

# Icon Stained Glass Group AGM & Conference 2015: Review

Conference review by Zoe Harrigan

**The Stained Glass Group held its 2015 conference and AGM 17-18 September 2015 at the prestigious Burrell Collection**

Titled 'Working with the Evidence: Researching, Recording, Retaining, Removing Evidence of Earlier Intervention', the conference explored issues concerning historic interventions and their implications for current treatment and future conservation. The conference combined talks by conservators and students and opportunities to view notable glass in the Glasgow area and in the Collection itself.

Bursaries kindly provided by Icon allowed for five student members to attend the conference for free: two of these students gave talks.

## Day One

The first day began with tours of the Burrell Collection's conservation studio, the stores and a chance to view the Collection's galleries before it closes for a four-year renovation from 2016. Following the Group's AGM, the afternoon's talks were kicked off by University of York PhD student Oliver Fearon, whose research focuses on heraldic glass kept at the Burrell.

Oliver's talk centred on heraldic glass as an assertion of status and the ways in which the language of heraldry encouraged new technological developments, notably in the insertion of 'jewels' in glass. This was to be a recurring theme of the conference, and many of the talks observed the technical skills of the medieval stained glass makers and glaziers.

Leonie Seliger ACR (Director of Stained Glass Conservation at Canterbury Cathedral) revisited a talk given with Virginia Raguin at International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) 9th Forum for the Conservation and Technology of Historic Stained Glass in Paris in July 2015. Discussing the potential of computer programs such as Photoshop to provide a level of restoration not possible by other means, we were shown the effective results of recreating faded and 'lost' paintwork through digital manipulation.

Marie Stumpff ACR (Senior Conservator at the Burrell Collection) delivered the keynote lecture on the Boppard panels in the Collection. The panels looked at in the lecture are part of a larger collection of 34 panels from three windows originating from the Carmelite church in Boppard-on-Rhine and acquired by William Burrell in 1938/39. Marie discussed the two-year project, funded by the Clothworkers' Foundation and undertaken with Megan Stacey as Assistant Conservator, of documenting, assessing condition and developing the conservation concept for the panels.

Marie discussed her visits to museums and historic buildings in Germany and the US which held the other Boppard panels, and how she used the physical evidence to identify interventions and restoration history.

## Day Two

The second day was divided into two parts, with further talks in the morning and visits in the afternoon.

Linda Cannon ACR (Cannon MacInnes Stained Glass) gave us an insight into the methods she and Rab

MacInnes used to recreate the glazing scheme in Stirling Castle's Royal Apartments, consisting of 52 medallions and 154 quarry panels. The specification for the 2011 project was that the Apartments be made to look as they might have in 1543, the date of James V of Scotland's wedding to Mary of Guise.

Linda detailed the research undertaken, which involved not only looking for contemporary examples of plain and quarry glazing across Scotland and England, but also in the Lorraine region of France, where Mary of Guise had lived prior to her marriage to James V.

The following talk, given by Alison Gilchrist ACR (Barley Studio), continued the recurring themes of heraldry, identity and status, as well as the ways in which historic interventions are identified and the questions surrounding their retention or removal. The window from St. Mary the Virgin Church at Stopham portrays several generations of the Stopham family and their heraldry and was in need of conservation, having suffered damage and attack of microbial growth. The window, a composite of panels from a number of windows, had been subject to restorations and additions in the 19th century.

Alison discussed the way in which the team used established guidelines such as those provided by the CVMA and English Heritage to make considered decisions on how to proceed with the window's conservation, retaining the majority of 19-century infills as evidence of the window's history.

The penultimate talk was given by Megan Stacey, who has just completed the MA Stained Glass Conservation at York, having taken two years out to work as Assistant Conservator to Marie Stumpff at the Burrell.

Her talk went into further detail on the conservation of the Boppard panels, in particular the techniques developed in fabric repair. Megan discussed the way the technique had developed from the use of Japanese tissue paper in paper conservation, applied with wheat starch, and the many experiments undertaken to apply this principle to stained glass. This process, which then moved onto lightweight synthetic fabric instead of tissue paper, was praised for its transparency under transmitted light and stability when kept in museum conditions.

Rachel Thomas ACR of York Glaziers Trust gave the final talk, detailing the process of using dichloromethane (DCM) vapour to remove well-adhered glazing cement from the glass of York Minster's Great East Window. Rachel detailed the testing process and how health and safety implications were paramount in the use of this solvent: this is also the subject of her article in [Issue 59 of Icon News](#). This was followed with a discussion between delegates of other ways DCM could be used in stained glass conservation.

After the Conference

The delegates then descended on Glasgow to view some of its stained glass, our first visit being to two neighbouring churches in Hyndland. Hyndland Parish Church is home to a range of 20th-century stained glass by notable Scottish designers and artists including William Wilson, Gordon Webster, Douglas Strachan and more recently Rab MacInnes, as well as a few late 19th-century windows. St. Bride's Episcopal Church, a few doors down, contains 20th-century windows by Edward Woore, Herbert Hendrie and Karl Parsons, all former students of Christopher Whall.

St. Paul's Whiteinch Church, built 1957-60 and glazed throughout with dalle de verre windows by Gabriel Loire, was our next stop. The east window, depicting the life of St. Paul, is a dazzling array of colours and an excellent example of dalle de verre work. Before departing there was a chance to visit Kelvingrove Museum and the 1923 Coronation of the Virgin window by Harry Clarke, installed in August of this year after conservation led by Marie Stumpff.

Overall the conference was a lively and interesting mix of talks, many of which were strongly related in their themes and content, and visits to view Glasgow's stained glass and of course the vast and varied stained glass collection at the Burrell itself.

The theme of 'early intervention' was well-examined, the results of which was a interesting look into individual studio approaches and current academic research.