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Medieval Stained Glass and the Victorian Restorer

Sarah Brown

Restoration: the 'arch-enemy'?

The recovery of the 'true principles' of stained glass in the course of the nineteenth century grew out of a complex relationship between restoration, research, reinvention, and startling creativity. The Victorian period also gave rise to the modern conservation movement, and the restoration of churches, subject of much contemporary scholarship, was the context in which this movement evolved most rapidly.[1] The story of the restoration of stained glass in England in the Victorian period, in contrast, has received relatively little attention, although art historians of the medieval medium must always establish authenticity through the unravelling of past interventions.[2] Victorian debates about restoration inevitably laid bare the tensions between craft, commerce, art, and scholarship, as well as issues of status, education, and class. In the process, the reputation of the Victorian stained glass restorer has not fared well and has fuelled the belief, already strongly entrenched by the early twentieth century, that Victorian restoration practices were homogeneous in their character and damaging in their impact. This has allowed the ruthless unpicking of Victorian stained glass restoration to be justified and even celebrated, a deep-seated attitude that has not been entirely dispelled. This article will reconsider the nature and

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[1] *The Future of the Past: Attitudes to Conservation, 1174–1974*, ed. by Jane Fawcett and Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976); *'A Church as it Should Be': The Cambridge Camden Society and its Influence*, ed. by Christopher Webster and John Elliot (Stamford: Tyas, 2000); and *From William Morris: Building Conservation and the Arts and Crafts Cult of Authenticity 1877–1939*, ed. by Chris Miele, Studies in British Art, 14 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

[2] A rare early exception is J. A. Knowles, 'Early Nineteenth-Century Ideals and Methods of Restoring Ancient Stained Glass', *Journal of the British Society of Master Glass-Painters*, 11 (1953), 72–79; see, for example, the restoration diagrams in Tim Ayers, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Wells Cathedral*, Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi (Great Britain), 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and David King, *The Medieval Stained Glass of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich*, Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi (Great Britain), 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

variety of restoration practices emerging in the Victorian period and their implications for modern conservation and art historical scholarship.

Victorian commentators themselves had an ambivalent attitude towards the status and reputation of the stained glass maker and restorer for, until the second half of the twentieth century, the two were interchangeable. In 1844 the *Ecclesiologist* accused stained glass artists of the recent past of secrecy and profiteering.[3] In his influential 1852 essay on stained glass, the architect G. E. Street (1824–1881) was far from complimentary about the quality of much new stained glass and concluded with the common trope that commercialization was at the root of the problem.[4] One of the most implacable opponents of the commercial restorer was Lewis F. Day (1845–1910):

> [The] arch-enemy [of stained glass windows] is the restorer, at whose hands they have suffered cruel and irreparable wrong. He is the thief who has robbed so much old glass of its glory [...]. So greedy is he of work, if not of gain, that restoration cannot safely be left even to the most learned of men [...]. The story of destruction repeats itself wherever the restorer has had his way.[5]

Writing in 1905, in more temperate language, the Arts and Crafts pioneer Christopher Whall (1849–1924) contrasted the care required to handle and restore fragile historic glass with the rough and ill-informed treatment meted out to it in the average stained glass workshop. Rather than be entrusted to the 'gentle hands of a cultivated and scientific artist, connoisseur, and expert', the precious ancient window is handed over, via a clergyman or surveyor with no practical or technical experience, to the manager of the commercial glazing shop and thence to 'a number of ordinary working men to treat by the ordinary methods of their trade'.[6]

By the early twentieth century, with the anti-restoration campaign rallied to the cause of William Morris's Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, it had become a commonplace to describe restoration in negative terms. Writing in 1908 of the much celebrated medieval stained glass of All Saints, North Street, in York, the Reverend P. J. Shaw (d.1956) was moved to observe: 'But it has not escaped the restorer. His heavy and indiscriminating hand is visible in many of the windows.'[7] Only in the writings of

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[3] 'Stained Glass', *Ecclesiologist*, 3 (1844), 16–20.
[4] G. E. Street, 'On Glass Painting', *Ecclesiologist*, n.s., 10 (1852), 237–47.
[5] Lewis F. Day, *Windows: A Book about Stained & Painted Glass* (London: Batsford, 1897), pp. 404–05.
[6] Christopher Whall, *Stained Glass Work: A Text-Book for Students and Workers in Glass* (London: Hogg, 1905), pp. 316, 319.
[7] *An Old York Church, All Hallows in North Street: Its Medieval Glass and Architecture*, ed. by P. J. Shaw (York: Church Bookshop, 1908), p. 25.

Whall's American disciple Charles Connick (1875–1945) do we find a more sympathetic and appreciative view of the contribution of past restorers:

> Restorers and their restorations are often scorned, but skilful craftsmen and sensitive, sympathetic artists have kept many a masterpiece in glass from crumbling into oblivion [...]. The craftsman who devotes himself wholeheartedly to the rehabilitation of old windows naturally has a strong sense of responsibility for them.[8]

However, even the generous Connick contrasted the work of his devoted, talented, and, by implication, rather solitary restorer, with 'the wholesale, mass production type restoration that is so well typified in the Sainte Chapelle, Paris' (p. 243). This was serious criticism of a state-funded project of 1848–55 intended to provide an exemplary national model of modern restoration, which had resulted in the removal of earlier interventions from the windows and the creation of new panels in imitation of what were conjectured to have been lost originals.[9] Connick shared this suspicion of large-scale state-sponsored projects in France with many well-informed and influential English commentators, including G. F. Bodley (1827–1907).[10]

Only one figure, Charles Winston (1814–1864), has been universally acknowledged as the herald of a 'modern' and 'legitimate' approach to stained glass restoration. His influence as a historian of the medium, as an innovator in the development of materials, as the supervisor of 'enlightened' restoration, and as the advocate of conservative restoration principles have all been discussed in recent scholarship.[11] Appreciation of Winston's influence has, however, tended to polarize the discussion, creating a binary assessment that is very far from representing the complexity and variety of Victorian restoration practice and has allowed Winston's well-deserved eminence to overshadow the contributions of other key figures.

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[8] Charles J. Connick, *Adventures in Light and Colour: An Introduction to the Stained Glass Craft* (London: Harrap, 1937), pp. 240–41.

[9] Alyce A. Jordan, 'Rationalizing the Narrative: Theory and Practice in the Nineteenth-Century Restoration of the Windows of the Sainte-Chapelle', *Gesta*, 37 (1998), 192–200.

[10] G. F. Bodley, 'Church Restoration in France', *Ecclesiologist*, n.s., 19 (1861), 70–78.

[11] A. C. Sewter, 'The Place of Charles Winston in the Victorian Revival of Stained Glass', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 24 (1961), 80–91; Martin Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1980), pp. 22–23; Sarah Brown, 'The Stained Glass of the Lady Chapel of Bristol Cathedral: Charles Winston (1814–64) and Stained Glass Restoration in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the British Archaeological Association Conference*, 19 (1999), 107–17; and Jim Cheshire, 'Charles Winston and the Development of Conservative Restoration', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, 20 (2013), 83–102.

Restoration and replication *c.* 1800–40

Critics of what was seen by the 1870s as a reprehensible modern trend in stained glass restoration rather overlooked the fact that this practice of restoration and repair had a very long history, and that many of the practices of which later Victorians were so critical were based on centuries-old craft traditions. Cyclical restoration can be documented from at least the twelfth century, while close stylistic observation has identified many surviving examples of medieval replication and replacement of lost or damaged pieces of an earlier era.[12] Some of these were themselves displaced by nineteenth-century restorers, as happened to many later medieval interpolations into the Sainte-Chapelle windows, for example.[13] The circumstances surrounding the medieval replication and replacement of lost or damaged glass are almost never known, but it is clear that medieval restoration was always undertaken in the interest of maintaining the symbolic and narrative coherence of the original scheme, as well as the window's structural integrity. After the Reformation the growing reliance of glaziers on miscellaneous 'stop-gaps' of recycled old glass as a means of repairing old windows reflected the shortage and high cost of appropriate glass (*Fig. 1*), but also, to an appreciable degree, declining skills in the painting and firing of glass, as well as declining interest in and understanding of medieval imagery. For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the care of stained glass was entrusted to the plumber-glazier.[14]

It has long been recognized that in the years between *c.* 1750 and *c.* 1840 the handling of medieval glass during restoration and relocation, notably in the installation of imported Continental glass, provided a nursery for the rapid development and revival of the traditional 'mosaic' craft skills of many English glaziers (Harrison, p. 15). Birkin Haward has gone so far as to suggest that in East Anglia, at least, stained glass practice in the first thirty-five years of the nineteenth century was dominated by the installation of imported glass collections and the restoration of medieval survivals.[15] While art historical interest in the provenance of these medieval and

[12] Sarah Brown and David O'Connor, *Medieval Craftsmen: Glass-Painters* (London: British Museum Press, 1991), pp. 16–18.
[13] Madeline Caviness, '"De convenientia et cohaerentia antiqui et novi operis": Medieval Conservation, Restoration, Pastiche and Forgery', in *Intuition und Kunstwissenschaft: Festschrift für Hanns Swarzenski*, ed. by Tilmann Buddensieg (Berlin: Mann, 1973), pp. 205–21.
[14] This was a European phenomenon. See Sebastian Strobl, 'From Plumber to Glazier: The Story of Stained-Glass Restoration', in *The Art of Collaboration: Stained Glass Conservation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Mary B. Shepard, Lisa Pilosi, and Sebastian Strobl, Corpus Vitrearum United States of America, Occasional Paper 2 (London: Miller, 2010), pp. 34–43.
[15] Birkin Haward, *Nineteenth-Century Norfolk Stained Glass* (Norwich: Geo and Centre for East Anglian Studies, 1984), pp. 205–07, 280–91.



Fig. 1: The east window of Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, York (1472). The lost head of the seated Virgin May has been replaced, probably in the early nineteenth century, by the head of a female donor figure of similar date. Photo © Revd Gordon Plumb.

Renaissance importations is long established, far less scholarly attention has been devoted to the impact of these projects on indigenous nineteenth-century glaziers.[16] The demand for relocation and restoration of historic glass transformed many a provincial plumber-glazier into a stained glass artist.[17] For example, the Shrewsbury glazing business founded in the mid-eighteenth century by John Betton, now better known as the stained glass firm of Betton and Evans, emerged from local obscurity through the practice of restoration. A turning point was John Betton junior's sensitive and respectful handling of the early sixteenth-century glass from the Cistercian nunnery of Herkenrode in Belgium, purchased in 1803, and installed in the Lady Chapel of Lichfield Cathedral in 1804–05.[18] Using very little new glass, Betton junior (1765–1849) created composites out of old panels that ensured that almost all of the old glass could be accommodated in its new location.

Betton's work at Lichfield is in very marked contrast to the treatment of the late fourteenth-century glass of Winchester College chapel, restored by the same firm between 1821 and 1828. This resulted in the creation of copies of almost all of the medieval glass remaining in the chapel and the displacement of the medieval originals, only some of which have since been recovered.[19] The comparison of these two projects, undertaken by the same company within a twenty-year period, exemplifies the rapid evolution of restoration methods in English stained glass practice in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Much work remains to be done on Betton and Evans, but it is hard to escape the conclusion that the growing dominance in the company of the talented draughtsman and glass painter David Evans (1793–1861), who became a partner in 1815, had a transformative effect on the company's practice, especially after Betton's retirement in 1824.[20] It must be acknowledged that the Winchester windows were in a far more deteriorated condition than the Herkenrode glass, with many areas of

[16] Such interest is exemplified by David J. King, 'The Steinfeld Cloister Glazing', *Gesta*, 37 (1998), 201–10.
[17] This is being researched by a York doctoral candidate, Catherine Spirit, and I am grateful to her for discussion of it.
[18] Charles Winston, 'Remarks on the Painted Glass at Lichfield Cathedral', *Archaeological Journal*, 21 (1864), 193–208; and Yvette Vanden Bemden, 'The 16th-Century Stained Glass from the Former Abbey of Herkenrode in Lichfield Cathedral', *Journal of Stained Glass*, 32 (2008), 49–90.
[19] J. D. Le Couteur, *Ancient Glass in Winchester* (Winchester: Warren, 1920), pp. 69–72; John H. Harvey and Dennis G. King, 'Winchester College Stained Glass', *Archaeologia*, 103 (1971), 149–77.
[20] Gareth Williams, 'Domestic Stained Glass Works by John Betton and David Evans: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Patronage and Historicism' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Manchester, 1994); Lorna Roberts, 'David Evans, the Forgotten Pioneer', *Historic Churches* (2003) <https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/david-evans/david-evans.htm> [accessed 4 April 2020].

encrusted corrosion rendering parts of the windows illegible and opaque. Consequently, the long-established tradition of copy and replace may have seemed like the only way of satisfying the college's expectation for legible, brilliant, and translucent windows. However, the company's methodology would have been unthinkable, and indeed unachievable, without a mastery of glass painting and firing techniques, and would have been judged a failure without Evans's skills as a copyist.

Betton and Evans were not alone, of course, in undertaking 'restoration by replication', often at the cost of historic glass. The recent conservation of the Great East Window of York Minster has identified a (thankfully) small number of painted insertions in fifteenth-century style introduced during the restoration of 1823–27, competently painted pieces that miraculously escaped removal in the restoration of the window conducted after the Second World War.[21] On a far larger scale, the 1843–46 restoration of the minster's Chapter House witnessed the replication and replacement by the local firm of Joseph Barnett of all but one narrative panel from the late thirteenth-century east window, a project warmly endorsed by minster historian John Browne.[22]

Contemporary reception of these restorations reveals that the copying and replacement of heavily corroded or broken medieval glass was an acceptable practice in the eyes of many clients, for whom intelligible and translucent stained glass was much preferred to damaged and dark originals, even if they were closely associated with the patronage of highly esteemed historical figures. At Bishop William of Wykeham's Oxford foundation, New College, for example, the replacement of his late fourteenth-century Jesse Tree west window had been sanctioned as early as 1765, when William Peckitt of York (1731–1795) had been commissioned to create an entirely new window, with the founder's glass forced upon him in part payment of his bill.[23] At Wykeham's Winchester College, the warden greatly admired the Betton and Evans 'restoration' of the founder's glazing, described above (*Fig. 2*), declaring it to have been 'restored to its original brilliancy', while the local press reported that

> lovers of antiquity and admirers of the art of Glass Staining [will] receive much pleasure from a visit to the Chapel, the east window having been retouched and restored with great fidelity and recovered and brought back to what it was when originally painted. (quoted in Le Couteur, p. 70)

[21] Sarah Brown, *The Great East Window of York Minster, an English Masterpiece* (London: Third Millennium, 2018), pp. 14–16.
[22] Hilary Moxon, 'York Minster's Chapter House and its Painted Glass Narratives', 3 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 2017), I, 75–77.
[23] Christopher Woodforde, *The Stained Glass of New College, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 20–21.



Fig. 2: The east window of the chapel of Winchester College, Winchester. William of Wykeham witnesses the Annunciation, a copy by Betton and Evans of an original panel of *c.* 1385. Photo © Revd Gordon Plumb.

It has been suggested that Betton and Evans hoodwinked the college into believing their old glass had returned, but it is more likely that their clients simply shared the widely held early nineteenth-century view that accurate

copying based on firm authority was an entirely legitimate form of restoration.[24] Even Charles Winston was surprisingly uncritical of the treatment of the Winchester chapel windows, praising Evans's skilled draughtsmanship: 'The original designs have been preserved in the modern glass with considerable fidelity [...]. [And] it must be admitted to be a *very good copy* of the old.'[25]

With only limited craft-based repair techniques at their disposal, and with only mending leads to bond broken glass pieces, it is not hard to see why the growing interest in reading the imagery of old glass encouraged increasingly confident stained glass artists to copy and replace damaged pieces, particularly heads, especially when their efforts were received so favourably. It is clear, however, that there was also a growing financial incentive to remove and replace. Whereas the glazier's store of miscellaneous fragments had once served as a supply of material with which to patch holes in old windows, by the middle of the nineteenth century these pieces, and especially heads, had acquired a value of their own, particularly since, with the repeal of the glass tax in 1845, the cost of new glass for this purpose had fallen. While Peckitt may have accepted medieval glass from New College only reluctantly, it would seem that elsewhere it was common practice for restorers to take away and dispose of old glass for financial gain.[26] They could now profit from making restoration copies and selling the originals to romantic antiquarians who had no medieval glass of their own, a situation that inevitably encouraged rather than inhibited replication. Restoration was therefore also fuelling an antiquarian market only partially satisfied by the importation of glass from Continental Europe. Only in the 1960s and 1970s was Winchester College able to recover some of the glass sold on by Betton and Evans, although significant fragments remain alienated from the college, integrated into new Betton and Evans schemes elsewhere. One of these is the 1823 east window of St Deiniol, Worthenbury (Flintshire). Here, medieval heads from Winchester College chapel have been woven into a composite of 'fragments', which itself emulates the miscellaneous melanges arising elsewhere from accident, neglect, and the passage of time. While some pieces are genuine medieval fragments

[24] Chris Miele, 'Real Antiquity and the Ancient Object: The Science of Gothic Architecture and the Restoration of Medieval Buildings', in *The Study of the Past in the Victorian Age*, ed. by Vanessa Brand, Oxbow Monographs in Archaeology, 73 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1998), pp. 103–24.

[25] Charles Winston, 'A Short Notice of the Painted Glass in Winchester and its Neighbourhood', in *Memoirs Illustrative of the Art of Glass-Painting* (London: Murray, 1865), pp. 63–70 (p. 66), emphasis in original (first read on 13 September 1845 at the Meeting of the Archaeological Institute at Winchester).

[26] Madeline Caviness, 'Some Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Glass Restoration: Membra Disjecta et Collectanea; Some Nineteenth-Century Practices', in *Crown in Glory: A Celebration of Craftsmanship-Studies in Stained Glass*, ed. by Peter Moore (Norwich: Jarrold, 1982), pp. 69–72; Jordan, p. 194.

(from Winchester College and more local sites), others are based on medieval exempla copied by David Evans from engravings published in the early 1800s by the antiquarian William Fowler (1761–1832).[27] In Norwich at least one, and possibly two, medieval narrative panels were lost during the 1837–41 restoration of the glass of St Peter Mancroft by the churchwarden, plumber-glazier, and former manufacturer of water closets John Dixon (1783–1857), who removed seven medieval panels from the east window to make way for his own figure of St Peter. Some of the discarded medieval originals were acquired by William Howe Windham (1802–1854) of nearby Felbrigg Hall, where they were installed by Dixon alongside panels of his own manufacture (King, *Medieval Stained Glass*, pp. lxvii–lxviii, 172–75).

In summary, while restoration by replication undoubtedly reflected the limitations of restoration techniques, other factors, including the growing competence and confidence of nineteenth-century glass painters, their clients' expectations regarding translucency and legibility, and the greater quality and growing affordability of new glass all played their part. The repeal of the glass tax, which had favoured the lighter crown glass over the heavier cylinder, also removed an obstruction to experimentation in the manufacture of 'antique' glasses that better replicated the qualities and characteristics of medieval glass.[28]

A turning tide: Charles Winston and 'true principles' of stained glass restoration

While the practice of restoration by replication was clearly widespread and long-lived, by the 1860s it was increasingly discredited in the public discourse, as the general reaction against restoration gained traction. The reception of the restoration of two windows at St Mary, Fairford (Gloucestershire) by Chance Brothers of Smethwick between 1860 and 1861 exemplifies the degree to which the tide of opinion was turning.[29] Local observers applauded the Chances' work in the south nave aisle (sVIII), described as having been carried out in 'a most satisfactory manner', and encouraged it to be more widely applied, especially in the heavy restoration of the west window (wI) (Barley, p. 119). But in the restoration of the much larger west window, the extent of replication and consequent loss caused a national outcry, occasioned by the 1868 visit to the church of the British

[27] Martin Crampin, *Stained Glass from Welsh Churches* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2014), pp. 72–73.
[28] For Winston's role in the revival of 'antique glass', see Sewter; for Pugin's interest, see Stanley Shepherd, 'A. W. N. Pugin and the Making of Medieval-Type Glass', *Journal of Stained Glass*, 21 (1997), 1–10.
[29] Keith Barley, 'Conservation and Restoration', in *Fairford Parish Church: A Medieval Church and its Stained Glass*, ed. by Sarah Brown and Lindsay MacDonald, 2nd edn (Stroud: Sutton, 2007), pp. 110–38.

Archaeological Association during its summer conference at Cirencester. A national committee to promote the responsible restoration and preservation of the other Fairford windows was established. This scholarly opposition to 'restoration' can be attributed in no small measure to the influence of Charles Winston, whose views on stained glass and its restoration had first appeared in print in 1844, in the first edition of the association's journal.[30]

Winston was the son of a Kentish clergyman. He was educated at home, before taking up pupillage in the Inner Temple, latterly with William Twopeny (1797–1873), also a native of Kent. He was called to the bar in 1845.[31] He was not, therefore, an Oxbridge man and nor was he an adherent of the Ecclesiological movement, with whom, in fact, he was rather at odds. His knowledge of glass was founded on his close personal study of it *in situ*, starting at an early age in the churches of his native county. Winston himself acknowledged and learned from the restoration practices of an earlier generation, and in particular those of the glass painter Thomas Willement (1786–1871), whose work he had encountered at St Mary, Westwell in the county. Of Willement's restoration of the Jesse Tree in the east window (*Fig. 3*), he observed:

> The remnant of the painted glass in this window was re-leaded, and many of the missing pieces of glass supplied with plain bits of coloured, or white glass, by Mr. Willement, under the superintendence, and we believe principally at the cost, of William Twopeny, Esq., of the Temple. We have had occasion to examine this window ourselves, and can bear testimony to the good taste displayed in its repair. ('Painted Glass', p. 16)

Willement had been involved in the restoration of old glass since the late 1820s, and he and Winston were brought into contact with one another throughout their respective careers, notably during the celebrated restoration of the Temple Church in London, where Willement supplied stained glass as well as polychrome decoration.[32] By 1834 Willement was working on his 'Historical Essay on the Staining and Painting of Glass', described in the prospectus on folio 1 as 'chronological Illustrations of Stained and Painting on Glass in England, most carefully drawn and coloured from the best existing examples of each period'.[33] That it was never published

[30] Charles Winston, 'Painted Glass', *Archaeological Journal*, 1 (1844), 14–23.
[31] G. Le G. Norgate, rev. by Stanley A. Shepherd, 'Winston, Charles (1814–1864)', *ODNB* <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29761>.
[32] Sarah Brown, '"So perfectly satisfactory": The Stained Glass of Thomas Willement in St George's Chapel, Windsor', in *A History of the Stained Glass of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle*, ed. by Sarah Brown, Historical Monographs Relating to St George's Chapel, 18 (Windsor: Dean and Canons of Windsor, 2005), pp. 109–45.
[33] London, British Library, Add MS 36588. The manuscript is undated but is on paper watermarked 1834.



Fig. 3: The east window of the chancel of St Mary, Westwell (Kent). Jesse Tree of *c.* 1220 restored by Thomas Willement. Photo © Hans Fischer.

probably reflects the pressures of Willement's growing workload by the 1840s. In his text it is clear that he regarded the Church of England as the negligent custodian of England's stained glass inheritance, and he argued that the skilled contemporary craftsman was fully capable of its repair and restoration. His restoration techniques had benefitted from his study of the 1774 history of stained glass by Parisian scholar and glazier Pierre Le Vieil (1708–1772), translated extracts of which he included in his appendix.[34] Among them are Le Vieil's description of the use of paper pasted to the surface of old glass as a means of securing it during restoration, a technique that Willement used in his own practice.[35]

The earliest surviving draft of Winston's own attempt at a historical survey, 'An Essay on the Art of Glass Painting', dates from October 1838, and his project bears so many similarities to Willement's unpublished essay, including admiration of the achievements of the early sixteenth century, that it is tempting to surmise that the younger man was significantly influenced by the older scholar and craftsman.[36] That he may even have read Willement's unpublished essay is suggested in the introduction to his own *Inquiry into the Difference of Style Observable in Ancient Glass Paintings, especially in England, with Hints on Glass Painting, by an Amateur*, where he says of Willement that 'the latter was the first to observe in his works, the differences of style'.[37] None of Willement's published works, which concern heraldic decoration, in which he was especially expert, conform to this description, suggesting that it was Willement's unpublished historical essay to which Winston refers.

Jim Cheshire has argued that Winston anticipated the principles of 'conservative restoration' enshrined ultimately in the manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), founded in 1877 ('Charles Winston and the Development of Conservative Restoration'). Winston's own publications show that he was indeed anticipating the 'stitch in time' philosophy of the SPAB by some years. They also show that he did not count the influential Ecclesiological movement as his primary audience. His 1844 article 'Painted Glass' was written with 'the view not only to the preservation of existing specimens of ancient painted glass, but to the ultimate and complete revival of the art itself' and was offered to the journal of the newly founded British Archaeological Association (BAA), not to the Cambridge Camden Society (p. 14). He was not championing stained glass as a means of ecclesiological or liturgical revival, which probably

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[34] Pierre Le Vieil, *L'Art de la peinture sur verre et de la vitrerie* (Geneva: Minkoff Reprints, 1973).
[35] British Library, Add MS 36588, fol. 31.
[36] British Library, Add MS 33846.
[37] Charles Winston, *An Inquiry into the Difference of Style Observable in Ancient Glass Paintings*, 2 vols (Oxford: Parker, 1847), I, 19.

accounts for the somewhat belated and hostile review of his work in the *Ecclesiologist*.[38] While Winston was an early member of the BAA, founded in 1843, he was not a member of the Cambridge Camden Society, founded in 1839, even though both Twopeny and Willement were early members.[39] The majority of his articles concerning medieval glass were researched in the context of the association's annual summer conferences.[40] In his 1844 paper, half of which was devoted to restoration issues, he argued for the preservation of every irreplaceable fragment of old glass, and outlined his stance on the maintenance, repair, and protection of what remained. He contended that the process of repair should be entrusted to stained glass artists, not just glaziers, who should be expected to retain all old fragments in the positions in which they found them, without any alteration of the leadlines, although he was prepared to countenance the replacement of the old leads themselves. He scorned the practice of 'restoring', by which he specifically meant the making good of any defects with modern painted glass, despite his advocacy of the glass painter in the role of restorer. He promoted instead the introduction of new glass only as a means of ensuring structural stability, and would countenance the introduction of only a

> corresponding plain piece of coloured glass; or even perhaps to restore a portion of ornament, or other matter, where sufficient authority exists for the restoration; but in all other cases, it is safest to make up the deficiency with a piece of plain white glass, slightly dulled, or smeared over, so as to subdue its brilliancy. ('Painted Glass', pp. 15–16)

He argued that a defective original was to be preferred to an imperfect or conjectural restoration. These principles were observed in the three restoration projects in which Winston was most closely involved — the Dean's Eye of Lincoln Cathedral (1855), the Stapleton Chantry of All Saints, North Moreton (*c.* 1858–61) and the east window of Gloucester Cathedral (1861–62) — all three implemented by his favourite stained glass company, Ward and Hughes of London.[41] Old glass was scrupulously retained and repaired

[38] 'Chapters on Stained Glass — No. II. Warrington and Winston', *Ecclesiologist*, n.s., 7 (1850), 81–97.
[39] Geoffrey K. Brandwood, 'Appendix: A Camdenian Roll-Call', in *'Church as it Should Be'*, ed. by Webster and Elliott, pp. 359–454.
[40] Winston's papers were gathered together and published posthumously in *Memoirs Illustrative of the Art of Glass-Painting*.
[41] Nigel J. Morgan and others, *Stained Glass of Lincoln Cathedral* (London: Scala, 2012), pp. 55–65, 82–88; Fiona M. Whyte, 'The East Window of the Chapel of St Nicholas at All Saints Church, North Moreton', *Journal of Stained Glass*, 19 (1991–93), 105–32; Léonie Seliger, 'A History of the Repairs to the Stained Glass in the Great East Window of Gloucester Cathedral' (unpublished master's thesis, University of York, 2001).

with mending leads and any losses were made good in the manner advocated by Winston in 1844. While he did not argue for the retention of all ancient window lead, regarding its loss in the pursuit of structural integrity as a necessary evil, Winston was the first historian of the medium to describe the character of medieval cast lead calmes (the strips of lead used in glazing, formed with grooves on either side), noting their curved profile and uniformly narrow leaf, observations reflected in Ward and Hughes's choice of lead (*Inquiry*, I, 27).

Winston's 1844 advice was repeated in his most widely read publication, *An Inquiry into the Difference of Style*, an account of the history of the medium that explicitly sought to do for glass what Thomas Rickman (1776–1841) had done for Gothic architecture (I, 1). This book was head and shoulders above all other survey works of the nineteenth century in terms of its authority, comprehensiveness, and practicality. Winston's analysis is illuminated by a volume of hand-coloured plates based on his own meticulous watercolours, and the two volumes were owned and used by almost every stained glass workshop in the country.[42] Winston's renowned command of technicalities is apparent throughout, and he included an appendix containing his own annotated translation of Book 2 of Theophilus's twelfth-century treatise on medieval glass painting and window manufacture. Indeed, Winston's book was probably the single most important vehicle for its wide dissemination among practising stained glass artists in the English-speaking world.[43].

While it can be argued, therefore, that Winston was an early and influential advocate of what came to be defined as 'conservative restoration', he was, above all things, a pragmatist when it came to the care of stained glass, practical rather than philosophical. Winston shared with every restorer of his day an assumption that most, if not all, ancient windows would require dismantling and releading, even though he fully appreciated the interest and value of old lead. The process of dismantling inevitably made any window vulnerable to the movement of glass pieces within it, and potentially the removal and substitution of any pieces deemed to be alien to it. Winston was quite explicit that 'the pieces of glass of which it is composed should be retained in their original position, and the forms of the ancient lead-work preserved as much as possible' ('Painted Glass', p. 15). By this it would seem that he meant pieces of glass *original* to a window. His text does not, however, explicitly address the slightly different question of how

[42] Sarah Brown, 'Recovering the Past, Thinking about the Future: Writing about Stained Glass in England, *c.* 1750–*c.* 1850', in *Le Vitrail et les traités du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, ed. by Karine Boulanger and Michel Hérold (Berne: Lang, 2008), pp. 277–96.
[43] Robert Hendrie's complete English translation of Theophilus's treatise was published in the same year under the title *An Essay upon Various Arts* (London: Murray, 1847). For his own translation, Winston had used L'Escalopier's 1843 French/Latin edition.

a responsible restorer should handle the all too common inheritance of recycled patches of old glass introduced to stop up holes by the thrifty plumber-glazier of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His water-colours always record the lacunae in medieval panels (*Fig. 4*), indicated



Fig. 4: Charles Winston's 1858 watercolour of the conversion of St Paul in the east window of the Stapleton Chantry at All Saints, North Moreton (Berkshire). © British Library Board, Add MS 35211, fol. 7.

in the form of blanks in his otherwise detailed sketches.[44] His own sharp eye and deep knowledge of style ensured that he could readily distinguish these, making his records invaluable as a means of authenticating the originality of a medieval panel. There is no record, however, of whether these blanks represented later medieval repairs or miscellaneous patches of recycled glass, although it seems likely that the panels he studied must have contained both kinds of repair. It is clear that he allowed some, at least, of these patch repairs to be removed and substituted with plain smeared inserts of appropriately coloured modern glass. While on the one hand this represented the kind of 'honest' repair later advocated by Ruskin — 'do not care about the unsightliness of the aid: better a crutch than a lost limb' — on the other, in the process, Winston and his collaborators allowed some of the evidence of what Ruskin memorably called 'that golden stain of time' to be lost.[45] He was quite unapologetic about the consequences of these decisions:

> The ancient artist alone should be permitted to address himself to us through [these venerable remains]. A figure which has lost its head, or is otherwise mutilated, no doubt renders a glass painting defective; but it is far more disagreeable to detect an imperfect, or conjectural 'restoration', of an ancient work. Indeed the restoration is the more dangerous in proportion to its deceitfulness — its similitude to the ancient work. ('Painted Glass', p. 16)

It is in this statement that we see most clearly the key distinction between the stance of Winston and his contemporaries, notably Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879) and his followers, for whom the removal of all evidence of previous intervention and the introduction of restorations that were indistinguishable from the original was the mark of successful restoration.[46]

This is not to say that Winston was opposed to all restoration. As his 1844 article cited above makes clear, he was prepared to countenance the recreation of such repetitive decorative or architectural detail for which there was strong visual evidence preserved within the medieval original. In some of his own watercolours he would even fill in this missing detail, thereby 'perfecting' aspects of the medieval original, while retaining evidence of

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[44] Winston was not alone in adopting this convention. It was used also by Octavius Hudson, *c.* 1848 (Strobl, p. 39) and by Henry Crump Camidge, *c.* 1884 (Brown, *Great East Window*, p. 75).

[45] John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, 1849), pp. 181, 172.

[46] See Jordan; Elizabeth Carson Pastan, 'Restoring the Stained Glass of Troyes Cathedral: The Ambiguous Legacy of Viollet-le-Duc', *Gesta*, 29 (1990), 155–66; and Virginia Chieffo Raguin, 'Revivals, Revivalists, and Architectural Stained Glass', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 49 (1990), 310–29.

other imperfections, albeit without indicating this distinction in his drawings.[47] This is the case, for example, in his pre-restoration record of the glass at North Moreton, for which he launched a public restoration appeal around 1856. Winston's watercolours show far more detail in the canopies than now survives in the medieval glass (*Fig. 5*), suggesting that Ward and



Fig. 5: The conversion of St Paul in the east window of the Stapleton Chantry at All Saints, North Moreton (Berkshire) following restoration by Ward and Hughes, photographed in 2018. Photo Nick Teed © The York Glaziers Trust.

[47] I am grateful to Professor Tim Ayers and Professor Nigel Morgan for discussion of this point.

Hughes did not attempt to recreate these missing decorative/architectural elements. Losses in the figures, shown as blanks in the watercolours, were made good with Winston's hallmark smeared insertions. The window does, however, retain a small number of patches of recycled medieval glass, suggesting that this had been a characteristic of an earlier period of repair in the window's past. In step with Winston's principles, the panels were all releaded very sympathetically in a narrow lead profile, the enormous internal window bars (*ferramenta*), themselves a feat of medieval blacksmithing, were given non-ferrous tips but were preserved and repainted, and the window was provided with an external protective grille, strongly advocated by Winston as a guard against accidental or malicious damage.

The influence of Winston's restoration principles

For those restoration projects under the watchful eye of the educated English antiquary, Winston's principles cast a long shadow. In the aftermath of the British Archaeological Association's 1868 visit to Fairford, for example, restoration was taken away from the destructive 'restoring' hands of the Chance brothers and was entrusted to the more cautious and scholarly N. H. J. Westlake (1833–1921).[48] While the BAA had established a scholarly committee to advise on the Fairford restoration, it was actually the antiquary Reverend J. G. Joyce (1819–1878), then engaged in a meticulous study of the windows, who was instrumental in introducing Westlake to the project.[49] Westlake had joined the stained glass company of Lavers & Barraud in 1858, becoming a partner in 1868 and after 1880 sole proprietor of the firm (Harrison, pp. 80–81). In addition to his work as a stained glass designer and decorative painter, he was a noted scholar and author, his most important work being the impressive and multiply reprinted *History of Design in Painted Glass* (1881–94), in four profusely illustrated volumes. All four books make copious reference to Winston's work.

After an initial trial period (1878–79) during which Westlake restored two lights of the west window and two windows in the north nave aisle (nVII and nIX), progress at Fairford was delayed by lack of funds. The restoration programme restarted in May 1889 and continued until May 1890, directed by the rector, the Reverend F. R. Carbonell (1849–1919). Numerous misplaced pieces of glass were identified by Carbonell and relocated to their correct positions, and some pieces dispersed by the Chances were recovered. No new painted pieces were admitted to the scheme and lacunae were made good with stippled glass in the manner advocated by Winston, always white, no matter what the colour of the surrounding original. Slender mending leads were used to repair fractured glass and

[48] For this and what follows, see Barley, 'Conservation and Restoration'.
[49] J. G. Joyce, *The Fairford Windows* (London: Arundel Society, 1872).

leadlines were used to indicate lost figurative details, although it is clear that Carbonell had strong opinions on this matter, not always in step with those of Westlake.

The prolific and well-known London company founded by Charles Eamer Kempe (1837–1907) undertook a small number of important restorations in which Winston's influence is equally clear. In the firm's 1906–07 restoration of fifteenth-century glass at St John the Baptist, Thaxted in Essex, a series of figures of saints in the north aisle were releaded.[50] Many lacunae were made good with plain unpainted glass inserts, predominantly white, to match the overwhelmingly monochrome palette of the medieval figures (*Fig. 6*). While this ensures that the original glass can



Fig. 6: North aisle (nIV), St John the Baptist, Thaxted (Essex). Fifteenth-century figures of St George and St Michael as restored by Charles Eamer Kempe. © Christopher Parkinson.

[50] James Bettley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Essex* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 765; Adrian Barlow, *Kempe: The Life, Art and Legacy of Charles Eamer Kempe* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2018), p. 285.

be clearly distinguished from the restoration, the aesthetic result is rather unsatisfactory, as the delicately painted medieval figures are punctuated by glaring white gaps, especially unsettling in heads and faces. A similar approach was adopted in the 1923–25 restoration of the famous fourteenth-century choir clerestory glazing of Tewkesbury Abbey.[51] Full-scale coloured cartoons of the window were made by the firm's chief designer, Rudolph Tanner (1895–1978).[52] Tanner's cartoons show that minor lacunae throughout the scheme had been filled with pieces of medieval glass from elsewhere, which he carefully recorded. Far more extensive damage had been suffered by the lower panels of each window, readily accessible from the roofs of the adjoining radiating chapels. With oversight from the scholar G. McNeil Rushforth (1862–1938), the Kempe team removed most of the earlier patch repairs into a newly created 'museum window' in the sacristy, inserting in their place Winston-inspired stippled pieces. The missing lower parts of the figures of prophets and kings were built up using leaded outlines enclosing more stippled glass of appropriate colour. Comparison of photographs of the pre-restoration condition of the glass with its current state shows that Kempe's workmen were not always able to resist the temptation to move medieval pieces from their original location in order to achieve a more satisfactory aesthetic result.

Not everyone found the austere aesthetic divide between old and new advocated by Winston to their taste, especially in windows close to the ground, where losses are more apparent. One project which offered an alternative approach deserves to be better known. In the restoration of the mid-fifteenth-century Jesse Tree window in the church of St Margaret at Margaretting (Essex), part of the wider restoration of the church of 1869–70, Westlake was required to move the glass from its original location in a side window to pride of place in the east window of the chancel.[53] Lacking enough original glass to fill the larger east window (*Fig. 7*), he supplied two entirely new panels, and created an essential central figure of the Virgin Mary, which he admitted had to be conjectural. On the other hand, the other additions were based on

[51] Sarah Brown, 'The Medieval Stained Glass', in *Tewkesbury Abbey: History, Art and Architecture*, ed. by Richard K. Morris and Ron Shoesmith (Logaston: Logaston Press, 2012), pp. 183–96.
[52] Roger Rosewell, 'Tewkesbury Abbey Cartoons Preserved', *Vidimus*, 124 (2019) <https://vidimus.org/blogs/news/tewkesbury-abbey-cartoons-preserved/> [accessed 4 April 2020].
[53] N. H. J. Westlake, *A History of Design in Painted Glass*, 4 vols (London: Parker, 1881–94), III (1886), 67; and Bettley and Pevsner, p. 591. I am grateful to my Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi colleague Christopher Parkinson for discussion of this site.

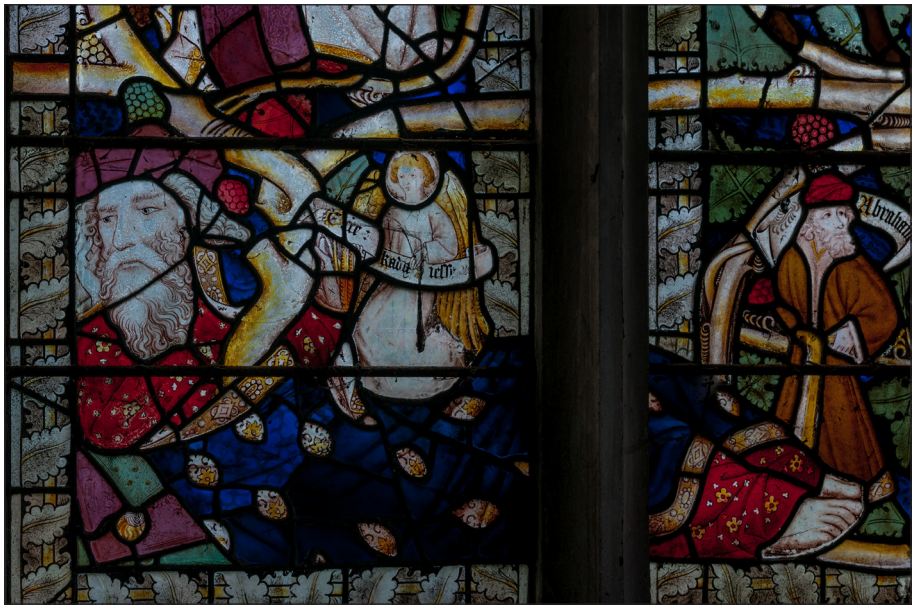


Fig. 7: East window of St Margaret, Margaretting (Essex). Reclining figures of Jesse, as restored by N. H. J. Westlake. Photo © Christopher Parkinson.

medieval models derived from the window itself, justified by the fact that the medieval designer had already repeated a number of his own cartoons. Westlake also ensured that any new addition to an old figure be easily recognized by the addition of a clearly distinguishable cross in fired glass paint (*Fig. 8*). This is the earliest example known to me of what is now a common requirement in modern stained glass conservation.[54] In this innovative and scholarly restoration, Westlake achieved a fine balance between the approach attributable to the influence of Winston and that of the Viollet-le-Duc philosophy of restoration. He achieved a harmonious and legible iconographic composition in a liturgically sensitive location, which also allows for an immediate distinction to be drawn between old and new, but without the negative aesthetic consequences of blank insertions. Not until Cesare Brandi's influential *Theory of Restoration* (1963) does one find a coherent rationale for aesthetic restoration of this kind.

[54] *Guidelines for the Conservation and Restoration of Stained Glass*, 2nd edn (Nuremburg: International Corpus Vitrearum, 2004) <http://www.cvma.ac.uk/CVConservationGuidelines2004.pdf> [accessed 4 April 2020] (para. 4.4.1).



Fig. 8: Detail of newly painted piece, marked with a cross, inserted into the hand of Jesse by Westlake. Photo © Sarah Brown.

Uneasy bedfellows: art, craft, science, and stained glass restoration

The importance to the modern conservation movement of John Ruskin (1819–1900), William Morris (1834–1896), and the SPAB cannot be overstated. The eloquence of Ruskin's prose and the passionate call to arms of Morris's 1877 SPAB manifesto find their echoes in the writings of Christopher Whall, W. R. Lethaby (1857–1931), Lewis Foreman Day, and even Walter Benjamin (1892–1940).[55] For Morris, ancient buildings were 'sacred monuments', and yet the anti-restoration movement in general, and the SPAB in particular, added surprisingly little to the toolbox of the stained glass restorer. Morris's own silence on the subject of stained glass restoration has been noted by others.[56]

Whall, whose much loved book was reprinted in 1920, offered some practical advice. He stressed the special care and insight needed to restore old glass, effectively calling for the emergence of specialists in the field. He strongly advised against the cementing of old windows, recommending hand puttying instead, and also advocating the creation of a sandwich of thin modern glass to protect the most corroded and fragile fragments (Whall, pp. 315–20). This technique came to be widely used as a means of avoiding an obtrusive mending lead, especially across faces. It was employed extensively in the 1933–35 restoration of the medieval glass of New College Oxford by the Arts and Crafts artist Joan Howson (1885–1964), although she also cut the uneven pieces of medieval glass into strips in order to fit them more easily within the plates of modern glass.[57]

Only in 1929 did specific SPAB advice on stained glass restoration appear in print when A. R. Powys (1881–1936) included a short chapter devoted to 'The Repair of Window Glazing' in his *Repair of Ancient Buildings*.[58] Powys followed what was by now a broadly familiar traditional approach to structural repair, although the value of photographic recording was stressed. The chapter also contains a rather chilling acceptance of the anticipated 'tide of destruction' awaiting Victorian stained glass, seen then as an opportunity rather than a heritage disaster. While Powys acknowledged that specialist knowledge might be called for, the care of stained glass in the twentieth century was still perceived as being a matter

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[55] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. by J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2008).

[56] Chris Miele, 'Morris and Conservation', in *From William Morris*, ed. by Miele, pp. 30–65; David O'Connor, 'Morris Stained Glass: "an art of the Middle Ages"', in *William Morris and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joanna Banham and Jennifer Harris (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 31–46.

[57] Woodforde, p. 62. The slicing of medieval glass within the plates was observed by the York Glaziers Trust during recent conservation.

[58] A. R. Powys, *The Repair of Ancient Buildings*, new edn (London: SPAB, 1981), pp. 163–69.

rooted in craft. Nineteenth-century confidence in a scientific understanding of technical problems had no place in this publication, which was republished as late as 1981.

However, it is in the chapter 'A Word on Restoration' in Day's popular and otherwise inspirational book *Windows* that the consequences of what Chris Miele has called Morris's 'fetishizing of the past' can be seen most clearly.[59] For Day the appeal of an old window was inextricably tied up in its deteriorated state: 'The quality may be due in part to age and decay: What then? Beauty is beauty; and if it comes of decay (which we cannot hinder), let us at least enjoy the beauty of decay.' He concludes:

> If there remain enough old glass to make a window, let it be judiciously repaired; if there be not enough for that, let it be piously preserved, best of all, in a museum, where those who care for such scraps can see them.

He also enshrined a perception that art and restoration are implacable foes: 'Restoration is a word to make the artist shudder' (Day, pp. 406, 410).

This was not a promising context in which the implications of an emerging technical and scientific understanding of stained glass deterioration might be expected to flourish. By the end of the period there was, however, a dawning realization that the chemistry of ancient glass has something to do with its corrosion and decay. One of the earliest explorations of these issues in print came in 1880. James Fowler, who had studied the stained glass of York Minster closely, attempted to characterize a range of deterioration phenomena, and while his interpretations are sometimes fanciful, his observations are full of interest.[60] In 1907, at a meeting of the Society of Arts chaired by Day and attended by Whall and other stained glass artists, the chemist Noel Heaton (1874–1955), himself a member of a stained glass dynasty, gave a landmark paper presenting the results of a series of chemical analyses of the composition of medieval glasses, illustrated with microscope images of deterioration.[61] Heaton explained that the coating on old stained glass, to which the Arts and Crafts artists present attributed a great deal of its character and beauty, was actually occasioned by its alteration and deterioration, and was connected to a process that culminated in its pitting and decay. He also explained that this was a process triggered by its exposure to moisture in the environment. Here, then, was the foundation of a modern understanding of a problem that was already

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[59] Day, pp. 404–10; Miele, 'Real Antiquity', p. 124.

[60] James Fowler, 'On the Process of Decay in Glass, and, Incidentally on the Composition and Texture of Glass at Different Periods, and the History of its Manufacture', *Archaeologia*, 46 (1880), 65–162.

[61] Noel Heaton, 'Medieval Stained Glass: Its Production and Decay', *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 55 (1907), 468–84.

being recognized by some glaziers throughout Europe, practical craftsmen who had begun to put up physical barriers to protect their precious ancient glass from the elements.[62] It is clear, from the notes of the discussion that followed Heaton's paper, that his findings were a revelation to his audience. Nonetheless, only in the years after the Second World War were the conservation implications of his observations for the care of stained glass fully realized through Europe-wide research and in the advocacy of environmental protective glazing (*Guidelines*, para. 3.2.1). They continue to be challenged, even as windows made in the long nineteenth century themselves begin to fall victim to the processes of deterioration of which he wrote.

An understanding of the history of restoration practice in the long nineteenth century is essential if we are to appreciate and preserve historic stained glass in all its flawed complexity. In writing of historic buildings, Ruskin celebrated the 'golden stain of time', a mark that all responsible modern conservation seeks to preserve. In 2004, in less poetic language, the Corpus Vitrearum reminded scholars, conservators, and custodians that 'losses, stopgaps and later additions provide evidence of the history of a stained-glass panel and must be fully studied', advice that is sadly not always heeded (*Guidelines*, para. 4.1.1). The loss of so many Victorian stained glass company archives makes this history an elusive one, and its impact on the commerce of stained glass in the period consequently difficult to quantify. The windows themselves, however, bear eloquent testimony to this story, one that can be researched and retold through the collaboration of scholars and conservators.

[62] Isabelle Pallot-Frossard, 'Petite histoire des verrières de protection, ou comment un vitrail échappe à la clôture', *Monumental*, 1 (2004), 90–103.