

St Nicholas' Church  
Child Okeford  
Dorset



## The Stained Glass Windows

C G Giles

*If you have any information to help improve these booklets, please advise the Churchwardens.*

- #1 St Nicholas Church; A Short History
- #2 St Nicholas Church; Visitors' Guide
- #3 St Nicholas Church; Memorials
- #4 St Nicholas Church; The Stained Glass Windows
- #5 St Nicholas Church; The Bishops' Bible
- #6 St Nicholas Church; Church Music and the Church Organ
- #7 St Nicholas Church; The Church Bells

This booklet is one of a series of seven written in 1998 by Chris Giles.

After a career in teaching, Chris took early retirement and began to devote himself to the local Church. He became a Churchwarden, the first Benefice Secretary and a member of General Synod. Chris was always interested in history, and especially local history. It was never a nostalgic pursuit for him, but just one of the ways in which he sought to unite the past and the future, those who had lived in the village for a long time and those who had arrived more recently.

In 1999, after these booklets were written, he played a key role in the establishment of the Okeford Benefice. This Pastoral Measure brought the Parishes of Child Okeford, Okeford Fitzpaine, Manston and Hammoon into one Benefice with the Parish of Shillingstone. As Benefice Secretary, Chris worked tirelessly to ensure that what we could best do together was done together, not only within the Benefice, but beyond, with the other Parishes of the Southern Blackmore Vale. He delighted in being able to assist in the training of our first Stipendiary Curate, Rev'd Michael Brierley, and in helping to foster other vocations to Ordained and Reader Ministry.

Whenever he could, he also delighted in combining his devotion to the Church with his devotion to his family - his wife Jean, son Tim, with his computing skills, and twin daughters Kate and Melanie, gifted in history and archaeology.

Chris never took Holy Orders but was, in the true sense of the word, a Deacon, utterly unstinting in his service and an exceptional guide and companion to the first Rector of the Okeford Benefice. He was tragically killed in a road traffic accident on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2002, at the age of sixty five years.

It was Chris' hope and prayer that these booklets would help you, the reader, better to understand the past of this place, that you may serve the Lord better in the future and know His presence and peace with you today. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

*Rev'd Philip Rahilly*

*Rector of the Okeford Benefice  
(1995 – 2006)*

*Lent 2003*

## The Stained Glass Windows

Much of the glass is Victorian, dating from 1878-9.

### The Chancel

Window 1. The **East Window** which depicts the Ascension, (3 lights).

- Centre light: Christ ascending, with the Apostles Peter, James and John.
- Left and Right lights: Two groups of four Apostles. The main part of the window depicts the ascension as an earthly event; the upper panes contain emblems which symbolise its heavenly significance.

Besides the various floral designs, there are in the centre the two monograms:

1. J H  $\Sigma$  (despite the use of the Greek letter Sigma,  $\Sigma$ , this is a Latin monogram for **Jesu Hominem Salvatorem** - Jesus Saviour of Mankind. (See also window No.8)  
The **IHS** version is sometimes also referred to as "in His service"
2.  $\chi$   $\rho$   $\sigma$  *the Greek letters Chi, Rho, Sigma (for ChRriStos) [XPS]*

Left and Right are the Greek letters **A**(Alpha) and  **$\Omega$** (Omega)

A(Alpha) and  $\Omega$ (Omega) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet so the window can be regarded as symbolising Jesus Christ, the beginning and the end (Revelation 1:8).

The topmost window shows an angel holding a Crown - of Christ's glory, or of Christ the King (Rev 2: 10) or Crown of Life (James 1:12) or High Heaven (2 Tim 4:8).

[These two monograms are also carved in the panels of the reredos (behind the altar) and IHS is in one of the mosaic designs on the North wall of the Chancel]

(See also window No.8.)

The East Window was installed "*In memory of George & Elizabeth Peach & their daughter Mary Alice. Window placed by surviving children AD 1879*". This window was designed by *Henry Hughes* in 1879.

Window 2. The **Sanctuary, South Window** shows Jesus with Martha and Mary at the time of the raising of their brother, Lazarus (Luke 10: 38-42).

There are two "lights"; on the left are Martha and Mary, on the right is Jesus.

Above is the double triangle symbol - the 6 pointed Star of David. The triangle is a symbol of the Trinity (this symbol is also part of the mosaic design in the south wall of the Choir). The Star of Jacob (Numbers 24:17) denotes Jesus as the Christ. At the top the Dove is shown, the emblem of The Holy Spirit (Mark 1:10).

This window was designed by *Henry Hughes* and is in memory of

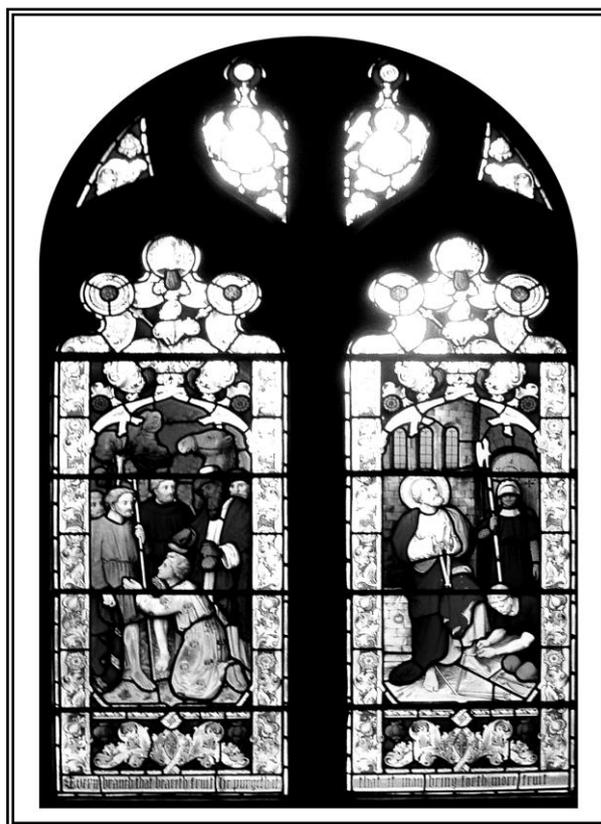
*"Eliza Briget Seymer from H.M.M.Pitt and L.L.Pitt AD 1879"*

(Eliza Seymer, of Hanford House, was a benefactor of the village School.)

3. The **Choir Window**, south wall, is in two parts (lights). These show similar subjects taken from the Old and the New Testaments.

- On the left Joseph is shown being sold to the slave traders by his brothers (Genesis 37). One of his brothers is holding his “coat of many colours”.
- On the right St Peter (probably) (Acts 12), or St Paul, being held in prison (in Rome) restrained by leg irons.

Above two angels are depicted.



NB Biblical accounts do not describe angels as having wings - only Cherubim and Seraphim have wings. Angels are “like young men, dressed in white.” (Luke 24:5)

Below, the text is from Jesus’ allegory of the Vine (John 15:2). The text reads:  
 “Every branch which beareth fruit, he purgeth it // that it may bring forth more fruit”

“Suffering” is therefore seen as a process of strengthening the person as preparation for better things in the future. The general subject is how the faithful share Christ’s sufferings.

[The design of the leg and arm irons is of incidental interest - this particular design was made in Birmingham and was still being exported from the UK to Africa in the 1970’s. The window artist was using contemporary information to illustrate his theme.]

There is no memorial dedication but the newspaper report of 1879 about the opening of the rebuilt Church says that all three windows in the Chancel were designed by *Henry Hughes* of Ward & Hughes.

## South Aisle

### Lady Chapel

4. The **East Window**, above the Lady Chapel altar.

Some argue that this is not a “Lady Window” since Mary is not shown with a *nimbus* (halo) round her head; as is the case in the other Mary windows. Others say it *is* a Mary window, as indicated by the Lily symbol. The newspaper report of the opening of the rebuilt church says that it shows Jesus with Martha and Mary in Lazarus’ house in Bethany, (ie it is not a “Mary Window”).

The three lights show:

Left - Martha carrying a wine cup;

Centre - Jesus;

Right - Mary (of Bethany) sitting listening to Jesus.

Above are 6 floral designs; two of which seem to be lilies or white roses.

At the top an angel with hands joined in prayer.

This window was designed by *Henry Hughes* and is dated 1879.

It was given *In memory of Thomas Oliver who died July 12th.1870 aged 74, and also of Martha Vere Oliver who died May 23rd.1873 aged 67.*

5. The **South Window** of the Lady Chapel (the Magnificat Window). This is one of the Mary windows, and is again in two parts.

- On the left is the Old Testament model for the Magnificat - the text on the Scroll is the song of Hannah, “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, Mine horn is exalted in the Lord because I rejoice in thy salvation” The picture is of Hannah and the child Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1-2).
- On the right is the New Testament - showing Mary and the Christ Child.
- 

The text is the Song of Mary - “My soul doth magnify the Lord, My spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour...” (ie the Magnificat); (Luke 1:46-47).

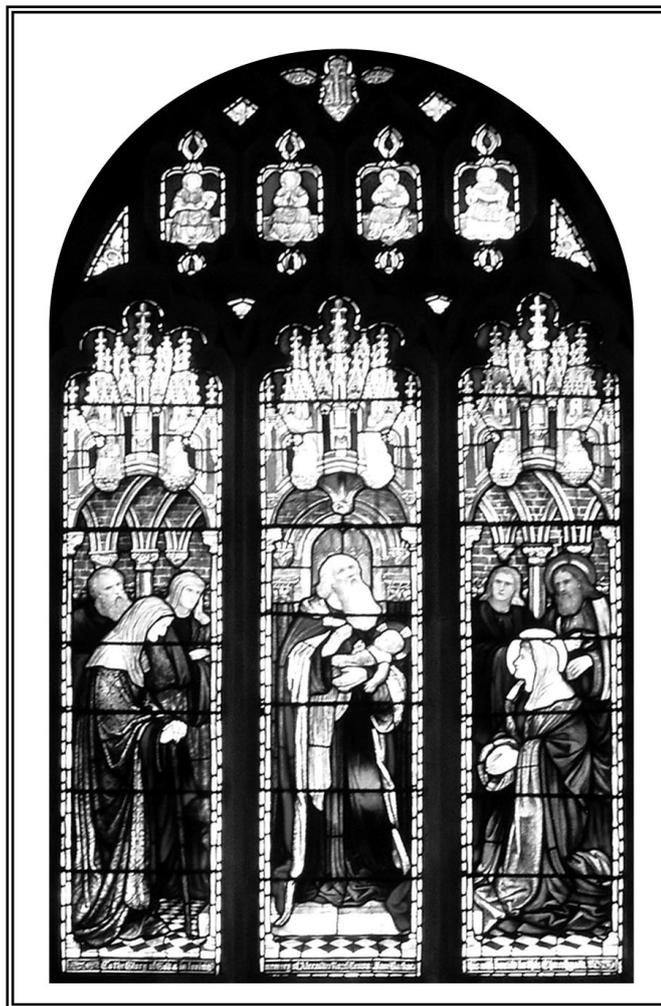
The window is dedicated:

*“To the glory of God in memory // of Gerald Syndercombe Bower  
and John Syndercombe Bower. // AD 1888.”*

Although not signed, the window design was originally thought to be by *Charles Eamer Kempe*. However, in June 2004, John W. Simson, of Culmstock in Devon, kindly advised that this is, in fact, the work of his great grandfather, *Wyndham Hope Hughes*. The attribution to Kempe arising, possibly, from the fact that for many years Hughes worked for Kempe before setting up his own business in the late 1860’s. Hughes’ diary entry for Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 1891 concludes “*Heard from Rev’nd W Penell about window for Childe Okeford church – the sketch for which I did last March. Two days later (Friday 16<sup>th</sup>) “Received the order for the Childe Okeford window. Very pleased”.*



8. The **West Window** of the South Aisle is sometimes called the **Candlemas Window**. It illustrates the Song of Simeon - the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:22-38), "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ...".



There are 3 lights:

Left: the prophetess Anna with by-standers.

Centre: Simeon, holding the baby Jesus (the Christchild).

Right: Mary and Joseph, with a by-stander.

Above are six seated figures (reading, writing?).

In the inner small lights are angels sitting: the outer two have instruments - strings and pipe (Psalm 150: 4); the outer two have scrolls - Nunc Dimittis (Song of Simeon) and Alleluia.

In the top light is the sacred monogram  $\text{IHS}$  (See also window 1.)

This is the third "Mary window". It is a memorial:

*"To the glory of God and in Loving memory of Alexander Rozel Brown & Jane Barbara his wife, buried in this churchyard."*

(He was buried 2nd.May, 1885 and his wife was buried 2nd.May 1889).

## The Tower

9. The **West Window** in the Tower is a “Christian Soldiers” window which depicts Archangels and Christian soldiers. (See “Church Music” and “Sir Arthur Sullivan” in Visitors’ Guide.)

There are four lights; the larger (upper) figures are “mighty beings”:

Two Archangels: St Michael, left-centre, with dragon (Revelation 12:7);  
Archangel Gabriel, right-centre, with scroll “God is my Strength”  
(which is a translation of the name Gabriel).

The other two are: St Oswald, King-Martyr (outside left) and  
St Edmund, King-Martyr (outside right).

Beneath these are smaller figures with illustrations of knightly virtues:

Duty (Pietas), Obedience (Obientia), Magnanimity (Magnanimitas) and Love (Caritas).

- **Duty** or Piety: “Ye knight watcheth his armour” shows a knight keeping a vigil before the statue of Mary and the Christchild at Salisbury Cathedral. (see\*\* below),
- **Obedience**: “Ye knight is armed to defend Ye right”
- **Magnanimity**: “He defendeth the oppressed”
- **Love** or Charity: “He doth afford succour to the wounded”; a clear reference to the dedication.

Below again are three shields or bearings (specially relevant to the family - the inner right is that of the South Staffordshire Regiment) and the outer right is the memorial dedication:

*"To the Glory of God in memory of  
Henry Raymond Syndercombe Bower  
Lieut. 1st. Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment  
beloved eldest son of Henry and Charlotte Bower.  
Who was killed in France whilst rescuing  
a wounded soldier. December 19 1914 Aged 20."*

Above the main figures are 6 small lights, in 2 layers, four below and two at top:

- Outer left is the arms of Salisbury (see \*\* above)
- Outer right, the emblems of St Nicholas - Bishop’s Crook and three bags of gold

In other lights are four further Virtues with their appropriate emblems:

- inner left - Fides (faith) - Shield with Cross (Ephesians 6:16)
- inner right - Spes (Hope) - Anchor (Hebrews 6:19)
- top left - Fortitudo (Courage) - Sword
- top right - Puritas (Purity) - Lily/Fleur de Lys

NB These “Virtues” include the three theological “supernatural” virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity (1 Corinthians 13:13); the others have some affinity with the natural or “cardinal” virtues: Justice, Fortitude, Prudence and Temperance.

The West Window was dedicated on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1919 by the Bishop of Salisbury, following his dedication of the Village Cross War Memorial.

## The North Aisle

10. **North Window**; a second window of Christian soldiers showing St George (with Dragon), King David and St Maurice.

- Centre light: King David (Old Testament precursor of Christ; “born of David’s line”, with symbols of sword and harp, standing for military prowess (saviour of his people in a sense) and his musical and poetical skills. The Psalms are mostly attributed to the Hebrew David; see the Psalms of David; 1 Samuel 16: 23 and 1 Samuel 17: 48-50.
- Left and Right lights: two Christian martyrs, St George with dragon, and St Maurice.

Above are two angels bearing crowns, with scrolls for appropriate Virtues:

- Left, a golden crown for Valour.
- Right, a Crown of Thorns for Faith or Faithfulness

The window is a memorial :

*"To the glory of God and in loving memory of Maurice Syndercombe Bower,  
Lieutenant RASC who died on active service at Sofia (Bulgaria); January 13th.  
1919"*

(ie he died after the signing of the Armistice which marked the official end of the first World War). British troops were doing relief work in Bulgaria.

The window is signed by its designer, *H T Bosdet*, of Chiswick, London, and dated 1920.

The window was reinstalled in August 2006 by Salisbury Cathedral Glass Workshop after restoration work by Henry Haig, ARCA, stained glass artist, and John Shepherd, stonemason.

**Acknowledgements:**

This booklet started as part of the updating a simple guide, which I wrote over a decade ago. Some Australian visitors, whose forebears had come from Child Okeford and Hammoon, wanted something to take home. We had nothing available. The outcome is a series of booklets, of which this is No 4.

I started with the booklet produced by Rev R F York in 1973. In that volume he gives credit to:  
 Taylor, Rev, R. 1969. *Child Okeford. A Parish Panorama.* (Hand published pamphlet).  
 Hutchins, J. 1870. *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset.* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Vol. IV.  
 London, John Bowyer Nichols and Son.  
 Diocesan Records Office, Salisbury  
 Dorset County Archivist  
 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments  
 Notes left by Canon C H S Bower

Among additional sources to which I have referred are:

The Domesday Book.  
 Fraser, A. (ed). 1975. *The Lives of the Kings and Queens of England.* London, Book Club Associates.  
 Giles, M. C. 1996. *Between Down and vale. A Social Archaeology of the Parish of Child Okeford, North Dorset.* Unpublished M.A. research, Sheffield University.  
 Hutchins, J. 1870. *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset.* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Vol. IV.  
 London, John Bowyer Nichols and Son.  
 Lawrence, A. 1899. *Sir Arthur Sullivan; Life Story Letters and Reminiscences.* London, James Bowden.  
 Marshall, M. D. 1959. *Church Bells in England.* Unpublished thesis.

Wiltshire County Records Office, Trowbridge, who allowed key records to be photographed.  
 Dorset County Records Office, Dorchester.  
 Materials in the care of St Nicholas Church. Graveyard maps made about 1986.

The windows and memorials within St Nicholas Church, with interpretative assistance from Rev D Box, AKC , Rev R M Giles BA(Econ). John W. Simson kindly identified window #5 (*please see Page 5*). Surviving notes refer to Fontmell Parva (home of the Henry Syndercombe Bower, Churchwarden who re-built St Nicholas' Church in 1878/9), 1888 as the date, and the subject matter. Henry Hughes (1822-83) was chief designer and a partner in the firm Ward & Hughes from c.1850. From the mid-1860s Hughes produced windows under his name as well as for the partnership.

Many individuals who live in the Parish and beyond, whose local knowledge is a vital resource, have been kind enough to allow access to Deeds of local properties. I am sure more amendments will be made as this resource is further explored.

***C G Giles***

This series of books was the inspiration of Chris Giles who devoted an enormous amount of time and effort to research, write and produce the first editions. In memory of a dear friend, I am proud to continue his work and, with the considerable help of the churchwardens and the support of the PCC, the books have been reviewed, updated and now reprinted.

***David Pope***



