

Strange Bed-fellows: A Bishop's Crozier and a Stained Glass Window

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Abstract: The crozier of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, provides a fine example of the Gothic art and craft of the fourteenth century displaying images of musician angels. The same typographical theme is to be found in a stained glass window installed in St. Margaret's Church at Lewknor in Oxfordshire, designed by William Morris in the nineteenth century. This essay examines the crozier and window images in detail and discusses the sources which may have inspired the goldsmith and the skills he needed for their creation; it explores the influences which may have guided Morris in the recreation of similar images but in a different medium.

The fourteenth-century crozier of William of Wykeham (1320-1404) was presented to him at his consecration as Bishop of Winchester in 1367, and it was subsequently bequeathed by him to New College (originally The College of St Mary of Winchester in Oxford), which was the college he founded in Oxford in 1379.¹ It is now enclosed in a glass case in the college Chapel but was described in detail in 1906 on behalf of the Oxford Historical Society.² Made of silver gilt, its overall length is 6ft 9in. (205.74cm) and consists of two parts, the shaft and the crook. The shaft is cylindrical, 1³/₈ in. (3.5cm) in diameter and expands to end in the octagonal knop (capital) 11in. high (27.94cm).³ It is covered in panels, each with five silver lilies in low relief on a background enamelled alternately blue and green with gilt beaded mouldings between each panel.

Figure 1 (<http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/215342/>) is a portrait of Wykeham in his episcopal robes with a full-length crozier (not the one in question) whilst Figure 2 (<http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/205101/>) shows the details of the knop, part of the shaft and the crook of the actual crozier. The architectural detail of the knop includes statuettes of Christ and the accompanying saints of St Peter and St Paul, placed in full relief in elaborate sculptured niches on each side. There are also two images of the Virgin Mary in these niches which, together with the lilies in the panels on the shaft, may have been included because the Virgin was Wykeham's particular patroness.⁴

The crook proper ascends to a height of about 11ins (27.94cm) above the knop and is hexagonal in shape and enamelled with broad flat sides with ridged edges, 1⁵/₈ in (3.7cm) broad and ⁷/₈ in. (2.2cm) thick. It is sparsely crocketed and ornamented by ten panels on either side, height 1¹/₂ in. (3.8cm) and width ⁵/₈ in. (1.6cm). These panels are filled with translucent, champlevé enamels of various colours portraying angels playing musical instruments.⁵ They can be identified as being either on the 'Peter' side or the 'Paul' side depending on which saint is in a niche of the knop directly below.

¹ Sir William Hayter, *William of Wykeham. Patron of the Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 102

² H.C. Moffat, *Old Oxford Plate* (London: Archibald Constable, 1906). p. 61. C.J. Jackson, *An Illustrated history of English Plate, ecclesiastical and secular* (London, 1911), pp.114-118

³ 'Three Fourteenth-Century Patrons' in J. Alexander & P. Binski (eds) *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200 - 1400: Catalogue XV* (Royal Academy of Arts: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1987) p. 472. Note: This text refers to the 'capital' as described in Moffat as the 'knop'.

⁴ R. Loath, *The Life of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester* (London, 1759) pp.29-37, quoted in J. Montagu, 'Images and Instruments: the Crozier of William of Wykeham', *Early Music, Galpin Society*, no. 55 (Nov. 2002) p.541

⁵ In champlevé enamelling, the design was 'gouged out of the surface of the metal to be treated, leaving thin ridges of metal standing above the resulting troughs and channels'. In the latter, more than one colour was applied as powder in a single compartment before firing to fix the colours. Glossary in *Age of Chivalry*, p. 541.

⁵ Montagu, p. 548.

Figure 4 (<http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/205111>), shows an angel, in a loose brown robe with turquoise wings and a halo, seated on clouds against a blue background and playing a woodwind instrument identifiable by its straight cylindrical body. Although the image is small and not very distinct, it has been suggested this may be the first known representation of a recorder.⁶ In Figure 5 (<http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/205110>), a haloed angel is playing a portative organ and wearing a brown and yellow robe over a pink undergarment; its wings are pink and green, and it is seated on clouds again with a bluish background. The row of five pipes of the portative organ can just be made out but no keyboard or bellows are visible.⁷ The third angel's image, Figure 6 (<http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/205107>), is partially obscured but its robes and wings are clearly outlined and even the expression on its face is visible. It holds horizontally a pair of cymbals which have high conical domes.⁸

These three musician angels have been selected for detailed description because they 'play' similar instruments to those held by the angels in the stained-glass window designed by William Morris (1834-96) and installed in 1876 at St. Margaret's Church, Lewknor, situated in South East Oxfordshire. The information on the memorial tablet beneath it suggests it was commissioned by the Reverend Slade, who was vicar at the time, in memory of his dead child.⁹ The church was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary but the adoption of St. Margaret as a patronal saint probably derives from the holding of the village wake upon St. Margaret's day.¹⁰ The chancel rebuilt in the fourteenth century is an example of Gothic architecture, with a five-light east window and three-light windows on either side. A few fragments of medieval stained glass have been worked into the tops of the chancel windows.¹¹ Figure 6 illustrates the window to be examined: it is 170 cm wide and approximately 396 cm high, displaying three winged angels who are barefooted, without halos but wearing gold-coloured circlets in their hair. The figures are set against a background of clear quarry tiles, patterned with daisies and tulips in silver-stain, and the angels' feet tread on flowered grass.

⁶ Montagu, p. 548.

⁷ Montagu, p. 545.

⁸ Montagu, p. 545.

⁹ A. C Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris & His Circle: A Catalogue* 2 vols (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974). ii p.9. 'The brass plate reads 'In memory of Mabel Caroline daughter of the Rev. George Fitzclarence Slade who died November 3rd, 1863, aged 16 months'.⁹

¹⁰ Noted by Rawlinson, 1718, Par. Coll. ii.199. From: 'Parishes: Lewknor', *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 8: Lewknor and Pyrton hundreds* (1964), pp. 98-115. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=63819> Date accessed: 12 January 2013.

¹¹ R. Sherwood, & N. Pevsner, *Oxfordshire* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974) p.683



Figure 6: The North Window in the chancel, St. Margaret's Church, Lewknor.¹²

The left angel wears a simple, girdled, long-sleeved robe in blue with gold wings; she plays a wind instrument which may be a recorder. The dark-haired angel in the centre is playing a portative organ (no bellows is shown); she wears a blue girdled, long-sleeved robe and a loose shoulder-cape, with turquoise and blue wings. The remaining angel, with the vertically-held cymbals, has golden hair, a blue robe and gold wings.

So why were minstrel angels depicted in both crozier and window? In the fourteenth century the origin of angels could be traced back to early Christian art where they appeared as wingless men. They had originated from images of the Graeco-Roman goddess of Victory, who 'carried away the illustrious dead on tireless wings'.¹³ They subsequently became associated either as messengers or as God's servants singing praises to Him.¹⁴ They are represented in medieval paintings as idealised young men dressed in the artists' interpretation of liturgical dress, with haloes and wings (but sometimes without either) to indicate their divine status.¹⁵

The one reference to a choir of angels 'singing', in the Bible in the New Testament is related to the annunciation to the shepherds of the birth of Christ.¹⁶ The addition of a musical instrument to an angel in a painting or to a statue, therefore, was intended to depict the 'music' of this heavenly choir. Such images were included in paintings particularly of the Nativity and in other scenes representing the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin Mary where they play a peripheral rather than a central role in these paintings. Musical instruments would also be included when depicting saints as their accompanying attributes so people were able to quickly identify saints in statuary and stained glass, for example, the portative organ

¹² Photograph, 30 January, 2013, by Peter MacKinnon, Lewknor. Permission has been given for reproduction.

¹³ E. Langmuir, *A Closer Look at Angels* (London: National Gallery, 2010) p. 29.

¹⁴ G.E. Marindin, *A Smaller Classical Dictionary of Biography, Mythology, and Geography* (London: John Murray, 1898) p.383.

¹⁵ Langmuir, p 29

¹⁶ St.Luke.ii.13-4.

was traditionally associated with St. Cecilia who was associated with music and song.¹⁷ Stringed instruments, such as the cittern, were deemed particularly appropriate for heavenly music.¹⁸

The provenance of the crozier is not known, but it could be of French (Paris), Italian or possibly English origin; in 1317, Edward II gave the Pope a gold- enamelled ewer bought from a London goldsmith. Roger Frowyck.¹⁹ However, if the goldsmith was based in England, he could have found the angel images he needed for his heavenly orchestra from a variety of sources, such as illuminated manuscripts or *Books of Hours*. The stained glass of the period often portrayed saintly women in the ‘full-length S-swayed posture’ with loosely-draped robes, detailed facial features and wavy hair.²⁰ The crozier images however, are tiny and their fine detail is not easily made out. The exception is the angel with the cymbals where every detail of its face and hair has been carefully delineated. Their appearance is not gendered and their robes are a delicate mix of browns, pinks and yellows as they sit on clouds in a heavenly- blue sky.

It is not known if Morris had seen the crozier whilst he was an undergraduate in Oxford but he and Edward Burne Jones had visited the cloisters at New College, which they rated with Merton College chapel as ‘their chief local shrine’.²¹ They studied the medieval glass in the Chapel at Merton, which Morris said represented for him the true period for stained glass, describing the windows installed in the late fourteenth century as ‘the highest point reached in art’.²² The Lewknor angels when compared with those of the crozier are many times their size which enables detail to be shown which is not possible with the crozier images. However, there are similarities to be noted in that their robes are loosely-draped, their hair is loose and flowing and the clear quarry-tiles allows light to travel through the glass to reveal the blue (heavenly) sky beyond. His angel faces are more recognisably female (he has used his wife, Jane, as the model for the central angel) but their dress, nevertheless, echoes the simple robes of the crozier’s angels as shown in the illustration below.



Figure 7: The angel and portative organ in the Lewknor window.²³

¹⁷ F & G. M. G. Lanzi, tr. M. J. O’Connell, *Saints and their Symbols. Recognizing Saints in Art and in Popular Image* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2003) p.78.

¹⁸ ‘An Angel with cittern’. Image 562 in *Age of Chivalry: Catalogue*, p.446

¹⁹ M. Campbell, ‘Metalwork in England c. 1200-1400’ in *Age of Chivalry*, p.164-5

²⁰ ‘The Virgin Annunciate’. Image 740 in *Age of Chivalry: Catalogue*, p.534.

²¹ F. MacCarthy, William Morris. *A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994) p.72.

²² MacCarthy, p. 177.

²³ Photograph, 30 January, 2013 by Peter MacKinnon, Lewknor. Permission has been given for reproduction.

Morris has used varying shades of blue for the angels' dress. It is interesting that none of the robes of the crozier angels are blue but this is probably because their background is blue and a contrast was therefore needed. Blue as a colour was not invariably associated with the Virgin in medieval times, for example, in *The Wilton Diptych* (c.1395 –1399) both the Virgin and angels are all portrayed in brilliant blue as they tread on a flowery ground symbolizing the gardens of Paradise as do the Lewknor angels.²⁴

What is known about the angels in the Lewknor window is that they are not unique. Morris had designed them all well before 1876 as part of a set of twelve women with musical instruments which he drew intending that, with or without their wings, they could be employed in a number of commissions in either religious or secular settings, in stained- glass, tiles or tapestries.²⁵ Figure 8 below is the design for a minstrel tile by Morris for an organ screen at Beddington, Surrey, and this is clearly the same image as the angel with the portable organ in the stained glass. The information accompanying the cartoons held in the Huntington Library, in California, confirms that the Lewknor angels were all designed for different churches when Morris was a founding partner in the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (1861-75), that is, before it became Morris and Company in 1875.²⁶



Figure 8: Design for a minstrel's tile.²⁷ Blue water-colour and pencil on paper, squared for transfer. Not dated. Source: Bryson bequest to the Ashmolean Museum. Print room, Acquisition no. 1834.96

²⁴ <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/english-or-french-the-wilton-diptych>

²⁵ I. Zaczek, *The Essential William Morris* (Bath: Dempsey Parr, 1999) p.135.

²⁶ The angel with organ was the first to be designed in 1867 for Foreneaux Pelham Church, the angel with cymbals for Llandaff Cathedral in 1869 and the minstrel angel with short pipes for Overstowey Church in 1873 Ref: Cartoons: 2000.5.1524C, 2000.5.1523C, 2000.5.1525D. *Sanford & Helen Berger collections*, Huntington Library, Location, Scott Print room

²⁷ Author's photograph taken with the curator's permission on 11 December, 2013.

On his travels abroad, Morris had seen paintings by the Flemish artist, Jan van Eyck (c.1390-1441)²⁸ who had portrayed angels playing a variety of musical instruments in *The Ghent Altarpiece* (c.1430-32).²⁹ Morris was also very strongly influenced by the paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82 and the others of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose ‘abiding concern with the past grew out of the medievalism of the Romantic movement’, which seemed to them more individualistic than the classical orientation of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.³⁰

The representation of the crozier’s musical instruments is thought to be more artistic than realistic despite the contemporary instruments being available which a goldsmith could have used as models. Morris, on the other hand, would have had to rely on illustrations of the portable organ as this had become obsolete by the sixteenth century and his cymbals are a more modern version than those of the crozier. However, both the medieval craftsman and Morris would probably have been less concerned about the realism of their portrayal than the symbolism they conveyed. For the goldsmith, the crozier embodied the sanctity of one of God’s representatives on earth, but Morris was more concerned that his windows should enhance the appearance of a church and he sincerely believed they should be in keeping with their architectural setting. Nevertheless, he was well aware that the ecclesiastical objects his firm made were a major and successful part of his commercial enterprise.³¹

The goldsmith, who created the crozier, may have been responsible for all the different elements in its construction, such as the original design, the sculpting and casting of the many figures, the soldering and the enameling, with or without the help of assistants.³² However, in Morris’s Firm, no one craftsman in the production of stained glass would be concerned with overseeing the whole process of manufacture (in its original meaning of ‘made by hand’), from design to completion of the finished article. The designer would often be Edward Burne Jones who, having handed over his design for the window would play no further part in the process. Nevertheless, Morris was meticulous in adhering to the techniques of medieval craftsmanship, using only pot-metal glass, deciding on the lead framing of the glass elements and rejecting the ‘hotly polychromic colouring of High Victorian stained glass’ by using a more muted palette.³³ He sums up the process as follows:

The only method capable of producing stained glass which shall be beautiful and interesting and which at the same time can plead for some reason for its existence, is that which has been called mosaic glass...³⁴

The Lewknor window was commissioned about the time that Morris began to have doubts about putting new windows into ancient Gothic churches and he subsequently refused to supply his windows in these circumstances, severely criticising architects who did, and in 1877 he helped to found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.³⁵

In conclusion, the crozier and tracery window are linked by the symbolism of the images they embody. The minstrel angels portrayed share a common religious heritage which stretches back to the mythology of Greco-Roman times. The crozier created at the zenith of

²⁸ MacCarthy, p. 116.

²⁹ J. Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2007) p.103.

³⁰ T. J. Barringer, *The Pre-Raphaelites: Reading the Image* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998) p.21

³¹ MacCarthy, p. 45.

³² N. Ramsey, ‘Production and Consumption. Crafts’ in R. Marks & P. Williamson (eds) *Gothic. Art for England, 1400-1547*, (London: V& A Publications, 2003) p. 88.

³³ Martin Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass* (London: Barry & Jenkins, 1980) p.58.

³⁴ W. Morris, ‘Glass, Painted or Stained’ in D. Patrick (ed) *Chambers Encyclopaedia: A Dictionary of Universal Knowledge, New Edition* (10 vols., London & Edinburgh, 1888-92) v. p.246a

³⁵ MacCarthy, p.375.

the Catholic Church in the fourteenth century as the pastoral staff of William of Wykeham signifies his symbolic role as the shepherd of his flock. It is a beautifully crafted, unique and costly object which became his personal property. William Morris's stained glass window in Lewknor's fourteenth-century chancel was part of a commercial enterprise based on the religious and secular opportunities which the Victorian era afforded. His design for the window, probably commissioned as a memorial for a dead child, is a composite of the designs for previous windows. It became the property of St. Margaret's Church and it is an example of Morris's sincere attempt to represent medieval art using similar religious images but reinterpreting their presentation by using contemporary aesthetic and artistic ideas so that they are neither simple copies nor pastiches of the past.

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