

the higher clergy, local aristocrats (such as the Mortimers, Bohuns and Talbots) and town guilds, while also noting that humbler donors sometimes stipulated the posthumous funding of windows in their wills.

The author's chronological survey of the region's glass, from the twelfth century to 1700, is a remarkably insightful analysis of stylistic and technical developments. What makes it especially valuable is Walker's detailed focus on the post-medieval 'after-life' of windows, a dimension all too often neglected by medievalists. For almost every extant medieval window has undergone interventions – by plumber-glaziers, Victorian restorers or more recent conservators – that have ensured its survival, albeit often in a fragmentary form. Walker makes a point of documenting these procedures wherever possible, using ecclesiastical records, local antiquarian sources and, particularly for the nineteenth century onwards, newspaper and other periodical reports. Although the various efforts to preserve medieval glazing have varied widely in their sensitivity to the original work, Walker commendably recognises that these are now just as much a part of their cumulative history – and, importantly, equally worthy of study – as successive repairs and alterations to a building's architectural fabric. This is perhaps especially pertinent to the region that is the book's focus, since the Shrewsbury-based firm of Betton & Evans was responsible for restoring many important local windows, notably at Ludlow and Shrewsbury, between the early 1800s and the 1870s.

Walker's comprehensive gazetteer of churches, divided into those in Hereford diocese and, as an appendix, those within north Shropshire, not only lists windows that can still be seen but also those recorded by antiquarians. For St Bartholomew's at Richards Castle, for example, his listing includes reports dating from the 1600s (by Silas Taylor and Thomas Blount) of fourteenth-century glass, almost all of it lost by the time Stephen Glynne visited the church in the 1850s. While Walker observes that antiquarian interest was often too narrowly concerned with recording only heraldic data, there were exceptions; where possible, he illustrates sketches from the 1600s and 1700s (made by Richard Symonds, Thomas Dingley, William Mytton and others) showing details of figures and background glazing in lost windows.

Among the locations of outstanding stained glass in the Welsh Marches, several are of undoubted national significance. The east

window of Madley church, in particular, has a magnificent array of panels, the earliest dating from *c* 1250. Walker comments that the latter, in their resemblance to 'the great programmes of medallions found in French and English cathedrals', are unique in any English parish church, suggesting that the commission was linked to the appointment of a Frenchman, Peter of Savoy, to the See of Hereford. The same window also contains three impressive figures from a fourteenth-century *Jesse Tree* by the 'Madley Master', whom Walker plausibly identifies as William of Hereford.

At Hampton Court Chapel in Hope under Dinmore, little of the important medieval glass remains *in situ*, most of it having been sold in the 1920s to museums and private collections in the UK and North America. Walker's extended essay on the 1420s–30s windows, reconstructing their original provenance – he suggests Leominster Priory – and documenting their subsequent dispersal is a masterly exposition of his detailed knowledge of the locality's history. Likewise, the book's account of the well-known windows at St Laurence, Ludlow, is a *tour de force* of careful research into their iconography, commissioning (principally by the town's Palmers' Guild), stylistic characteristics and successive restorations. Walker's holistic approach to the material is refreshing. While acknowledging that David Evans's 1832 restoration of the fifteenth-century east window was 'drastic', he has no hesitation in applauding the 'highly skilled copying of historical styles of drawing' that carefully preserved the imagery of the medieval original.

Walker writes with a lively, appreciative and sometimes lyrical eloquence that is all too rarely found in scholarly studies of medieval glass. Above all, his text and his many excellent illustrations focus primarily on the windows as exquisite works of art – not simply as visual 'documents'. The book will undoubtedly inspire its readers to seek out for themselves the many vitreous treasures of the Marches.

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Temlau Peintiedig: murluniau a chroglenni yn eglwysi Cymru, 1200–1800. Painted Temples: wallpaintings and rood-screens in Welsh churches, 1200–1800. By RICHARD SUGGETT with ANTHONY J. PARKINSON and JANE RUTHERFOOD.

345mm. Pp xii + 366, 275 ills (mostly col). Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth, 2021. ISBN 9781871184587. £29.95 (hbk).

This impressively synthetic survey of medieval painted churches is rooted within the context of a widespread and remarkable movement of church rebuilding that proliferated throughout Wales in the late fifteenth century. Suggett dextrously explores this fleeting moment of zealous architectural renewal, which, attended by a simultaneous resurgence in domestic construction drawing upon the same skilled craftsmanship in timber, has tended to be overlooked in more orthodox art historical analyses of the period. Evidence attests that, astonishingly, all but one of the country's surviving medieval churches were reroofed in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The resulting paradox was that modest, and often remote, single-celled structures were adorned with incongruously elaborate timber roofs and rood screens, the painted embellishment of which was frequently accompanied by a renewed programme of more extensive mural decoration. In a scholarly landscape where, as Suggett observes, 'interpretation has not kept pace with recording', this volume provides a much-needed exploration of the parish church interior as a product of, and theatre for, evolving devotional practices. The resulting review is ambitious in its timespan and, while focused on schemes of decorative polychromy, adopts a far more holistic approach than is typical for such material-specific studies (and is all the more successful for it). The decorative programmes that form the focus of this volume were, often, lay commissions reflecting the spiritual preoccupations of parishioners, and as such it illuminates an area of research that has only recently begun to receive the attention it merits.

The opening chapters of Suggett's survey chronicle the proliferation of polychromed rood screens and lofts – ornately carved from malleable green oak – erected by Welsh congregations in the decades around the turn of the sixteenth century. They stand as physical testimony to a popular pre-Reformation devotional focus on the Cross, which simultaneously found voice in contemporary vernacular verse. It is both remarkable and interesting that so many more rood lofts survive in Welsh churches than in the naves of their often more affluent English counterparts, where now only scrubbed and mutilated screens remain, and that some of the most flamboyant examples – such as the

magnificent screen in St Ishaw's Church in Partrishow, carved with intricate bands of interlaced decoration – were commissioned by less wealthy congregations, unfettered by the conservative conventions that constrained patrons of higher status. Most commonly, though, it is the painted backdrop to a lost rood that survives, whether executed on boards (as in St Ellyw's Church, Llanellieu, where the rose-diapered timbers are tantalizingly punctured by elevation squints) or directly onto the plaster of the chancel arch (as is the case with the strikingly illusionistic geometric hanging painted on the nave's east wall in St Illtud's Church, Llantwit Major).

The close association of the rood loft with other painted decoration in the parish church is further explored in a subsequent chapter, in which Suggett addresses the perennial question of how wall paintings were perceived and used by their medieval audiences. While late medieval mural painting appears to have featured less extensively in chancels, among the most exceptional survivals showcased in the book are those decorative schemes painted on timber canopies of honour (*'mwd'*) which were widely installed in the north of Wales around this time to demarcate the sacred space around the altar. Two such schemes – at St Benedict's Church in Gyffin and St Elian's Church in Llanellian-yn-Rhos – are particularly fine figurative examples of a phenomenon that would seem to be altogether absent from English medieval churches. Figurative paintings on plaster were, by contrast, mainly confined to the nave, their iconographic programmes – chosen and paid for by the congregation – adhering broadly to the same repertoire of subjects documented in English mural schemes of this date. Together they comprise what Pauk Binski (1999) termed 'a spiritual encyclopaedia', among which abound scenes from the Life and Passion of Christ and didactic scenes, such as the Sunday Christ and Seven Deadly Sins. Representations of the Virgin and other intercessory saints are depicted alongside the ubiquitous St Christophers and Last Judgements. These discretely placed and often disconnected depictions, sometimes bounded by painted frames or accompanied by explanatory inscriptions, were used as devotional *foci* – as Parkinson observes in his exploration of the painting scheme at Llandeilo, 'rather like woodcuts pasted onto a wall'. Indeed, what this exploration of later medieval Welsh church interiors illustrates particularly well is the integrity of the iconographic scheme as a unified whole, extending

across all available surfaces and expressed through a variety of decorative media.

The final three chapters of the volume chart a ‘chronology of loss’ as church building in Wales was halted and their associated adornment proscribed, first by the Reformation and subsequently as a result of the Civil War. Suggett estimates that, in the ensuing years of destruction and neglect, over a third of Wales’s recorded chapels were lost, with many ultimately converted to dwellings. But alongside this cheerless reality, the author offers a refreshingly invigorated perspective on post-Reformation church decoration. At a time when worship in the vernacular was mandated by law and mural embellishment became predominantly scriptural, inscriptions in Welsh became tightly bound up with a sense of local identity. The distinctive ‘blackscript’ texts that survive from this period, accompanied by a proliferation of successively overpainted Royal Arms, offer a window onto the earthly realm and, as Rowan Williams notes in his foreword, afford ‘a forceful visual expression of the new relationship between church and state’. Chapter 6 of the book cites evidence of a dynamic movement in the early seventeenth century, under Archbishop Laud, to repair the country’s dilapidated churches – the exuberant technicolour interior of Rûg Chapel testament to a renewed tolerance for painted decoration (as long as it remained secular in character). While a further period of church repair followed the Restoration, Suggett reflects upon the changing aesthetic of the parish church, as monuments began to encroach on the painted walls and obliterate post-Reformation texts, their interiors increasingly ‘bleached of colour’. Indeed, it is noteworthy that, despite evidence of a renewed awareness of historic schemes of ecclesiastical decoration (an interest invigorated by the work of such assiduous copyists as the Reverend John Parker), there remained little enthusiasm to *restore* that colour.

Only towards the end of the nineteenth century (which falls beyond the scope of this volume), with the meticulous recording undertaken over successive decades by C E Keyser and E W Tristram, did more widespread appreciation for medieval mural decoration begin to take hold (Keyser 1883; Tristram 1944; 1950; 1955). It was a movement from which modern-day conservation practices – grounded in careful condition recording and rigorous diagnostic assessment – evolved. Thus, while the engaging chronological overview crafted by Suggett feels ever so slightly interrupted by the insertion midway of two in-depth case studies of recent

mural conservation programmes, their inclusion in his narrative is certainly fitting. Jane Rutherford reports in detail on the discovery and subsequent conservation (by herself and Ann Ballantyne) of an extensive and striking scheme of early fifteenth-century decoration in the south aisle at St Cadoc’s Church in Llandarfan, exceptional in both its subject matter and coherence. Unusually, this impressive ensemble, comprising an elaborate portrayal of the *Legend of St George* alongside an animated rendition of the *Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Works of Mercy*, seems to have been rendered in imitation of embroidered hangings, complete with wavy bias edge. A further contribution from Tony Parkinson details the recovery of not only the wall paintings but the entire parish church of St Teilo from Llandeilo Talybont, famously reconstructed (and its painted interior vividly recreated) at St Fagan’s National Museum of History. The latter study is particularly valuable in so far as St Teilo’s was, as Parkinson notes, a relatively unimportant, late medieval church. Ironically, in falling derelict before it was subjected to any well-meaning restoration attempts, its obscured painted interior was better preserved as a coherent whole. The decorative programme, which is believed to have been executed around 1500 following the insertion of a new roof, was recorded with meticulous detail by the RCAHMW, affording an extraordinarily precious glimpse of the everyday when, too often, we find ourselves preoccupied with the exceptional.

Alongside other recent explorations of the parish church – including general overviews by Jenkins (2012) and Goodall (2015), and more specialised studies by Bernstein (2021), Bucklow *et al* (2017) – and other scholarly investigations of wall paintings and roods – among which Rosewell’s (2008) work on the former and a recent project on roods by the Hamilton Kerr Institute – this new volume helps to relocate buildings that too often lie at the periphery of our art historical consciousness back at the centre of our vision. Welsh churches seem to have been conspicuously poorly represented in art historical surveys undertaken at a national level (it is a matter of no small irony, given that Tristram was born and bred in Carmarthen, that his three seminal volumes on medieval wall painting feature only a handful of sites beyond the Marches). Happily, several hundred schemes of Welsh mural decoration, in both ecclesiastical and secular settings, receive treatment in the soon-to-be-launched National Wall Paintings Survey database. The timely and

significant contribution made by Suggett's study cannot be overstated at what we must hope is a turning point for research in this field. The immense detail and wide-ranging scope of *Painted Temples* is impressive, its bilingual text engaging and abundance of lavish illustrations a delight, all of which more than compensate for the mild inconvenience of its unwieldy size. The catalogue appended to the volume, which is based upon a gazetteer of wall paintings compiled by Tony Parkinson, provides the reader with a wealth of valuable information, further enriched by cross-references to both published literature and site records accessible via the National Monuments Record of Wales's excellent Coflein database.

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An Archaeological History of Hermitages and Eremitic Communities in Medieval Britain and Beyond. By SIMON ROFFEY. 240mm. Pp xiv + 203, 86 b/w figs. Routledge Studies in Archaeology, Routledge, London and New York, 2023. ISBN 9780367110611. £120 (hbk).

Since Clay (1914) published her seminal work on English hermits and anchorites, various authors have produced studies of different aspects of this topic. Roffey's approach is different from that of his predecessors as he focuses on sites that either survive as standing structures or have been archaeologically investigated. Part one of his book is devoted to an overview of pre-Christian and early Christian hermits and hermitages in Asia and the Middle East. Part two is an overview of hermitages in early medieval Europe.

Part three starts with a consideration of the physical setting and religious context of British hermitages, before moving on to a discussion of the hermits and hermitages of late medieval Britain. It is a pity that the latter topic, which in my opinion constitutes the most important section of the book, is covered in one relatively short chapter of twenty-three pages and is restricted to England. Many late medieval English hermits undertook a variety of civic duties to support themselves and help the community, instead of devoting their lives to solitary prayer and contemplation in geographically remote and sometimes hostile locations as their predecessors had done for a thousand years. These civic or community hermits lived and worked in a range of coastal, rural and urban environments. Hermits managed or maintained beacons, lighthouses (assisting maritime navigation), city gates, ferries, fords, roads and bridges. Sometimes they collected alms or tolls. Some also managed or staffed associated chapels. Through acts of Christian charity, these hermits were improving infrastructure, making travel safer, saving lives and helping people, thereby emulating St Christopher, a legendary hermit and popular medieval saint who devoted his life to helping pedestrians safely ford a river. The phenomenon of civic hermits merited greater discussion than it receives here, as it represented a new and radically different eremitic tradition (see Davis 1985; Jones 2019, 106–13, 119–20, 139–42). Unfortunately, the surviving architectural and archaeological evidence directly connected with these civic hermitages in