

## WINDOW 1

### 15TH-CENTURY COATS OF ARMS

These shields were originally in the East window of the Lady Chapel (window 5), where some of them are believed to be connected with the VISIONS OF OUR LADY received in All Saints by the anchoress Emma Raughton in 1421.

In particular the shield at bottom right, containing six pears, belongs to the Beachamp family. In the visions Our Lady instructed that Richard Beachamp, Earl of Warwick, was to have care of the as-yet-unborn infant son of King Henry V, whose death was also foretold (he died on campaign in France in 1422). The son was to be crowned as King Henry VI in England and also in France (he was) and was to be educated by Beauchamp (he was).

In the top of each of the three lights is an exuberant architectural fantasy known as a 'canopy'. Similar canopies can be seen in many of the windows in All Saints. These canopies originally went with a different, now unknown, window.



## WINDOW 2

### The S. Thomas Window (c. 1410)

In the left light is S. Thomas the Apostle, known as 'Doubting Thomas' because according to S. John's Gospel he refused to believe in the resurrection of Christ until he saw and touched him.

The scroll behind his head reads 'Dominus meus et Deus meus', 'My Lord and my God', Thomas's confession of faith when the risen Christ showed himself.

In the centre light is the risen Christ, showing to S. Thomas the visible wounds to his hands, feet and side.

In the right light is S. Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury murdered in his cathedral in 1170.

It has not always been accepted that this figure is in fact S. Thomas Becket. In the 18th century he was identified as S. Timothy, and the 19th century thought he was S. William of York and placed him in a different window. But the fact that a chantry was founded on this spot at the altar of S. Thomas the Martyr (i.e. Becket) in 1407-9 makes it most likely that this is who he is.



## WINDOW 3

### The CORPORAL ACTS OF MERCY window (1410).

In the 'Great Assize' parable in S. Matthew's Gospel (chapter 25) Jesus teaches that people are judged by God on the basis of their acts of mercy towards the needy—feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, bringing relief to prisoners. Medieval piety referred to these along with a seventh, burying the dead, as the 'CORPORAL ACTS OF MERCY' (complementing seven 'SPIRITUAL ACTS OF MERCY' such as counselling doubters and forgiving others willingly).

This magnificent window illustrates the six Corporal Acts of Mercy from S. Matthew's Gospel. It was given as a memorial to Nicholas Blackburn, father and grandfather of the Blackburns shown at the foot of window no. 6. Hence the window itself is the seventh 'corporal act', burying the dead.



Each of the three lights consists of four panels. In each light the top panel is another elaborate canopy. The bottom panels on the left and right contain kneeling figures, which probably were not originally part of this window, since kneeling figures at the base of a window are normally the donors of the window.

The middle two panels of each light are the Acts of Mercy:

Left light upper: A good man gives food to the hungry.

Left light lower: The same man gives clothes to the naked.

Centre light upper: He gives drink to the thirsty. Note the crippled beggar with knee pads and little hand-stools.

Centre light lower: He visits the sick. Note the beautifully illustrated embroidered bedspread.

Right light upper: He gives hospitality to the strangers.

Right light lower: He relieves those in prison (they have their feet in the stocks).



WINDOW 4

The 'PRICKE OF CONSCIENCE' window (1410)

This unique window, the finest in the church, illustrates part of a popular devotional poem of c. 1340, 'The Pricke of Conscience'. The poem is in the Northumbrian dialect of Middle English. The part illustrated concerns the End of the World, depicted in fifteen signs or 'days' - the last fifteen days of the world.

It is Europe's only known medieval window to contain the text of a poem it illustrates below each scene. Some portions of text have been lost over the centuries.

It is thought likely on stylistic grounds that the glass painter was John Thornton of Coventry, who made the huge east window of York Minster in 1405-8, the largest expanse of medieval glass in the world.

The fifteen 'days' are:

- 1 The sea floods.
- 2 The sea recedes, exposing the sea-bed.
- 3 The sea returns to its normal level.
- 4 The sea becomes poisonous and fish leap out 'roaring'.
- 5 The sea catches fire.
- 6 Fruit drops off the trees.
- 7 Earthquakes destroy buildings—the fallen church spire may be a semi-humorous warning about the wonderful spire of All Saints, only 15 years old at the time this window was made.
- 8 Rocks and stones are consumed by fire.
- 9 People take refuge in caves.
- 10 Only the featureless earth and red sky remain.
- 11 People come out of caves praying. (One man is still hiding!)
- 12 The graves are opened.
- 13 The stars fall from heaven.
- 14 All living people die.
- 15 The whole cosmos goes up in flames.



13	14	15
10	11	12
7	8	9
4	5	6
1	2	3
kneeling donors		

*The large medieval STATUE OF OUR LADY once stood at the right of this window, recommending therefore that the apocalyptic events should lead viewers to seek the help of Our Lady in turning back to God in Christ in the sacrament of the Altar—hence the deliberate positioning of window then statue then altar.*



## WINDOW 5

### The Lady Chapel east window (c. 1330)

This is the earliest window in All Saints and was at one point above the high altar (window 6). The canopies at the top of each light are clearly less assured than those of the 15th century in windows 1—3.

Left light, upper: The Adoration of the Magi (the three kings offer gifts to the infant Christ).

Left light, lower: The Annunciation (the angel Gabriel tells Our Lady she is to be the mother of God's son). The angel holds a scroll with the words 'Ave Maria gratia plena', 'Hail Mary full of grace' (the words are shortened to fit).

Centre light, upper: The Crucifixion. With the crucified Jesus are, on the left, Our Lady and, on the right, S. John.

Centre light, lower: The Nativity (the birth of Jesus). Our Lady holds the infant, S. Joseph is beside her, and above them are heads of an ox and an ass.

Right light, upper: The Coronation of Our Lady as Queen of heaven.

Right light, lower: The resurrection of Jesus, showing him rising from the tomb. At one side is an angel in white, and below are three soldiers, the centre one frightened and awake, the outer ones asleep.

Many individual pieces of glass in a window this old have broken and been renewed down the centuries. The face of the risen Christ, bottom right, is a clear example of a modern piece.

### TRACERY LIGHTS

This window along with the 'Pricke of Conscience' window (no. 4) and the other two east windows (no. 6 and 7) have 'tracery lights'. These are small areas of glass in the openings of the complicated stonework above the main window.

In each case the glass in the tracery lights is not part of the window below and is mostly not medieval.



## WINDOW 6

### The great east window (1410)

Like no. 3 this was given by the Blackburn family, who appear kneeling at the bottom—Nicholas snr is on the right with his wife Margaret, and Nicholas jnr on the left with his wife, also Margaret.

In between them, at the centre bottom, is a striking representation of GOD THE HOLY TRINITY. The Father is seated on his throne, holding the Son on the cross before him, and the dove of the Spirit is between their two heads.

Main picture, left light: S. John the Baptist. He wears the rough garb of a prophet, and carries the lamb which is his symbol, from the occasion when, according to S. John's gospel, he pointed out Jesus with the words 'Behold the Lamb of God'.

Centre light: S. Anne teaches her daughter, the Virgin Mary, to read—or, perhaps, to pray: the words are the beginning of Psalm 142 (143), 'Domine exaudi orationem meam auribus percipe obsecrationem meam', 'Hear my prayer O Lord; give ear to my supplication'.

Right light: S. Christopher carries the child Jesus on his shoulders through water. Fish swim between his feet.

It is striking that all the women in this window are reading—this merchant-class family wish it to be known that it is not only the aristocracy whose women are literate. Margaret Blackburn wife of Nicholas jnr, on the left, is reading the beginning of Psalm 6, 'Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me, neque in ira tua', 'O Lord rebuke me not in thine indignation, neither [chastise me] in thy displeasure', and Margaret Blackburn wife of Nicholas snr, on the right, from Psalm 50 (51) 'Domine labia mea aperies et os meum', 'Thou shalt open my lips O Lord, and my mouth [shall show thy praise]'.



## WINDOW 7

### The south aisle East window (c. 1350)

Though originally the second-oldest in the church, this is a disappointing window because it has been so heavily restored. Much of it dates from repairs done in the 19th century.

Upper row, left: Our Lady, unusually dressed in purple. She is in fact medieval.

Upper row, centre: the Crucifixion.

Upper row, right: S. John the Evangelist.



The placing of Our Lady and S. John on each side of the crucified Christ is a traditional theme in medieval art. It reflects the fact that according to S. John's gospel only these two remained faithfully by the cross when all the other disciples had fled. The same combination of figures but carved in wood occurs on the 'rood screen' of all medieval English churches separating nave from chancel. The carved rood in All Saints is an early-twentieth-century restoration.

Lower row, left: a kneeling lady, probably a donor.

Lower row, centre: Christ with the cup of sorrow in the Garden of Gethemane.

Lower row, right: a kneeling lady donor (medieval). To the left of her, outside the 'picture' but inside the blue border with its flowing vine, is a triangular piece of 16th-century glass with a long-beaked bird, a fragment from some other window.



## WINDOW 8

### S. Michael and S. John (c. 1430)

In the left light S. Michael the archangel defeats Satan, depicted as a blue animal with three heads (below, left). S. Michael is wearing plate armour and has golden wings (which incidentally make it clear that this is not S. George, who would be shown without wings). His face was stolen in 1842 and has been replaced in clear glass.



In the right light stands S. John the Evangelist (gospel-writer). The words on the scroll are 'Benedictus sit sermo oris tui', 'Blessed be the word of your mouth'. In his right hand he is holding a clasped book, an eagle (his symbol) and an ink horn.



S. John's left hand holds a palm branch. This is at first sight strange, because palms normally symbolise martyrdom (Revelation 7.9) and S. John was not martyred but lived to a ripe old age. It is in fact an allusion to an early legend according to which Our Lady on her deathbed is given a palm from heaven by an angel with the instruction that it is to be carried before the coffin in her funeral procession, a task she entrusts to S. John. Unbelievers scoff, and when they attempt to disrupt the funeral they are struck blind. They are converted by the preaching of S. Peter and are healed by the touch of the palm. The legend appears in a book attributed to S. John but certainly 5th-century, *The Account of S. John the Divine of the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God*.

S. John is often depicted in art as a very young man—an allusion to the fact that he lived on into old age. (S. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna martyred in AD 155, had met him.) The face of S. John in this window portrays a beautiful combination of youthful innocence and wisdom.



WINDOW 9

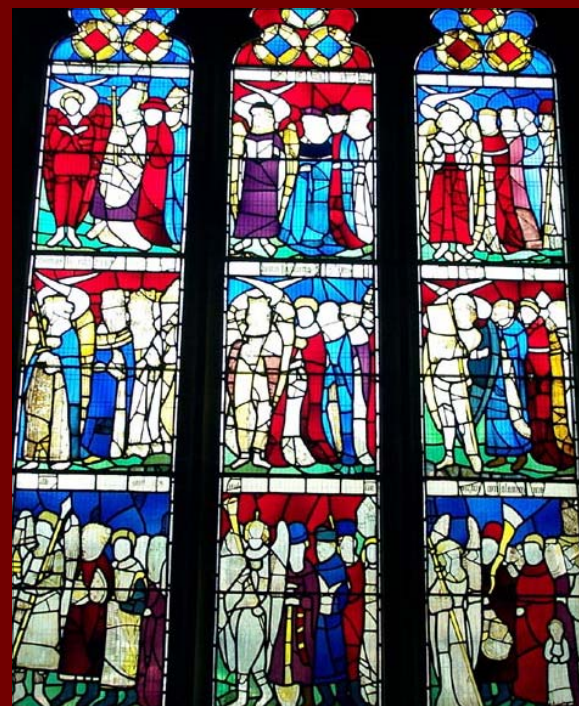
The Nine Orders of Angels window (1410)

This window has a fascinating recent history. Until 1965 it was in a very fragmented condition and nobody knew what it represented. In the 18th century it was thought to have contained an angel, a cardinal-bishop, a pope, and a religious procession, possibly a Corpus Christi procession. A 19th-century restorer suggested it might be the coronation of Edward IV in York in 1464. Some 20th-century scholars believed it was simply a jumble of glass fragments from several unknown windows.

Then the sketchbooks of an antiquarian called Henry Johnston came to light in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Johnston visited York in 1670 and made sketches of many of the sights, including stained-glass windows in various churches. He left a clear sketch of this window which enabled it to be identified as the nine orders of angels

described by the 5th-century writer Pseudo-Dionysius in an influential book. Dionysius placed them in three hierarchies

each containing three 'choirs'. The three horizontal rows in the window represent the hierarchies, and in each panel there is a single angel on the left, representing his 'choir', with various onlookers. The angels of the highest hierarchy (top row) have three pairs of wings each—one pair is crossed above the head, another is behind the back, the third is in front—recalling Isaiah's vision of seraphim in attendance on God (Isa. 6.2): 'Each had six wings: with one pair of wings they covered their faces and with another their bodies, and with the third pair they flew.' In the second row they have two pairs each, in the bottom row one.



Left to right, top to bottom: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones. Dominations, Princedoms, Powers. Virtues, Archangels, Angels.

The restorers of 1965 when they found a piece of glass missing replaced it in clear glass.

At the bottom right is a man wearing spectacles peering over someone's shoulder—a very rare illustration of what spectacles looked like in 1410. Is this a self-portrait of the glass painter?



## WINDOW 10

### The S. James window (1410)

In the left light is S. James the apostle, dressed as a pilgrim on his way to the Santiago shrine at Compostela. ('Iago' is the Spanish form of 'Iacobus', James.)

In the centre light Our Lady, crowned, is holding her Child.

In the right light is a kneeling archbishop. (We know he is a bishop because his mitre is sitting behind him, and he must be an archbishop because he is wearing the pallium around his neck, the symbol of archiepiscopal authority bestowed by the Pope.) He is saying Mass and is genuflecting at the elevation of the Host. A missal is open on the altar in front of him containing words from the appropriate place of the Canon. Above him Christ appears, accompanied by four angels.



It has been thought that the archbishop is S. Gregory the Great, or S. William of York. But recent research indicates he may be S. Denys, bishop of Paris in the 3rd century. Denys, or Dionysius, was thought at the time this window was made to have been the Dionysius who wrote the book on the nine orders of angels illustrated in the window next to this one.

Amidst the fragments below each of the three main figures is a charming bird.

The incomplete inscription underneath the archbishop contains the only surviving 'indulgence' in an English stained-glass window. An indulgence does away with the penalty incurred by a confessed sin, and could be gained by, for example, going on pilgrimage, or by meditating on truths of the faith expressed in a work of art

such as a statue—or a window. Though the sale of indulgences constituted a serious abuse which helped precipitate the Reformation, indulgences themselves were empowering for ordinary medieval church-goers—something they could actually do to express their penitence. In this case the window serves as a serious stimulus to prayer and recovery after sin.

This is another illustration of how medieval stained glass served an important spiritual function and was very far from being merely decorative.



## WHY ARE THE ALL SAINTS WINDOWS SPECIAL?

Because they contain more superb medieval glass than almost any other parish church in England. Medieval glass is greatly superior to more recent glass, both in artistry and technique.

## WHY IS THERE SO LITTLE MEDIEVAL GLASS IN MOST ENGLISH CHURCHES?

Stained glass which is medieval, that is made in the centuries before AD 1500, was nearly all destroyed during the religious upheavals of the 16th century (the Reformation) and the 17th century (the English Civil War). Most of it was deliberately vandalised and smashed. The art of making it, and maintaining it, was lost. What was left fell to pieces.

## WHY DOES SO MUCH MEDIEVAL GLASS SURVIVE IN ALL SAINTS?

Many parish churches in the city of York retain a lot of their medieval glass. Of these All Saints has easily the most extensive and the finest display. And York Minster has more medieval glass than all other English cathedrals put together.

York was fortunate in suffering less from the destructive impulses of the Reformation than many places. And in the Civil War the city though besieged was eventually surrendered without battle when the victorious army undertook to respect its unique heritage including the medieval glass.

## WHY DID MEDIEVAL CHURCHES HAVE STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS?

They give colour and beauty, good things of God's creation. (They also tell bible stories in pictures, useful for people who can't read, but the need for this has been somewhat exaggerated—the women in window no. 6 are all reading, and no. 4 assumes those looking at it can read.) Besides being helpful and decorative they have a strong religious purpose: they remind worshippers that Christian life is lived surrounded by the saints, and they call to repentance and renewal in Christ.

