

# HENRY PAYNE

## STAINED GLASS WORK AT BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL OF ART

Roy Albutt

Locally-born Henry Payne was a skilled designer and maker of stained glass windows, who joined the staff of Birmingham School of Art in 1890, where as an influential teacher he contributed significantly to the heritage of stained glassmaking in the West Midlands.

**H**enry Albert Payne (1868–1940) was born in Kings Norton, Birmingham. He was a talented artist-craftsman who produced art works in many media including paintings (in oil, watercolour and tempera), frescoes, book illustrations, designs for embroidery and mosaics.

A student at Birmingham School of Art under the influential head teacher E R Taylor, who was an advocate of the Arts and Crafts ethos, Payne was inspired by visits to the school in the 1880s of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. He began teaching art at the Central School in Margaret Street in 1890.

In 1901 Payne was sent on a three-month course in London under the celebrated Arts and Crafts stained glass practitioner and teacher Christopher Whall. On his return to Birmingham he set up a studio and began teaching stained glass work in September 1901.

### Learning by Doing

Previously only the design of stained glass windows had been part of the curriculum. Now, under Payne's tuition, in the workshop he set up at the Central School, students were able to translate their designs into stained



*Peace and Goodwill* (1922) from the now-demolished Grainger's Lane Chapel, Cradley Heath. Unveiled on Armistice Day, the four windows are now in the collections of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

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glass windows. The course proved to be successful and an external examiner commented in 1902 the 'stained glass is most excellent'.

Many prizes in annual National Competitions were awarded to students of Birmingham School of Art for their stained glass work and Payne's teacher Christopher Whall used an illustration of a window by Payne, and designs by Payne's students, in his book *Stained Glass Work* in 1905.

As well as teaching stained glass work Payne soon obtained commissions for stained glass windows which he undertook in his studio, located first in Midland Buildings, New Street and, from 1904, in Great Western Buildings, Livery Street, Birmingham.

An early local window, displaying Payne's expertise as a draughtsman and colourist and the Arts and Crafts influence of the School of Art, was the *Tè Deum* window of 1904 at St Alban and St Patrick's Church, Highgate, Birmingham. Payne also provided windows for St Egwin's Church, Norton, Evesham in 1906 and the Good Shepherd Church at Hook Common, near Upton upon Severn in 1905. The window at Hook Common is an innovative, asymmetrical design based on Psalm 104. Other early windows made between 1904 and 1907, are to be found at Scissett, Kirklees; Stokesay, Shropshire; and Tynemouth, North Tyne and Roker, Sunderland.

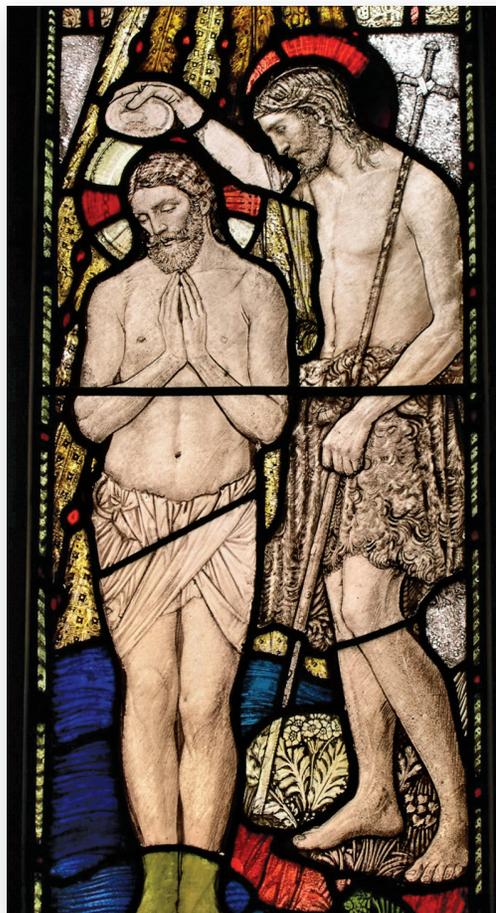
At this time Payne was associated with the Bromsgrove Guild of the Fine Arts which had been founded in 1898 by Walter Gilbert, a former student at Birmingham. Payne crafted stained glass windows for Guild commissions at private residences in Dundee (1903) and Glasgow (1905).

Payne was suspected of involving his students in his personal commissions, which caused some tension with the Management Committee at the School of Art. He felt that working on actual commissions was of greater benefit to his students than undertaking exercises in stained glass techniques.

### The Madresfield Commission

In 1902 Payne undertook the redesigning of the Chapel at Madresfield Court, Malvern, in Worcestershire. The decoration of this chapel has been called 'probably the most famous of all such Arts and Crafts schemes' and is indeed spectacular. The work was a wedding present to William, Seventh Earl Beauchamp from his bride, Lady Lettice Grosvenor, on their marriage on 27 July 1902.

Payne was responsible for the overall design and personally undertook, with student assistants, the stained glass windows and wall painting. Other art works in the chapel, including the painted reredos, altar frontal, altar cross and candlesticks, were undertaken by Payne's colleagues and friends. The students, who worked on



*St John Baptising Christ* (1902), Madresfield Court Chapel, Malvern.

Courtesy Roy Albutt

the stained glass and wall painting with Payne, were teenagers Richard Stubington, Joseph Sanders, Henry Rushbury and Bertram Lamplugh.

There are six main windows, and in addition a series of glass panels at the west end which were furnished with painted glass quarries. A window in the north wall of the chapel depicting the *Baptism of Christ* is signed with the initials HAP and dated 1902. The stained glass windows were completed early on in the project, but Payne worked on the wall painting until the 1920s, which allowed him to depict the five Beauchamp children, as well as their parents, among the angels, saints, rambler roses and a wide variety of flowers on the walls of the chapel.

### Payne's Legacies

Payne's teaching at the School of Art motivated many of his students to become stained glassmakers, and their work is to be found in numerous Midland churches. Among them were Richard Stubington, Benjamin Warren, Joseph Sanders and Florence Camm. Perhaps the most prolific was

A J Davies who set up a studio in Bromsgrove Guild premises in 1906 and was responsible for some 250 windows in Britain and another 100 abroad, mainly in Canada and Southern Africa.

In 1909 Payne left his post at the School of Art and moved to the Cotswolds where he set up St Loe's Guild at Amberley. His place as teacher of stained glass work was taken by his former student Richard Stubington.

Two later prestigious commissions Payne undertook were a wall painting in the east Corridor of the Houses of Parliament (donated by Earl Beauchamp in 1909) and in 1929, stained glass windows in the French National War Memorial at Notre Dame de Lorette in memory of war dead of the British Empire.

Payne continued to paint and undertake commissions for stained glass at Amberley until his death in 1940. He is remembered as a remarkable artist and stained glass window maker, as well as an influential teacher, who contributed much to our stained glass heritage in the Midlands and nationally. ●

**Roy Albutt** is a writer, researcher and speaker on stained glass windows.

#### Further Reading

Roy Albutt, *Stained Glass Window Makers of Birmingham School of Art* (2013).

Roy Albutt, *Stained Glass Windows of A J Davies of the Bromsgrove Guild* (2005).

Alan Crawford, *By Hammer and Hand: the Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham* (Birmingham City Council Department of Leisure, 1984).

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery has stained glass by Henry Payne among the stained glass windows displayed in the Industrial Gallery.