

# **LH134(E) The Windows of St. Laurence's Church, Lighthorne**

**by**

**Colin Such (2014), based on research by the late Peter Hinman and  
including research notes by Aidan McRae Thomson**

## **Introduction**

Although Lighthorne's church is small and serves a community which in the past has always been a village where the majority of the population were agricultural labourers, it contains stained and painted glass from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some of which is of national importance. Although no documentary evidence supporting it has yet been discovered, it seems highly likely that the reason why Lighthorne has been so favoured lies in its association with the Verney family of Compton Verney. Thomas Verney, who owned Compton Verney from 1526 to 1557, married Alice Tame, who inherited, jointly with her 2 sisters, the Fairford estates in Gloucestershire, in 1547. The Verneys bought out Alice's sisters and for a time held both the Compton Verney and the Fairford estates. The glazing in Fairford Church was accomplished between 1500 and 1517 and was the work of the King's Glazier, Barnard Flower, of Southwark, London. The set of 28 windows at Fairford illustrates the Bible story from Adam and Eve to the Last Judgement and are regarded as the most complete set of medieval windows in England. The central character of Saint Sebastian, in window M on the south wall of Lighthorne Church, is from the same cartoon (original full size drawing) as that in Fairford Church. It seems highly likely that this stained glass figure was commissioned for the chapel at Compton Verney, or that it was moved to the chapel in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The medieval chapel at Compton Verney, which had been the church of the deserted village Compton Murdak, was demolished in 1772, when Lancelot "Capability" Brown landscaped the grounds of Compton Verney. The Palladian style replacement for the chapel was not constructed until 1776-9. Meanwhile, in 1774 the church at Lighthorne was rebuilt and as the Verneys were Lords of the Manor, it is possible that the St. Sebastian window, as well as others, were used in the re-building. Today all that remains of Lighthorne's 1774 church is the tower, some of the bells and some of the windows, including the St. Sebastian figure.

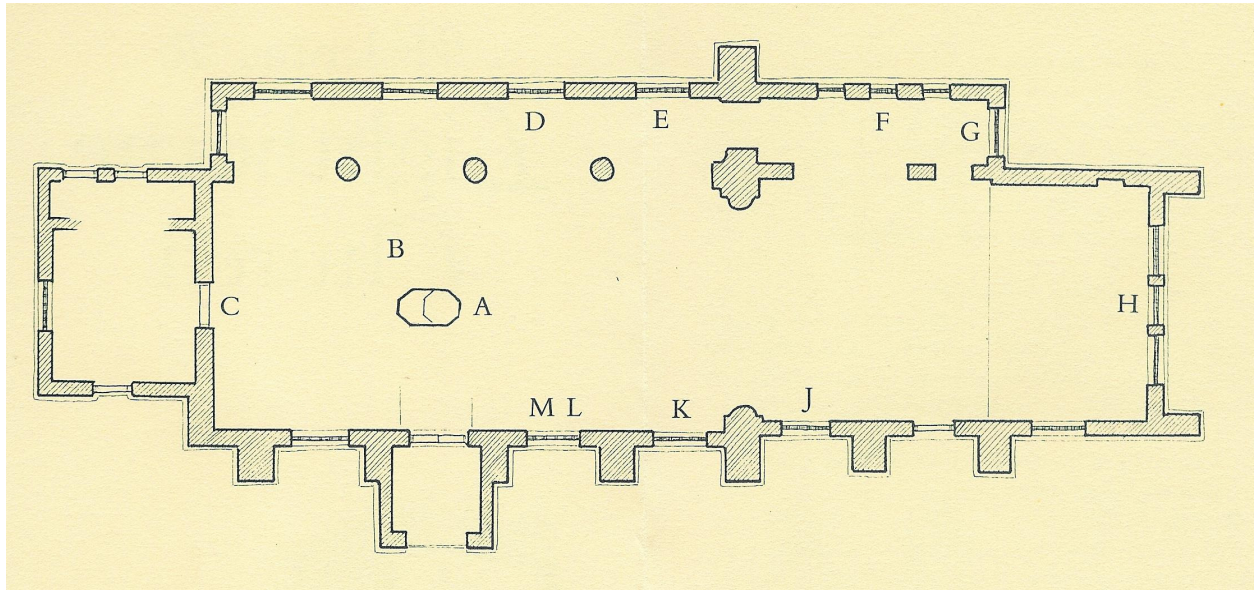
## **The Non-pictorial Glass**

The non-pictorial windows in the nave and chancel are of Victorian plain glass with a red border, contemporary with the building of this part of the church in 1875-6. This border can also be seen around the pictorial windows where the design allows for it.

Some of the tower glass is broad glass and is probably the original glass supplied when the tower was built in 1773-4. Some has been replaced through the years and one panel has an inscription "James Brown 18<sup>th</sup> May 1865".

## The Pictorial Windows

The windows are described in a clockwise notation, starting from window C.



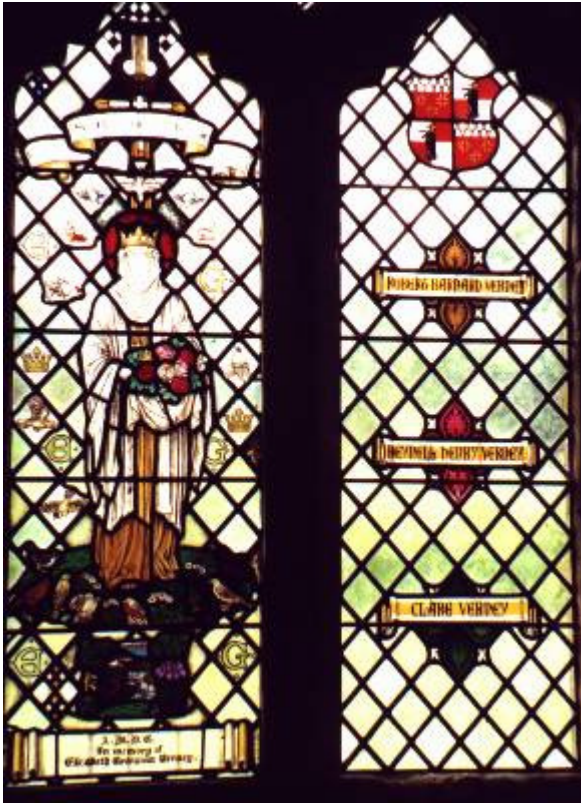
### Window C

This is the only modern window in the church. It was designed in 1996 by Chris Lund of Coventry and has an attractive spring floral theme. It commemorates the life of a village resident, Vicky Stephenson.



The original artwork for the design by Chris Lund, in the archive of the Lighthorne History Society.

## Window D



### Left Panel

This is a memorial window, dedicated to Elizabeth Georgina Verney (1855 – 1941), depicting St. Elizabeth of Hungary surrounded by 18 different kinds of birds. Elizabeth was a 13<sup>th</sup> century saint, who followed the ideals of St. Francis of Assisi. She was married at the age of 14 and widowed at 20. After the death of her husband she sent away her 3 children, reclaimed her dowry and used the money to found a hospital where she served the sick. She died at the age of 24. The window was commissioned in 1946, from the Camm studio in Smethwick. The work is believed to be by Florence Camm (1874-1960), the daughter of the founder, Thomas William Camm. Florence and her brother Walter Herbert are said “to have brought an Arts & Crafts influence into the firm and revitalised its artistic

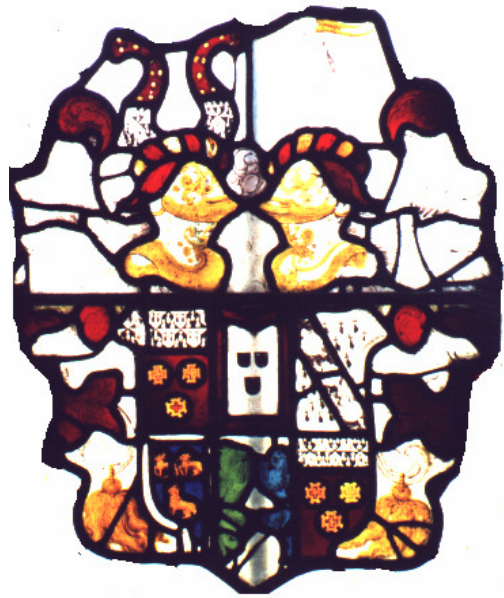
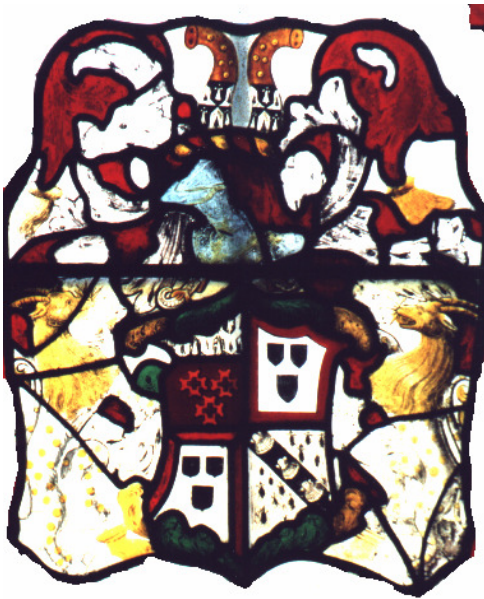
direction around the turn of the century”. Reference: *Victorian Stained Glass*, by M. Harrison. The last major commission undertaken by the firm was the window for the Warwickshire Regimental Chapel in St Mary's Church, Warwick. It is a magnificent window, at least 40 feet high.

### Right Panel

This window contains at the top the Verney coat of arms, quartered with a muzzled bear, and below three cartouches of the sons and daughter of Walter Robert Verney and Elizabeth Georgina Verney, namely Robert Barnard Verney (1881 – 1956), Reynell Henry Verney (1886 – 1974) and Clare Verney (1887 – 1976). The background glass is similar to that of the left panel and it is assumed that this also was the work of the Camm studios and that it formed part of the 1946 commission.



## Window E



This window contains four arms of the Verney family. According to church records, these panels were originally in window H. The lower two of these are very different in style and technique and much older than the upper two.

## **The Lower Pair**

These glazed panels are late 16<sup>th</sup> century and are probably by the Warwick glazier Nicholas Eyffeler. They are similar in style to windows in Charlecote Park and Coughton Court. The panels have obviously been made for a different frame, and may have been transferred from the Verney family chapel at Compton Verney which was demolished in 1772, just prior to the construction of the Thomas Squirrell church in Lighthorne in 1773-4.

In an undated survey of the glass by H. T. Kirby, (Hon. Fellow of the British Society of Master Glass Painters) the family crests illustrated are discussed. The lower left panel is described as a quartering of four, the families represented being, from top left to bottom right, Verney, Darcy, Darcy, Wendesley. The lower right panel is a quartering of six, representing Verney, Darcy, Wendesley, Greene, Tame and Verney.

Nicholas Eyffeler was born at Osnabrück in the Province of Westphalia in Germany. He worked as a glazier during Elizabeth I's reign, until his death in 1592. Examples of Eyffeler's work are only rarely documented and attempts to trace examples of it have to rely on inference and conjecture. His speciality was heraldic glass although he did produce pictorial windows. Much of his work included the difficult medieval technique of inseting, where a single piece of one colour is incised and another colour inset, giving a very jewel like effect. This technique was lost in England and was re-introduced from the Rhineland and Low Countries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

He is known to have produced glass for many local churches and grand houses, including Charlecote Park for the Lucys, with whom his relationship was very close. Eyffeler's will contained the request "my worshipfull good freinde Sir Thomas Lucy shall act as overseer for it". He is known to have worked for other local families including the Actons (Sutton), Catesbys and Wrights (Withybrook). Three shields, dated 1558, remain at Charlecote, namely those of Lucy, Acton and Elizabeth's Royal Arms. All are in new mountings. Other possible examples of his work can be seen in the Beauchamp Chapel in St. Mary's, Warwick. Other glass is recorded at Withybrook, south transept, Lapworth, west window, and Tenbury, Worcs, south aisle.

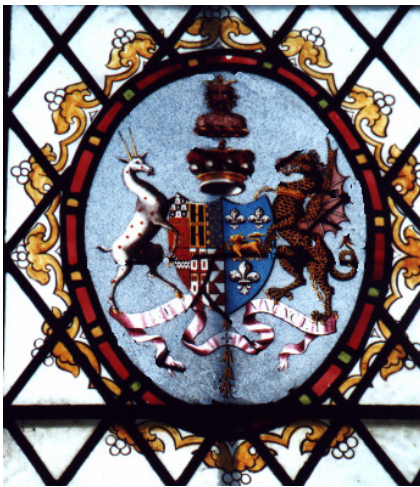
It is not known whether he produced glass for the Verneys at Compton Verney but it is quite possible considering the strength of his connections with the other leading families. If Eyffeler produced some of the glass for the family chapel at Compton Verney, it is quite possible that it was decided to re-use some of it in the new church at Lighthorne, as both the Lordship and Advowson had passed to the Verneys at this time.

Portraits of Eyffeler and his wife (dated 1577) can be seen in the Town Council Chamber, at the Court House in Jury St., Warwick. On his death the majority of his fortune was used to endow the Eyffeler Almshouses in Warwick.



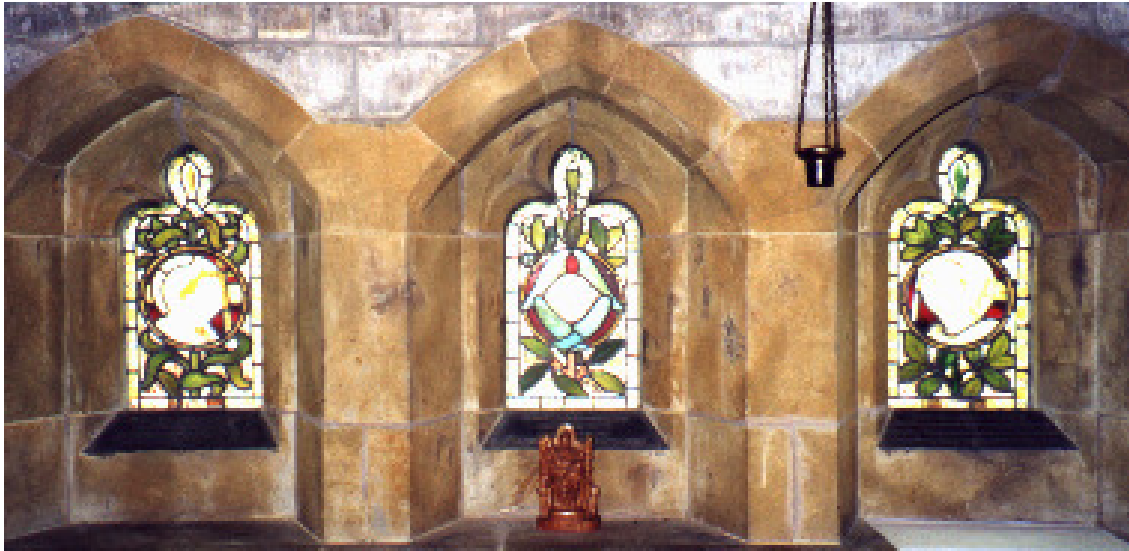
Detail from a portrait of Nicholas Eyffeler, hanging in the Warwick Council chamber, at the Court House in Jury St. Warwick.

### Window E, the Upper Pair



The upper two arms are enamelled glass of the late seventeenth century. Top left is described as a quartering of six with an impalement (a connection by marriage where the wife is herself a heraldic heiress). The families represented are Verney, Greville, unknown, Cheney, Heath and Peyto, all impaling north. The arms top right is a shield with an impalement, complex in arrangement. On the dexter side (left as one faces the arms), is a quartering of four, the first and fourth position comprising Verney, Darcy, Greene and Wendesley, with Tame in the second and third positions. These above impale a quartering of six, including Southwell, Wythingham, Falstofe, Tendring and Southwell.

## Window F



These are three small memorial windows to members of the Verney family: “Faith” in memory of Geraldine Willoughby de Broke, who died in 1894 aged 47; centre window in memory of infant Pamela Verney, who died in 1878 aged 2; “Valour” in memory of Henry Peyto Verney, Lt., 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars, who died in 1893 in a drowning incident in Poonah, India.

The attractive designs are by the famous studios of James Powell & Sons (Whitefriars Glass) of Whitefriars, London. Glass was made at the Whitefriars works from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and stained glass was made from 1844 to 1980. The central window was commissioned in 1878, but the artist is unknown. It was presented in 1880. The flanking ones, by artist Ada Currey (1852 – 1913) were commissioned in 1895 and presented in 1897. (References: *Worcester Diocesan Church Calendar* 1880, p. 185 and 1898, p. 200; Dr. Dennis Hadley’s list of Powell commissions, at [www.nadfas.org.uk](http://www.nadfas.org.uk).)



## Window G



This is a memorial, in Arts and Crafts style, to the Hon. Robert Reynell Verney, who died in Cork, Ireland in 1872, aged 22. It was presented by his brother officers of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Light Infantry. The 1875-6 rebuilding of the church was also undertaken in his memory. The left window depicts St. John the Evangelist and the right window St. Michael.

The windows were designed by the Powell studios of Whitefriars, London and the artist was Henry E. Wooldridge (1845 – 1917). (Reference: Dr. Dennis Hadley's list of Powell commissions, at [www.nadfas.org.uk](http://www.nadfas.org.uk)). Wooldridge worked for the Powell studios for 20 years and had been a studio assistant to Sir Edward Burne-Jones.



## Window H



The main east window is by the famous London studios of James Powell & Sons of Whitefriars and the designers were John W. Brown and C. Hardgrave. The panel on the left depicts Mary, Martha and Jesus, that in the centre depicts the crucifixion with the Virgin Mary and St. John and that on the right Jesus and Mary Magdalene. A brass plate on the north side of the chancel states that the window was presented in 1886 by the Hon. Mrs. Margaret Louisa Smith in memory of her sister, the Hon Alice Jane Tritton and of her own husband, Jervoise Smith Esq. (References: *Worcester Diocesan Church Calendar* 1886, p. 196; Dr. Dennis Hadley's list of Powell commissions, at [www.nadfas.org.uk](http://www.nadfas.org.uk).)

## Window J



### Left Panel

This is an early inset panel depicting the arms of Warwick as Beauchamp. It is believed to be 14<sup>th</sup> century and is the oldest glass in the church. This and a second panel are recorded in Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (published 1656) as follows, "In the Chancel Windows, are the Earl of Warwick's Arms as well as the old Earl's as Beauchamps". The Earl of Warwick arms have disappeared. This panel was presumably reinstalled in the 1774 church and again reinstalled in the 1875-6 church.



### Right Panel

This window has one small but attractive panel depicting a crown, with the letters underneath "HV" and the date 1413. It commemorates the accession of Henry V, which was generally welcomed and was often commemorated. The staining technique used on the glass was available in 1413. The date of this glass coincides with the date of the tenor bell.

## Window K



This window is entitled “Our Lord’s Charge to St. Peter” and is by the Warwick glazier W. Frank Holt (1843 – 1928), of Holland, Son and Holt. (Reference: *Warwickshire Parish Churches* by E. H. Lingen Barker, circa 1890, p. 66-67.) The studios were at 3 Priory Road, Warwick. It was presented by the architect John Gibson, on completion of the 1875-6 church. However, the borders are irregular and clearly the glass was not designed for the window and has been cut to fit the frame.

## Window L

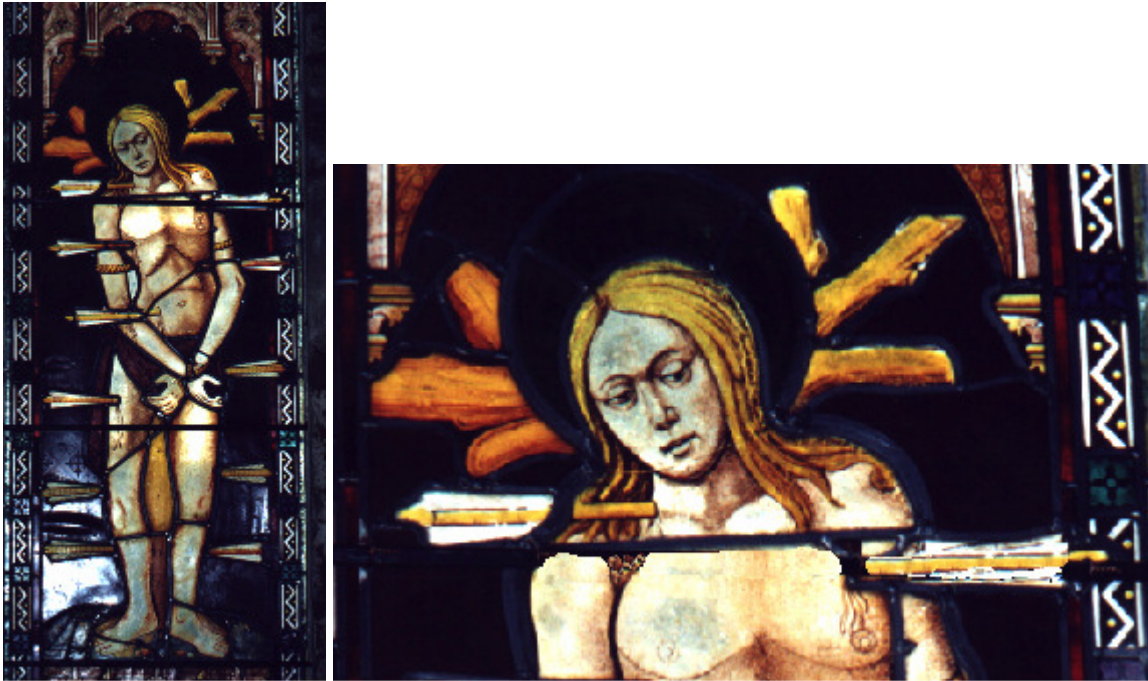


This is another example by the Warwick glazier W.F. Holt, of Holland, Son and Holt. (Reference: *Warwickshire Parish Churches* by E.H. Lingen Barker, circa 1890, p. 66-67.) This window, together with the adjacent St. Sebastian window, was presented by the Lighthorne based builder of the 1875-6 church, William Wilkins, who lived at Dene Hollow.

It shows the martyrdom of St. Laurence, the patron saint of the church. He was a third century Roman martyr, born in Spain and martyred by the emperor Valerian. When the Prefect of Rome demanded that Deacon Laurence hand over the riches of the Church in Rome he distributed as much Church property as he could to the poor and then presented to the Prefect the poor, crippled, blind and the suffering and said that they were the true treasures of the Church.



## Window M



This window, with its surround matching the St Laurence window, shows the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, a third century Roman martyr. The central figure of the saint is of early 16<sup>th</sup> century date and the style is German or Flemish. It was incorporated into the Victorian frame for the 1875-6 church rebuilding by the Warwick glazier W.F. Holt, of Holland, Son and Holt. (Reference: *Warwickshire Parish Churches* by E.H. Lingen Barker, circa 1890, p. 66-67.)

A window from the same cartoon (a full-size design for a window or panel) can be seen in window 21 of Fairford Church, Gloucestershire, which contains the finest set of medieval windows in England. The glazing of Fairford is believed to have been under the direction of the Glazier to King Henry VIII, Barnard Flower, of Westminster. The surround and some of the arrows are Victorian in date and the Lighthorne figure has a replaced left leg, lower right leg and left hand. Also one arrow is missing and one arrow, on the right side facing the window, passes behind the arm in Lighthorne and in front in Fairford. These differences are probably the result of repairs.

Aidan McRae Thomson of Norgrove Studios, Redditch, stained glass window restorers, has published the following information on the website, [www.flickr.com/photos/24141292@N02/2440355367](http://www.flickr.com/photos/24141292@N02/2440355367).

*The figure of St Sebastian is clearly much older than the surrounding window and itself of two different dates, his torso upwards being glass from c1510, whilst his legs clearly a repair from around 1600 (employing enamel for the ground and painted in a much cruder style than the original work).*

*Whilst this window was removed for repair in 1998 I made something of a discovery about its provenance. It had been assumed to be perhaps connected with the mid sixteenth century heraldic glass by Eyfeller, but I felt the face was somewhat reminiscent of earlier work, in particular the glass at Fairford.*

*On this assumption I revisited some books on Fairford's glass, looking for clues that would conclusively link this glass with the same, Southwark based and Flemish influenced workshop of Barnard Flower and his associates. What I found was somewhat more than a clue...*

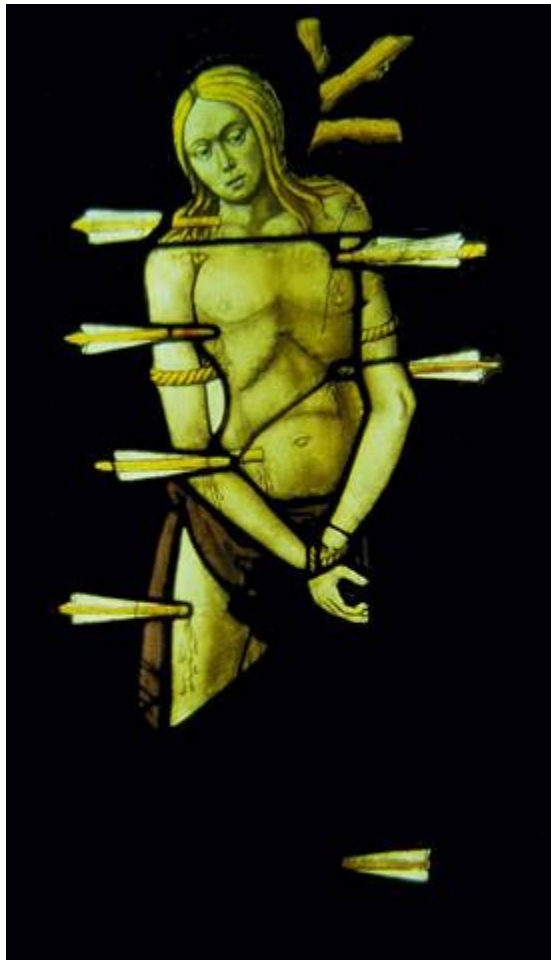
*I found that not only does Fairford possess a similar figure of St Sebastian (in the south nave clerestory), but on closer examination it was clear that this figure at Lighthorne was actually cut from the exact same cartoon! All of the original part of the figure almost exactly follows the same cutline used for the Fairford St Sebastian, the paintwork of which is far less well preserved than this one. On the other hand the original legs at Lighthorne have been replaced with a rather lifeless approximation of what was there originally. Comparison with the Fairford figure allows us to reconstruct the original outline of feet and legs here.*

*There are subtle differences: at Fairford the figure has a red background, whereas here it seems the background was originally clear white glass (small surviving element between torso and arm). One of the arrows here is partly painted onto the same piece of glass as the saint's neck, whilst at Fairford it is entirely leaded. With the face at Fairford in much poorer condition it is unclear how freely this figure was interpreted from the same cartoon.*

*Instances of the reuse of cutlines for certain figures were fairly common in the middle ages, occurring not only in the same buildings but even in adjoining lights of windows. Fairford has at least two such instances amongst the prophets and apostles of the nave aisles. However this seems to be so far the only example of one of the Fairford designs being re-used anywhere else.*

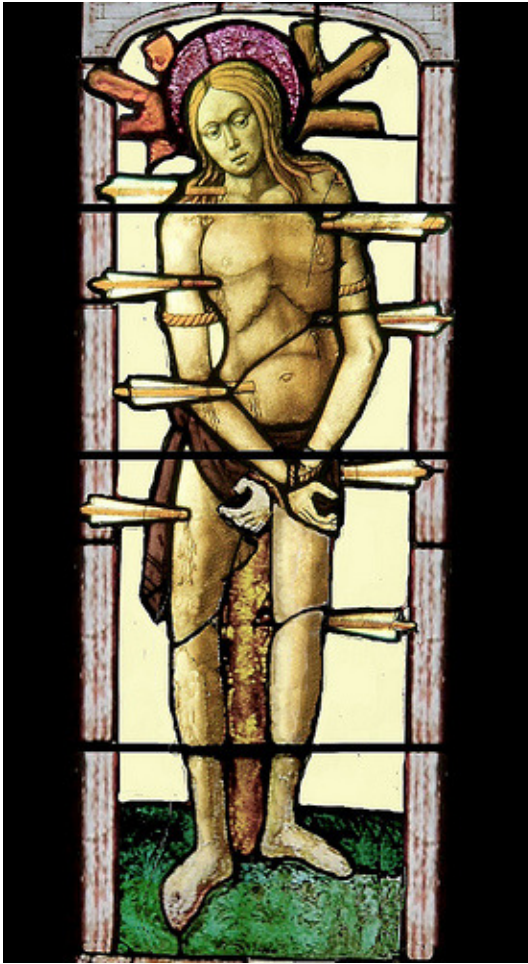
*The current window thus comprises three separate dates:*

- *c.1510-20 - head, arms, torso of St Sebastian, his right thigh, 7 of the 11 piercing arrows and the right hand tree branches (see illustration)*



- *c.1600 repair - St Sebastian's legs, his left hand, 4 of the lower arrows and the enamelled ground on which he stands*
- *c.1875 - entire remainder of window, including all of the blue background behind St Sebastian, plus his halo.*

## ***Reconstructed St Sebastian by Aidan McRae Thomson***



*Reconstruction of how the c.1510 Fairford-related, Southwark workshop, St Sebastian figure (now in St Laurence's Church, Lighthorne) may have appeared originally.*

*This reconstruction uses the almost identical figure in the south clerestory at Fairford to complete the missing parts of the figure. (Elements were sourced from Sarah Brown's book on the Fairford glass). Both figures were evidently produced from the same cutline, therefore the overall composition must be fairly accurate.*

*The differences are in the choice of glass used for the background, which though red at Fairford was clear / white glass in the Lighthorne figure. (Two elements of this survive in the patch left of torso, and a piece of clear ground attached to the topmost arrow on the right).*

*The architectural framework is based on that at Fairford, though it is otherwise conjectural and we have no direct evidence for it. Though the figure here follows the same dimensions it may have been set in a*

*wider panel, since some of the arrows protrude some distance from the figure, possibly more so than at Fairford.*

*It is also possible that the figure was set on a purely clear background of quarries with no framework at all, perhaps just a decorative border either side, as in the almost contemporary glass at St Michael le Belfry in York.*

*Though it is now clear the glass originated from the same Southwark workshops as the Fairford glass, the original setting of the window remains a mystery, though Lighthorne itself is not considered to be its original home. Glass of this quality and origin was generally evidence of aristocratic, often royal patronage. Nearby Compton Verney is considered a potential candidate, though nothing remains there of the medieval building.*

***So far it remains, embedded and almost camouflaged as it is by a somewhat commonplace Victorian window, a relatively unknown and obscure work, but one with national significance.***