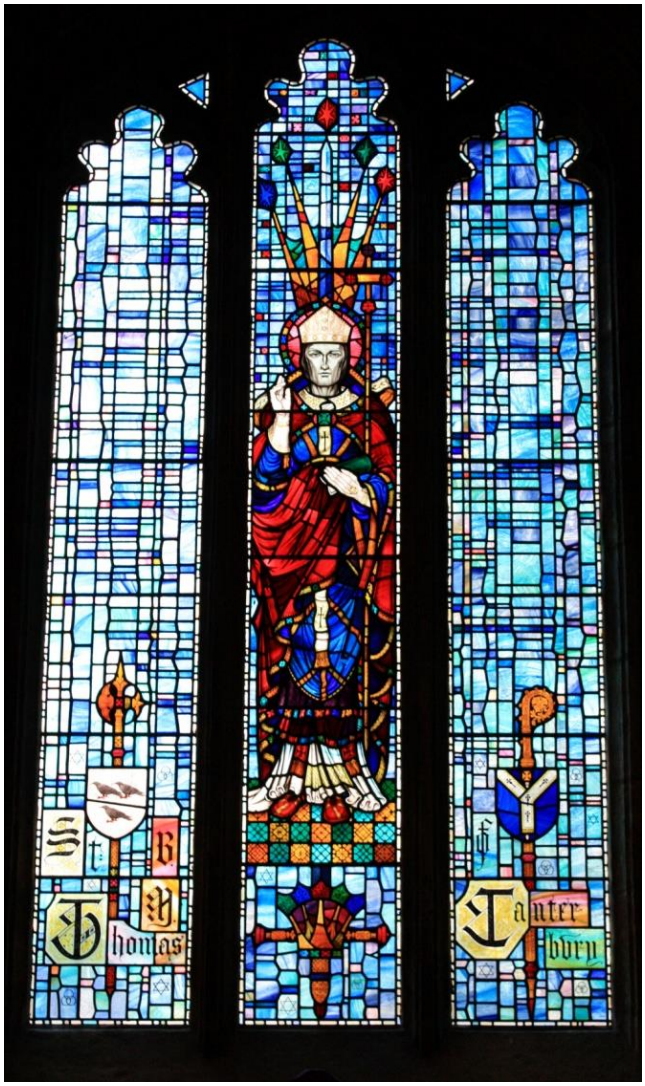
Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

STAINED GLASS IN LANCASTER

Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 6



St Thomas, in Lancaster (St Mary) Priory by R.F. Ashmead of Abbott & Co (1966}

The beauty of stained glass has been recognised since the Middle Ages and it is still popular. Lancaster had three notable stained-glass firms – Seward & Co, Shrigley & Hunt

and Abbott & Co – which produced fine work from 1825 to 1996, relying on their artists and craftsmen. There were also a few smaller-scale producers.

Their work

The later nineteenth century was a good time for stained glass – new churches, hospitals, town halls, ocean liners, pubs and country houses – the firms' work can be seen in all these.

Shrigley and Hunt initially favoured a Pre-Raphaelite style, lighter in design and colour than its predecessors, strongly decorative, detailed, with realistic scenes and faces telling clear allegories and Biblical stories. Stronger colours were used in the 1880s. Their two main artists, Edward Holme Jewitt and Carl Almquist, had different styles, so widening the firm's client base. They opened a studio in London to keep Almquist in the firm and to pick up on metropolitan shifts in taste. The firm also made decorative wall tiles.

Abbott & Co followed these Late Victorian and Edwardian trends but also developed more modernist styles for interwar houses and in the 1960s. Both firms got contracts in association with the noted Lancaster architectural practice of Paley and Austin.

Shrigley and Hunt used their London contacts to get work with Richard Norman Shaw and Alfred Waterhouse. Local magnates such as the Storeys and Williamsons of Lancaster and the brewing families of Boddington (Manchester) and Greenall (Warrington) also patronised them.

The families and firms

Seward & Co started their stained glass work in 1825 and they mostly produced windows for commercial and domestic clients. A later Seward married into the Shrigley family, and had a short partnership with James Williamson who founded the famous linoleum firm.

The Shrigleys had been Lancaster painters, gilders and decorators since 1750 but in 1873 Arthur William Hunt (who had been apprenticed to a Hertfordshire stained-glass maker) took over and turned the firm into a national stained-glass company. Their best work was done between the 1870s and 1914. Hunt died in 1917 and other managers took over, notably Joseph Fisher till his death in 1982.

Abbott & Co were plumbers who made stained glass from 1890 till they left Lancaster in 1996. Some of their best work was interwar and in the 1960s. Charles Elliot and Robert Ashmead were Abbott's best-known designers. Both firms were quite small – 15–30 staff usually. In 1930 Shrigley & Hunt employed two artists, a draughtsman, seven glass painters, two glaziers, a kiln man, a labourer and a secretary. Some of the shorter-lived local firms were offshoots from Shrigley & Hunt.



The Good Shepherd, Christ Church, Over Wyresdale by Carl Almquist of Shrigley & Hunt (1891-3)

Their sites in Lancaster

Seward & Co were mainly based in the Music Room in Sun Street and the firm ended in the 1970s. Shrigley & Hunt occupied the John O'Gaunt Gate Studio at 23 Castle Hill, Lancaster. You can still see the studio windows on the top floor. In 1959 they moved to 43 West Road. Hunt lived at Longlands, off Westbourne Road. The Abbott premises were at St John's Studio on Chapel Street till 1996.

Where to see their work

Little of Seward's work is known to have survived locally. St John Evangelist and the Town Hall in Blackpool have their windows.

The work of Shrigley & Hunt can be seen in Lancaster Town Hall, Christ Church, St John's (Lancaster), St John's (Galgate), St Peter's RC Cathedral and St Paul's (Lancaster), St George's (Preston, also murals) and Holy Trinity (South Shore, Blackpool). Village churches such as St Peter (Quernmore), St Margaret (Hornby), St Wilfrid, (Melling) and Christ Church (Over Wyresdale) also show their work. The firm also painted the reredoses in St Margaret's (Hornby) and St Paul (Caton) as the firm still carried on with its carving and decorating work. Do check these churches' opening times.

Stained glass by Abbott & Co can be seen in Fairhaven UR Church in Lytham and in that town's Spiritualist Church, St John the Divine (Sandylands, Morecambe) and Rossall School Chapel (Fleetwood).

The work of both firms can be seen in Lancaster Priory, Lancaster Baptist Church, Holy Trinity in Morecambe, St Paul (Caton) and St John (Pilling).

Lancaster City Museum (Market Square) has a major collection of designs and artefacts from these local stained-glass firms.

Of course local clients sometimes preferred the designs or prices of national firms. Examples are the work in Lancaster Priory of Newcastle-based William Wailes and in St Peter's Cathedral of Hardman of Birmingham.

Other Guides of interest include: 5 Gillow of Lancaster; and 86 J M W Turner and the Crook Of Lune.

Reference

W.Waters *Stained Glass from Shrigley & Hunt of Lancaster and London.* Lancaster: Centre for North West Regional Studies, Lancaster University, 2003.

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