



Extracts from the Chapter minutes from 1733 onwards and divers historical prospecting.

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A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW - NO. 14

MIKE DEEMING WRITES:



Spot the difference!!!

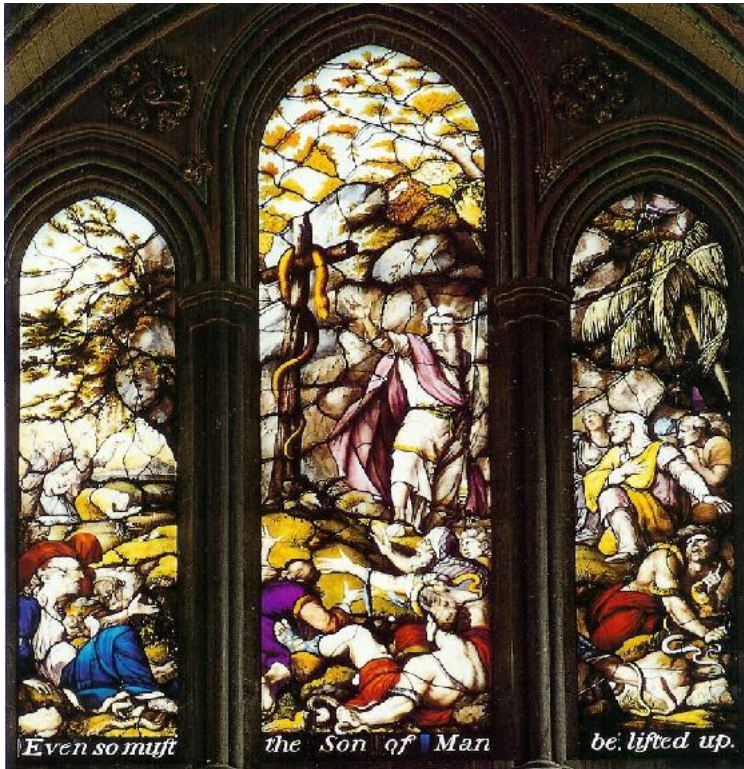


On the left, Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of King George III at his coronation in 1761, in the collection of the Royal Academy, London. On the right, a copy by James Pearson and Eglington Margaret in Ely Cathedral. However, the copy isn't a painting, it's a stained glass window, and its home in Ely Cathedral is the Stained Glass Museum there.

Pearson (1740-1838) became the leading stained glass artist copying original paintings. His copies use different coloured crown slab glass and, crucially, he uses enamel paints on them which are then fired to bond permanently to the glass. His key skill was to hide the lead-work that holds the different glass pieces together in the picture and to create a support structure behind the glass which is hidden to the viewer. You can see a difference in the panel on the right where a crack in the glass has been repaired with a lead calm, passing through the King's left hand. Pearson was supported by his wife Eglington, a leading stained glass enamel painter in her own right.

Our Cathedral's window, above the Presbytery, depicts 'Moses and the Brazen Serpent' and is another of their masterpieces. The window is a copy of a painting by the artist John Hamilton Mortimer (1740-79), a portraitist who had studied under Reynolds. He was active in the Society of Artists and became their president in 1774. Of course, the window in the Cathedral

is somewhat more challenging, in that the picture is spread over three lancets of different sizes. Mortimer based his painting loosely on one by Rubens, adjusting the images to fit the geometry of the window. Rubens painted his version shortly after returning from Italy where he was greatly influenced by Michelangelo, who himself had painted 'Moses and the Brazen Serpent' on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.



The window was first displayed at the Pantheon in Oxford Street, now an M&S superstore. The Pantheon, designed by James Wyatt (soon to wreak havoc in the Cathedral), had been built in 1772 as a set of winter assembly rooms; it complemented the out-of-town summer Pantheon at Ranelagh Gardens, now home to the Chelsea Flower Show. The window was installed in the Cathedral in 1780, at the behest of Jacob, second Earl of Radnor, along with other works in the Presbytery, including the Radnor cage pew.

Of course, this style of window was a radical departure from the C13 style used in the Cathedral up till then and, unsurprisingly, it was not met with universal acclaim. One contemporary critic thought it was more suited to a ballroom than to a church. Charles Winston, the author of the 1814 survey of the Cathedral's glass, was highly critical of the design, not least because the wide mullions make it difficult to see the three lights as a single image. Nevertheless, it is the only figurative window to have survived Wyatt's upheaval here ten years later, Radnor being still very much alive! The glazing in the Cathedral is dominated by the medieval and the C19/20 glass, so it's a real joy to have this outstanding example of Georgian glass – one of the most important transitional decorations in the Cathedral.

PASSING THE PORT

Rosemary Pemberton writes: I have become intrigued by the description of a table comprising a semi-circular table with brass rods and curtains and a 'rolling decanter wagon' in Col. Baker's magnificent 30 Ft diameter dining room. I think they are called 'Hunt tables' and were supposed to have been put in front of the fire after returning from a hunt. I have found an image of the sort that fits the description (see right). Do you



know anything about the rituals in Regency time which would have required a rolling/moving decanter for serving port etc? I have seen on google decanter wagons on wheels which are mostly silver but his plate was sold separately and the way it is described in the sale makes it sound as if it was integral.

I know I am supposed to be writing about his garden but now I have the description of all the furniture in his dining room and the room still exists I am trying to find out more. The good Colonel lived in the property where the old museum is now in St. Ann Street, and the dining room is now the retirement complex communal room.

The rituals are most apparent when it comes to how to serve Port. Tradition dictates that the Port decanter should be placed on the table to the right of the host or hostess. It is then passed to the left, going clockwise around the table until it comes to rest at its starting point. Port is never passed across the table or back on itself, it's only to the left. There are several theories as to why this is:

Historically, to keep one's sword arm free

In the Royal Navy, the rule was 'port to port', i.e. 'all the way around'

To simply ensure it's shared fairly and no one misses out

What if the Port decanter comes to a standstill during the round? If this happens, it's considered bad form to demand it.

Rather, a gentleman

should ask: *Do you know the Bishop of Norwich?* This traditionally acts as a subtle push to continue passing it around the table. The story goes that Bishop Bathurst of Norwich (1805 - 1837), aged 93, developed a tendency to unwittingly stall the decanter's journey by falling asleep at the table. I believe that a recent Bishop of Norwich has redeemed the character of that office.

In the Royal Navy, the host would start passing the port to his left but not serve himself nor his principle guest, seated on his right and therefore they would be the last to receive the port. Also, each gentleman would serve himself. If ladies are present, this can cause a problem as the gentleman could only serve a lady to his left. Breaches in etiquette could result in a forfeit!

As you might expect, there is a link between port and the City Livery Companies. The first overseas trip organised by a livery company was in 1928 when the Vintner's Company went to Oporto. The Master baptised a cask of Graham's port and started a tradition, such casks being called *The Master*.





REREDOS

In the St Edmund of Abingdon Chapel, North Transept is an *Adoration of the Magi* triptych designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield, Architect, and painted by Charles Edgar Buckeridge (1864 - 1898). It was originally placed in the Trinity Chapel in 1896. Photo *courtesy of ShannonMArthur creative commons*. Buckeridge was born in Headington Oxford, the son of Gothic Revival architect Charles Buckeridge. Buckeridge was in great demand and

carried out various commissions for Blomfield including a reredos for St. Mark's Church, Horsham that cost £200, say £20,000 in today's money.

ELIAS OF D

The *Cathedrals of England* by Harry Batsford & Charles Fry (Batsford 2020) has in its chapter on Salisbury this quote in his [Bishop Poore] *train went the canon Elias of Derham in whom some writers have recognised not only the architect of the beautiful chapel of the Nine Altars at the latter [Canterbury], but also the main fabric of Salisbury, though from an improved knowledge of medieval methods it seems hardly likely that his office was ever more than that of a modern clerk of works*. I don't know about you but I can't agree with this last statement. I can see that the line between his role and that of the master Mason is somewhat blurred but Elias also raised the money and was known as a designer as well as administrator. And this does not touch on his other achievements: his legal career, his diplomatic work and of course Magna Carta. Below is a CGI reconstruction of how his Thomas Beckett tomb in Canterbury may have looked.



END PIECE

It is gathered that it was usual in constructing cathedrals to carve the stonework on-site. The exception was the quarrying of Purbeck 'Marble' where masons were employed to finish the stone at source. This idea gradually spread to other quarries so that eventually you could buy mouldings 'off the peg'.