

The Stained Glass Windows in Northbridge Uniting Church

by **Beryl Watson**

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Set out below are descriptions and a potted history of each of the fourteen stained glass windows in our church. We start with the pair beside the pulpit and work round the church clockwise.

1. In the top window Charles Wesley, MA Oxon, is pictured seated at an organ. He is brother of John, founder of Methodism. The inscription reads 1707-1788 "Writer of Hymns". Our encyclopaedia states he wrote 6,000 hymns, two well known examples being Jesus lover of my soul-and Love divine all loves excelling. He is also reputed to have had a special board fitted to his saddle and wrote while journeying from place to place.

In the main part of the window John Wesley, MA Oxon, is depicted seated at his desk with a window beside him and the suggestion of a tree outside. He was the founder of Methodism and the brother of Charles the hymn writer. They were both sons of Rev Samuel Wesley, rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire and John was his father's curate for a short time early on. He was born in 1703 and died in 1791. He is said to have preached 40,000 sermons and had 100,000 followers at his death.

The bottom window contains an inscription reading "The world is my parish the best of all is with us".

2. In the top part of the next window Mrs Gilmour is pictured with some brown babies. Rev & Mrs Gilmour went to PNG as missionaries in 1901 together with my maternal grandfather, also a missionary. Mrs Gilmour was noted especially for her work with motherless babies. Until that time if the mother died so did the baby as there were no cows and no milk and they had no idea of a substitute. The inscription beneath reads "for of such is the kingdom of heaven"

Rev Matthew Gilmour is depicted in the main window with a bible in his hand and a partly completed boat nearby together with some of his 'boys'. Boatbuilding was one of his great talents and greatly appreciated together with his missionary work. The inscription at the bottom of the window reads "well done good and faithful servants a tribute to the life and work of Rev and Mrs M.K. Gilmour".

Mr Gilmour was a New Zealander. He had one brother who did not marry and the Gilmours themselves did not have any children so I as the eldest grandchild of my maternal grandfather was given by Mr Gilmour (in 1961) his mother's wedding ring which is inscribed with the date of their marriage (10th Feb 1870) and the initials of the bride and groom.

I should mention that Mr Gilmour was minister of this church from 1934-1939 and on his retirement bought a house in Barooka Road where they lived until Mrs Gilmour's death. Mr Gilmour stayed on until he could not manage alone any longer, then he moved to Miss Gibb's home at 90 Baringa Rd (later the home of Hazel and Milton Andrews) and lived there until he was totally blind and unable to care for himself. He was admitted to Lottie Stewart and died there in 1962. When he left the Barooka Rd house he made it available to our church for a very

reasonable sum and so at last we had a parsonage and in time were able to have a married minister.

3. The next pair of windows are the Henry windows; the only ones in place when the church was opened (7th May 1955. In the first one Jesus is depicted with a crook and three lambs. The inscription reads "in loving memory of Mark Henry died December 1952". The Henrys were very early church members, possibly founding members. They had one son, Trevor, who with his wife, Daphne, gave these windows. They had no children. Mr Henry was headmaster of Sydney Boys High School.

4. The second Henry window is in memory of Edith de la Force Henry, wife of Mark, and the inscription reads "died 10th June 1947". The scene in this window depicts Jesus with a boy and girl on either side of Him and His hand on the boy's shoulder' Mrs Henry was the sister of Sir Earl Page.

5. The first window in the next pair has an inscription in the top part reading "The master is come and calleth for thee". The scene in the centre window shows Mary and Martha with Jesus - Martha carrying a dish of food and Mary sitting at Jesus' feet on a flight of steps. The inscription underneath reads "In appreciation of work nobly done by the women of this church past and present".

6. The inscription in the top part of this window reads; ' "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel" and underneath it reads "To honour all our missionaries of every race and colour". Jesus, or perhaps God as he is an older man with a beard clothed in purple and red, is pictured handing a closed bible to a young man in dog collar and dark suit who

is standing with his hand on the shoulder of a seated dark young man dressed all in white with a tie and bare feet having an open bible on his knee.

7. The inscription on the next window (first of the last pair on the right hand side of the church) reads - "A tribute to the men and women who voluntarily helped to build this church (gift of Tom Hewson)." In the top part of the window Jesus is seated at a table talking to a man dressed in green and a young woman is kneeling at the front of the picture washing Jesus' feet. In the main window Jesus is shown blessing three men, a woman and a child. In the bottom window Jesus is depicted speaking to a man kneeling in a field and holding a spade in his hand. In the background three men are tilling a crop using various implements.

8. There are three pictures in the next window and the inscription reads "Thanks to God for manifold blessings, especially for the life of Elsie Mabel Hewson (gift of Tom Hewson and family)-. The top window shows Christ with a shaft of light behind Him. The centre scene shows Christ praying with a shaft of light coming from above and in the centre a golden chalice on a purple cushion; three of the disciples are asleep at the front of the scene. The bottom window pictures Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus in manger.

9. The large window at the back of the church shows Christ standing o,' one side of a carpenter's bench holding a tee square and pointing to an unrolled plan. Tom Hewson is pictured on the other side of the bench receiving his instructions and the church is shown in the background. The inscription reads - "Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it. To honour Mr & Mrs Hewson for their work in building this church."

This brings me to the Tom Hewson story and the building of our church as we know it today. See excerpts from the booklet published at the time of the 50th church anniversary celebrations: *The Northbridge Methodist War and peace Memorial Church*.

10. We now come to the pair of windows at the back of the church on the left hand side. They are in memory of my mother and father.

In the first window the inscription in the top window reads "Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God" and in the bottom window "In memory of Edna Cleland (nee Cox) 1903-1980" and the Uniting Church logo.

The scene in the centre window is of Ruth and Naomi where Ruth says - Entreat me not to leave thee etc. and showing lush fields in the background.

11. The second window in this pair has an inscription in the top window "And who is my neighbour". The scene in the centre window shows the Good Samaritan loading the injured traveller onto his donkey and two Levites walking away into the distance.

The inscription in the bottom window reads – "In memory of Alfred Barclay Cleland 1900-1987" together with the Cleland coat of arms consisting of a silver hare with green hunting horn round his neck, a left-handed glove and a falcon. The artist for this window originally showed the rear end of the donkey, not his head and the inn in the background was an Australian style house with a chimney and smoke rising. She was persuaded to show the donkey's head and eventually the building was left out altogether.

These windows were unveiled on 20th November 1988 while Noel Cleland and his wife were visiting from Canada.

Alf Cleland came to Northbridge church in 1926 from Walker St church in order to take over the Sunday School at the invitation of the Northbridge church. He married in 1927 and moved to Cammeray. He was Sunday School superintendent for 26 years, a Trustee from 1930 until church union in 1977. He was also active in the wider work of the church, serving as Lay Treasurer for the overseas Mission Board for many years, was a member of the Trust Association and had a seat on both Synod and Assembly. Edna Cleland was President of Women's Auxiliary to Overseas Missions at Northbridge for many years and at the same time was State Treasurer for the central body of the WAOM. She also attended both Synod and Assembly with a seat in her own right.

12. We now come to the Smith windows, the last pair of stained glass windows. The first one is in memory of Reginald Alfred James Smith who died 24th December 1967 and it was given by members of his family. The top window shows a draped cross under a small crown all in front of a shaft of light. The scene in the centre window is of Christ carrying the cross on his shoulder and wearing the crown of thorns. There is a small stone building in the background on the right and a taller building just showing on the left. The bottom window shows a basket of bread with a wine glass in the centre of the basket, all enclosed in a scroll with the top part of a large red cross showing above.

13. The inscription in the second one of the pair reads "To remember Selina Marion Smith died 11th July 1966. Erected by members of her family". The top window shows a lamb with a halo behind his head

lying on an open book with a matching small crown above. The middle window shows Christ with his hands raised. He is in a white robe with a beautiful red shawl draped over his shoulders and wearing a golden girdle. He appears to be blessing us all. The bottom window has a sailing boat enclosed in a scroll similar to the other one of the pair and a large red cross partly shown behind. The letters Alpha and Omega - the beginning and the end – are on either side of the upright of the cross.

14. The window adjacent to the organ has been frosted glass ever since the church was built. However, Jack Mitchell and Marie Rich (nee Nowland) submitted a proposal in 2007 that this window be replaced with one in stained glass in memory of Alfred Edward Nowland and his wife Olive Bernice (nee Adams) and also Joyce Mitchell (nee Nowland).

Joyce started attending Northbridge Church when she came to Sydney in 1936, joining "Comrades", playing both piano and organ and teaching a Sunday School class.

Alf Nowland and the rest of the family came to Sydney in 1940. He was a lay preacher and became a Church Trustee from 1943 until his death in 1966. Olive Nowland played both piano and organ and enjoyed the singing of hymns. She was interested in overseas missions, belonged to the Women's Auxiliary to Overseas Missions and hosted in her home visiting island clergy.

The top window shows a dove of peace with an olive branch in his beak. The main window depicts St Cecilia playing the organ and the bottom window shows a lyre and dedication to Alfred & Olive Nowland and Joyce Mitchell.

Excerpts from
***The Northbridge Methodist
War and Peace Memorial Church***

The scheme to set up plans for a new church was launched 27 September 1944.

Following a donation of \$2000 in 1952 by Mr E J L Hallstrom, the decision to begin building was made by Rev E Tredinnick, Superintendent Minister of the Willoughby Circuit. Youth Fellowship members and Sydney University Architecture students, Shirley Andrew and fiancé Jim Tanner, became Honorary Architects and Mr Tom Hewson became Honorary Builder and Supervisor of the new church project.

This church was built by the people, every man, woman and child of the congregation without exception giving voluntarily of their time, talents and money. Tom Hewson spent the whole of his time building and supervising to ensure a quality of workmanship worthy of the project. The church stands as a monument to Edgar Tredinnick, Shirley Andrew, Jim Tanner, Tome Hewson and all those who served under them.

Tom Hewson was chosen to lay the foundation stone 8th May 1954, Rev A G Manefield presided, assisted by Property Secretary Rev R H Doust and Home Mission secretary Rev R J Noble. Afternoon tea was provided by the Ladies Church Aid for the 250 people attending the ceremony.

The church was opened 7th May 1955. Rev E Tredinnick and Rev P Threlfell welcomed the chairman of the District Rev W Francis and the President of the Conference, Rev J H Sorrell who delivered the address of dedication. The door was opened by Rev M K Gilmour and Mss Bessie Cooke sang *Open the Gates of the Temple*.

The following day the morning, afternoon and evening services were addressed by Rev C Ritchie, Rev A Buxton and Rev J W Hill respectively.

On 19th June 1955 His Excellency the Governor of NSW Sir John Northcott dedicated the *Northbridge Methodist War and Peace Memorial Church* as a memorial to all who served and suffered in the cause of peace and to one such person, Flying officer John Hartley Middleton RAAF who had lost his life. The entrance gates of the church, chosen by his family as a memorial, were dedicated by Rev S Bostock Jones 17th July 1955.

Church services have continued ever since.