

ART. IX.—*17th-century painted glass in Witherslack Church*, By J. T. BRIGHTON, M.A.

Read at Keswick, April 3rd, 1971.

THE year 1971 marks the tercentenary of the consecration of Witherslack Chapel, now its parish church. An account of the present building and its foundation has been given by Mr Bruce L. Thompson in his paper, *Dean Barwick and his Will*, in CW2 lxxv 240-283. A detailed description of the 17th-century painted glass, now set in the upper lights of the windows on the north and south sides of the chancel, now seems appropriate, for it is intended to return the glass to its original position in the east window to celebrate the tercentenary.

In the top central light on the north side is a single cherub's head, affronté and with half-spread wings. On its right is the armorial achievement of the 8th Earl of Derby and on its left that of John Barwick, Dean of St Paul's. In the topmost central light on the south side is IHS with a cross and three nails in yellow on blue, set within a circle of yellow and orange Rays of Glory. Beneath it are yellow scrolls bearing the inscriptions "This is my body. Matthew XXVI. 26." and "This is my blood. Matthew XXVI. 28." In the top of the lights on either side are two pairs of winged cherubims' heads, looking in on the central motif.

Apart from the indifferent repair of cracks in Lord Derby's achievement, the glass is, in 1970, in good condition. The colours have endured well considering there is no pot-metal glass in any of the motifs, all of which are executed in yellow stain and coloured enamels. Enamelled glass of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries usually suffers from shelling off of the colours,

but at Witherslack, apart from this happening in the blues and a little fading in the reds, the colours are still very fresh. They do not appear to have been touched up or restored.

The glass described above is not in its original position. The six motifs were first grouped in the east window of the new chapel and were removed in 1856 when a new east window was inserted and perhaps placed in their present position in 1892, as suggested by a glazier's inscription on some coloured builders' glass at the base of the south chancel window. The original arrangement is ascertained from the illustrated notes of Thomas Machell who visited the Chapel in 1692.¹ He described the east window as "very ornamental, having five double lights, in the top of the uppermost is the figure of a cherubim with human face & yellow wings, which is all in that upper row".² In the five lower lights Machell described the Sacred Name, set in Rays of Glory, in the centre, with pairs of the heads of cherubim on either side of it. Lord Derby's achievement was in the left outermost light, with the Dean's on the extreme right. All six panels still exist exactly as Machell noted, and it is possible that the whole of the 17th-century painted glass from the east window is still here, apart from parings lost in removal and resiting.

Machell blazoned the arms but did not name all the coats. He obviously did not know the names of their bearers and, as a result, made an error in attributing the Derby achievement to William George Richard Stanley, who died as Earl of Derby in 1702, instead of to Charles, 8th Earl, who died in 1672. On the dexter side of the shield are eight quarterings:

1. Argent on a bend azure 3 stags' heads cabossed or. (Stanley.)

¹ Jane M. Ewbank, *Antiquary on Horseback* (1963, Kendal), 76.

² Machell MSS II, 275 (Dean and Chapter Library, Carlisle).

2. Gules 3 legs cojoined in fess point in armour proper, garnished and spurred or. (Lordship of the Isle of Man.)
3. Gules 4 bars argent and a chief or; overall a lion rampant or Crowned gules. (Brandon.)³
4. Quarterly gules and argent, in the first quarter a mullet of the second. (De Vere.)⁴
5. Or a chevron gules between 3 eagles displayed azure. (de la Trémouille.)⁵
6. Azure 3 fleurs de lis or. (France.)
7. Azure 3 fleurs de lis or charged with a baton alezé in bend gules. (Bourbon-Condé.)⁶
8. Or a serpent audroyant in pale azure ducally crowned of the first and vorant a child gules. (Duchy of Milan.)

The impaled coat is azure an eagle displayed in pale or. (de Rupa.)⁷

It is this coat which proves Machell's error, for it shows the marriage in 1650 of Charles, 8th Lord Derby, to Dorothea Helen, daughter of John Kirkhoven, Baron de Rupa in Holland.

Machell did not sketch the Earl's supporters and he described them wrongly. The dexter supporter is: "A griffin with wings elevated or gutté de sable ducally collared with the line reflexed over the back azure"; and the sinister: "A stag argent attired and ducally collared with the line reflexed over the back or."

At the base of the shield is the motto "Sans

³ Henry, 4th Earl of Derby, married a Brandon heiress in 1555.

⁴ These arms are more usually tinctured — "Quarterly gules and or in the first quarter a mullet argent."

⁵ Charlotte, daughter of Claude de la Trémouille (Duc de Thouars, Prince de Talmont et de Tarente, Duc et Pair de France, etc.) married James, 7th Earl of Derby, in 1626. The next three quarterings in the Witherslack escutcheon are some of those which the de la Trémouille family bore. See Woodward and Burnett, *A Treatise on Heraldry, British and Foreign* (1892, republished David & Charles 1969), 504.

⁶ This indicates a second line of descent of the de la Trémouilles from the Royal House of France.

⁷ *L'Amorial Générale*, ed. J. B. Riestap (Paris, 1903).

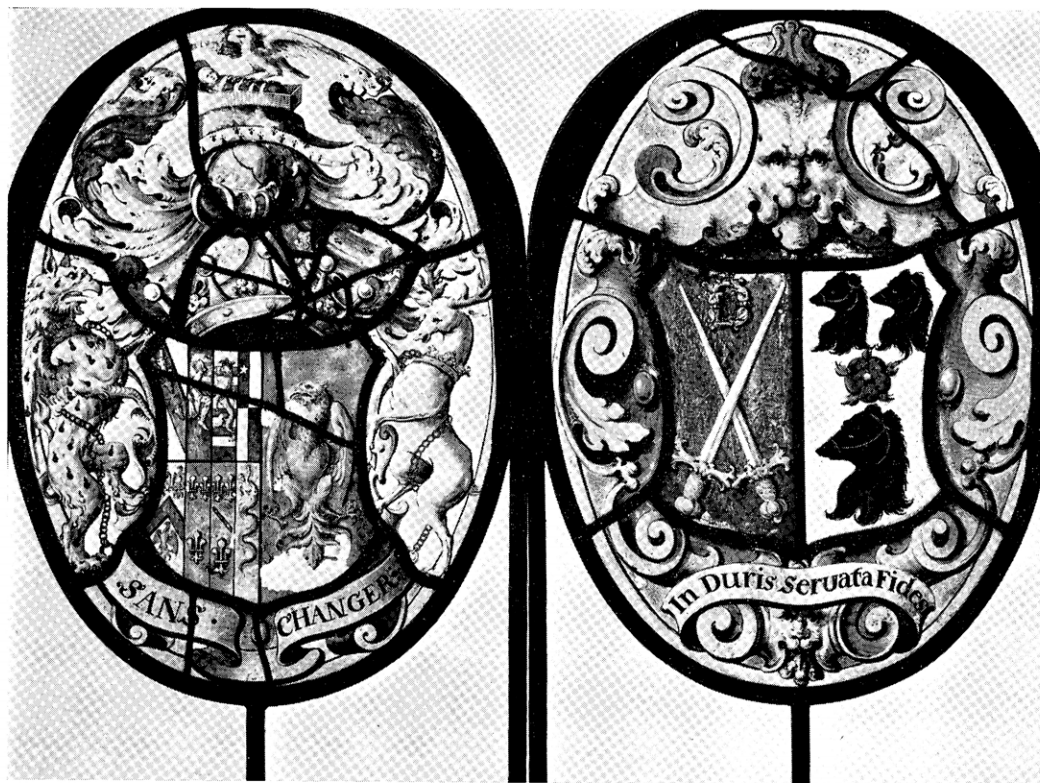


Photo: G. King & Son, Norwich.

The arms of Charles 8th Earl of Derby and John Barwick D.D.

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Changer'', while the whole is displayed beneath an earl's coronet. Above this is a peer's helm bearing the crest: "On a chapeau gules upturned ermine an eagle wings extended or, preying on an infant in its cradle proper swaddled gules the cradle."

Machell had less difficulty with the simple impaled shield of Dean Barwick. This may be blazoned as: "Gules two swords argent in saltire, points in chief, hilted and pommelled or, having a letter D of the third between the blades for difference (Deanery of St Paul's), impaling argent a rose gules between 3 bears' heads erased proper muzzled and bridled of the second. (Barwick.)''⁸

There is neither a date nor an artist's signature in either of the two windows which at present contain the glass, and Machell mentioned none. The glass is obviously not later than 1692 when he described it, and is not earlier than 1668/69 when the new building began.⁹ The death of Charles, 8th Earl of Derby, in December 1672 seems a better terminal date, though the glass could have been inserted after his death. It is reasonable to assume that it was *in situ* at the time of the consecration on 22 June 1671.

The name of the artist can be almost as certainly deduced as the date of execution and was identified a few years ago by Mr Dennis King, F.S.A.¹⁰ In the North of England at this period there were only two known glass-painters, both of whom worked in enamels. They were Edmund Gyles (1611-1676) and his son Henry (1645-1709), whose workshop was in Micklegate, York. The former can be discounted, since no work signed by him in the glass has been found and the few armorial pieces which can be attributed to him are crude in comparison with those at Wither-

⁸ The rose was a royal augmentation granted in 1661.

⁹ CW2 lxv 253.

¹⁰ CW2 lxv 254, n. 19, where the credit for the identification is given to Professor K. P. Harrison, F.S.A.

slack. They also display stylistic conservatism in the Tudor and Jacobean manner. The Witherslack glass, on the contrary, is a fine example of baroque taste, in which style Henry Gyles made his name according to his friend, Ralph Thoresby, as "the famousest painter of glass perhaps in the world".¹¹

The armorials display a neatness of execution not always evident in Henry Gyles' heraldic work. The complicated achievement of Lord Derby obviously presented problems, for it is painted within an oval only 21 inches high. It is perhaps surprising that some of the other important coats which the Earl might have quartered — Lathom, or Strange for example — are omitted, but space would not have allowed their inclusion. The quarterings commemorate only the three generations before the 8th Earl. Any shortcomings in the execution of the shield are, however, overcome by the fine treatment of the mantling and the spirited rendering of crest and supporters.

By comparison with the signed works of Henry Gyles which have survived, it is possible to strengthen the attribution of the Witherslack glass. Gyles was fond of executing armorials in ovals, and examples of this style can be found in his work at Staveley Church, Derbyshire, Nun Appleton Hall, near York, and Farnley Church in the West Riding. The similarity of his great armorial window to John, Lord Frecheville, at Staveley,¹² executed some five years after the Witherslack window, may further be seen in the treatment of the baroque cartouches surrounding the arms. The comparison can be continued by considering the cherubs in these two windows. The full-faced cherub head with outspread wings in the base of the Staveley window was virtually a Gyles signature. It appears in the bases of his window at Adel Church, near Leeds,

¹¹ *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby*, ed. Rev. J. Hunter (1830), 61-62.

¹² J. T. Brighton, "The Heraldic window in the Frecheville Chapel, Staveley Church", in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, lxxx (1960) 98-104.

and in the windows he executed in the Merchant Taylors' Hall and the Guildhall in York.¹³ In these examples the cherubs' wings are fully extended whilst those of the central cherub at Witherslack are inverted or half-closed. Almost exact parallels with this may be seen in the armorial window to Archbishop Lamplugh in York Minster and in two panels of signed glass in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The pairs of winged cherubs' heads at Witherslack have only one parallel. This is to be found in the tracery of the east window, which Henry Gyles painted for University College Chapel, Oxford. The actual window was removed in the last century, but the cartoons upon which it was based, perhaps the earliest to survive in English glass-painting, may still be seen in York City Art Gallery.¹⁴

Gyles, of course, painted full-bodied cherubs in many of his windows, the most notable example being the east window in Denton Chapel in Wharfedale, dated 1702.¹⁵ His cherubs were usually copied from prints secured for him by his friends both in London and on the Continent.¹⁶ Those at Witherslack are finely executed and their faces the most beautiful of any that Henry Gyles painted, and the delicate blush in their cheeks is unique in his known cherub studies.

The Rays of Glory surrounding the Sacred Name, alternately straight and wavy, are almost identical in size and appearance with those surrounding the face of the sun in the sundial window by Gyles at Tong Hall, Bradford. He used the same pattern for the sunburst

¹³ The Guildhall window was removed in 1866. For an illustration see *Essays in the York School of Glass Painting* by J. A. Knowles (1936, SPCK).

¹⁴ J. T. Brighton, "Cartoons for York Glass — Henry Gyles", in *Preview* 8 (The Quarterly Review of York City Art Gallery), October 1968, 773-775.

¹⁵ This window has just been restored by the York Glaziers' Trust. See J. A. Knowles, "Henry Gyles, glass painter of York", in *Walpole Society* xi, pl. xxviii b.

¹⁶ The central cherub in the Nun Appleton window is said to be after Titian. *Ibid.*, pl. xxv, 54, n. 3.

behind the crest of the Merchant Taylors' achievement in their Hall in York.¹⁷ The Tong Hall sundial is unsigned and undated in the glass, but when it was restored it was proved to be by Henry Gyles since signed leads from his father's lead-vice were taken out.¹⁸ It is just possible that similar evidence may be found when the Witherslack glass is returned to its original position.¹⁹

The present leading on the cherub subjects is not typical of Henry Gyles. It is probable that it was necessary to cut and re-lead some of the motifs in order to fit them comfortably into the topmost lights of the chancel, when the glass was moved there.

Finally, one may ask how glass by Henry Gyles of York came to such a small and remote place as Witherslack. With the exception of Oxford and Cambridge Universities and Staveley Church in Derbyshire, almost all his known work was executed for patrons within Yorkshire. Possibly the work of Gyles came to the attention of the Barwicks through satisfied patrons within the Church, or to them and Lord Derby through fellow Royalists, such as Lord Frecheville, or through the Fairfaxes, who commissioned a number of works from Gyles. Whatever the connection may have been, it is interesting to note that the Witherslack glass, though small in amount, is amongst the earliest and best work ascribed to Henry Gyles.²⁰

¹⁷ Bernard Johnson, *The Merchant Taylors of York*, for illustrations.

¹⁸ *Walpole Society*, xi 60, illustrates one of these leads from Nun Appleton.

¹⁹ No Gyles lead was found May 1971, when the glass was restored, the panes having been earlier entirely re-leaded.

²⁰ He is known to have executed work for Ripon Minster and a small window for the Merchant Taylors' Hall, York. His earliest signed and dated work is at Farnley Church in the West Riding, 1666, followed by his sundial window, 1670, at Nun Appleton.