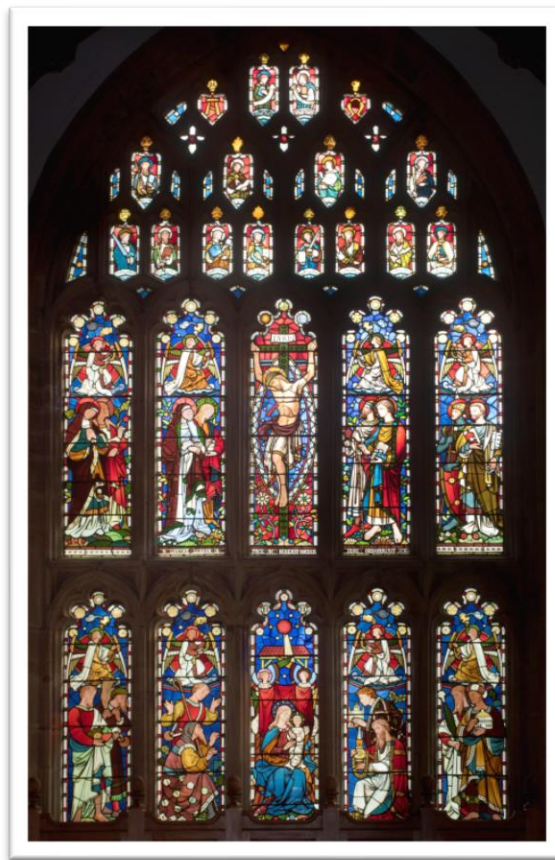




A Window on St. James Taunton



A guide to our windows and what they can tell us



Welcome to St. James

Our church contains many fine examples of stained glass, depicting New and Old Testament themes. In times past when few members of the church were literate they would have been part of the rich visual imagery that was contained in the church building. It is likely that in very early times the walls would have been painted with scenes from the bible. Below is an example of wall painting from Winchester Cathedral.



Although there has been a church on this site since the 12th Century or possibly even earlier, it has been altered over the years and most of the current stained glass dates from the 19th or early 20th centuries.

The plain glass which enables the church to have a light interior is probably the oldest glass in the building.

The pictorial windows are largely memorials for former church members and they are part of our story as a place where worship of the Lord Jesus has existed in Taunton for over a thousand years.

We hope that you find this guide helpful as you look at the stories and individuals in the glass.

Jenny Wakefield 2017 Fifth Edition June 2024

Acknowledgments

Grateful thanks are due to Mike Gillingham who has researched the history of St. James and for the material in Revd. Edwin Hirst's History of St. James, in which there is a section on the stained glass, to David Yaw for access to Yea family history, my proof readers Jane Dickson and Martin Wakefield and last but by no means least to Richard Sainsbury for his superb photographs.

The Chancel

The East Window



As you enter the church you will see ahead of you the stunning East Window of the church. If the projection screen is up, please feel free to walk into the chancel behind the screens, so that you can take in the full beauty. It portrays the two key events in the story of Jesus. The two central panels arrest the eye, with Jesus sitting on his mother's lap below, and his crucifixion above.

In the lower panels, the shepherds worshipping him on the left, mirrored on the right by the wise men of the East, who have travelled following the star to find him, holding out their rich gifts.

Directly above the nativity scene is Jesus suffering on the cross, watched by his followers on either side. To the left is Mary the mother of Jesus and

Mary Magdalene, denoted by her long flowing hair. To the extreme left are the other two Marys. On the right of the crucifixion, St. John (with a staff) and Joseph of Arimathea (with a jar of spices) stand; Joseph is one of two followers who risked the Roman governor Pilate's wrath by asking if he could bury Jesus. On the extreme right is Peter (with his keys) and the Roman centurion who was present at the cross.

The Story of Jesus is central to what we believe as Christians: “God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall have eternal life” (John 3:16). This is a simple but profound statement summarising the Creator of the Universe’s deep compassion for mankind.

Above the crucifixion scene are some of Jesus’s followers and other figures. From the top these are:

St. Mark and St. Luke Two of the gospel writers							
flanked by the Alpha and Omega symbolising the Beginning and the End							
St. James		St. Matthew (with a book)		St. John (with a chalice)		St. James the Less (Jesus brother, with a fuller’s club)	
St. Simon Zelotes (saw)	St. Philip (cross)	St. Jude (halberd)	St. Peter (keys)	St. Paul (sword)	St. Andrew (cross)	St. Bartholomew (large knife)	St. Thomas (draughts- man’s rule)

Down the centuries symbols have been used for the followers of Jesus, the saints and the martyrs, and they represent either roles and occupation or the means by which they died, often in very gruesome circumstances. Being followers of Jesus in the early history of the church required faith, courage, and deep conviction that Jesus was who he said he was and that the promise of eternal life was a reality. Suffering to the same depth is still experienced by Jesus’s followers today, less so in our Western world than in areas where Christians are in a minority. Many people now are impatient too with religion, which seems to be a byword for intolerance, oppression, cruelty and violence. Jesus would show impatience too, as his message for the world had none of those characteristics and was essentially about love and compassion

The window was donated by the Liddon Family in memory of Louisa Liddon who died in 1858. The Chancel was enlarged in the 1880s, so if this window was already in place before the enlargement it would have been re-sited.

The Liddon Family were a well-known family in Taunton, and included medical practitioners among their number. Their family grave can be found in the churchyard. Louisa’s brother William fought and was wounded at the Battle of Trafalgar, her brother Captain Matthew Liddon sailed with Edward Parry to discover the North-West passage and her nephew, Canon Henry Parry Liddon, was a celebrated 19th Century theologian.

(If you would like a challenge, look over the wooden reredos at the inscription “Louisa Liddon - In Pace Ac Misericordia Jesu Obdormivit - Fer IIIA Hebd Stae 1858 Aetat 69” and see if you can work out what it means! The answer is at the end of this booklet.)

Two other Chancel windows

There are two windows tucked away to the right and left of the East window. On the left is the Resurrection window dedicated to a former Rector (a type of Vicar), the Reverend William Thomas Redfern. He was our longest serving minister, and was at St. James from 1845-1885. Revd Redfern was widowed in 1864 and his first wife Eliza is buried in the graveyard. William was born in 1818, so he was only 27 when he came to St. James; he and Eliza had at least 4 children, Eliza, Ann, Thomas, and Jesse while living in the Parsonage which was next to the church. He would have come to a church which had been enlarged by the energetic activity of Dr. Cottle, whose successors, Reverends Tucker and Shute, did not stay very long. William was remarried in 1879, to Nanette Leland a widow from Thurloxtton. He died in 1885 in Derbyshire.

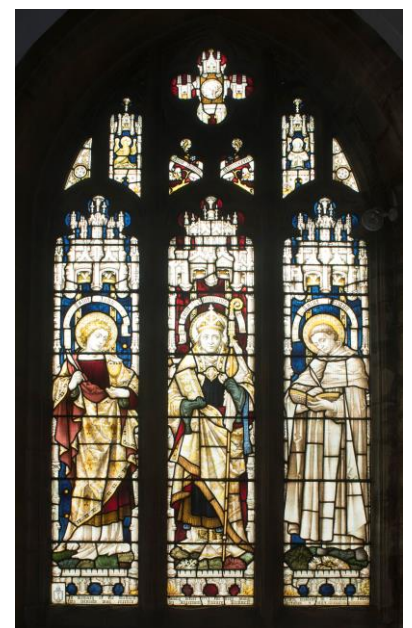


The window shows the risen Christ in the centre panel, and on either side an angel.

The window on the right is a three-light window, showing St. John the evangelist, St. Dionysius in Episcopal robes and St. German in the white habit of a monk.

While St. John is a well-known figure, being one of the three disciples closest to Jesus, and author of the fourth gospel, the other figures are less well known. The episcopal robes on Dionysius, suggests that this may be the judge mentioned in Acts 17:34, who was converted by the apostle Paul, and later, according to early Christian texts, became Bishop of Athens. St. German was a Celtic saint who lived in the 5th Century A.D. and was a contemporary of St. Patrick; he is mainly associated with Wales and the Isle of Man. Both are rather obscure figures in history, and the reason for them being portrayed is not clear. However the presence of St. German is a reminder that Christianity in Britain goes back in time, and that there was an established church in the Romano-British era.

The Window is dedicated to the Bicknell family who were associated with St James before 1732. They were cloth manufacturers of some repute, with a tendency to non-conformity, but at least one of their number was churchwarden of St. James in 1712. The family later moved to London. The window was donated in their memory by Algernon Sidney Bicknell in 1885, when the chancel was enlarged. The crest of the donor of the window appears in the left-hand corner. According to the Dictionary of National Biography, Algernon was a soldier, scholar, author and traveller and was close friend of the artist, J.M.W. Turner.



The North Aisle

The North Aisle contains two powerful windows.

The Old Testament Window



The first celebrates three heroes of the Old Testament. In the centre is Moses, to whom God entrusted the task of leading his Chosen People, the Israelites, out of Egypt, a rescue that has been celebrated by the Jews down the centuries. Moses was entrusted with the Ten Commandments, which remain central to the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths, and form the core of our own legal system.

The other two figures are the second and third Kings of Israel, David and Solomon. David was regarded as probably the greatest of the Old Testament kings and as the author of many of the Psalms in the Bible, which remain a source of encouragement, inspiration and solace to many people. Solomon is famed for the building of the first temple in Jerusalem and his wisdom, including many a pithy quote, can be found in the book of Proverbs.

Like us, none of these men were perfect, and God had cause to take them to task for their shortcomings. Today, as then, we need to pray for those who have authority and the responsibility of government, that they will do what is honest and good and just.

The window was in memory of George Spiller, who died in 1912; son of John and brother of James rebuilt the Church Tower in 1875. The Spillers were a well-known and influential family in the town. Henry James was twice mayor. It is likely they were freemasons, hence the masonic symbols at the top of the window. George's son Herbert is commemorated on the war memorial in the side chapel.

The Children's Window



This is the newest window in the church, being installed in the 1950's. Whereas most of the stained glass of the church depicts saints, prophets or scenes from the life of Christ, this one celebrates children. It was donated in 1952 by John and Jessie Spiller in grateful thanks for the return of eleven nephews from the Second World War*. The two were sitting in the church with Rose Richards, a Sunday school leader and long-term member of the church. The Spillers asked her advice as to what the window they were hoping to donate, should depict. She, having served a long time in Brownies, Guides and the Sunday School, suggested the theme of children. In the centre is Jesus as a child in the temple. On the right is a mother teaching her children to pray and on the left is a child being brought for baptism, showing the St. James font. At the time the window was installed in the 1950s, the font was at the back of the church, but it was moved to its present position in 1980, next to the window in which it is depicted. The children's figures include uniformed organizations, while others show children of different nations and reminds us of the hymn:

“Jesus died for all the children,
All the children of the world,
Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in his sight”
George Bennard (1873-1973)

Children are very important to us at St. James, and we have a number of groups and meeting points for young people as well as links with our local school. The bible advises the importance of training our children in the ways of truth and right living from an early age, and includes some wise advice to both parents and children.

*In 2019 the son of one of those nephews, brought his children and grandchildren to see the window and the tower.

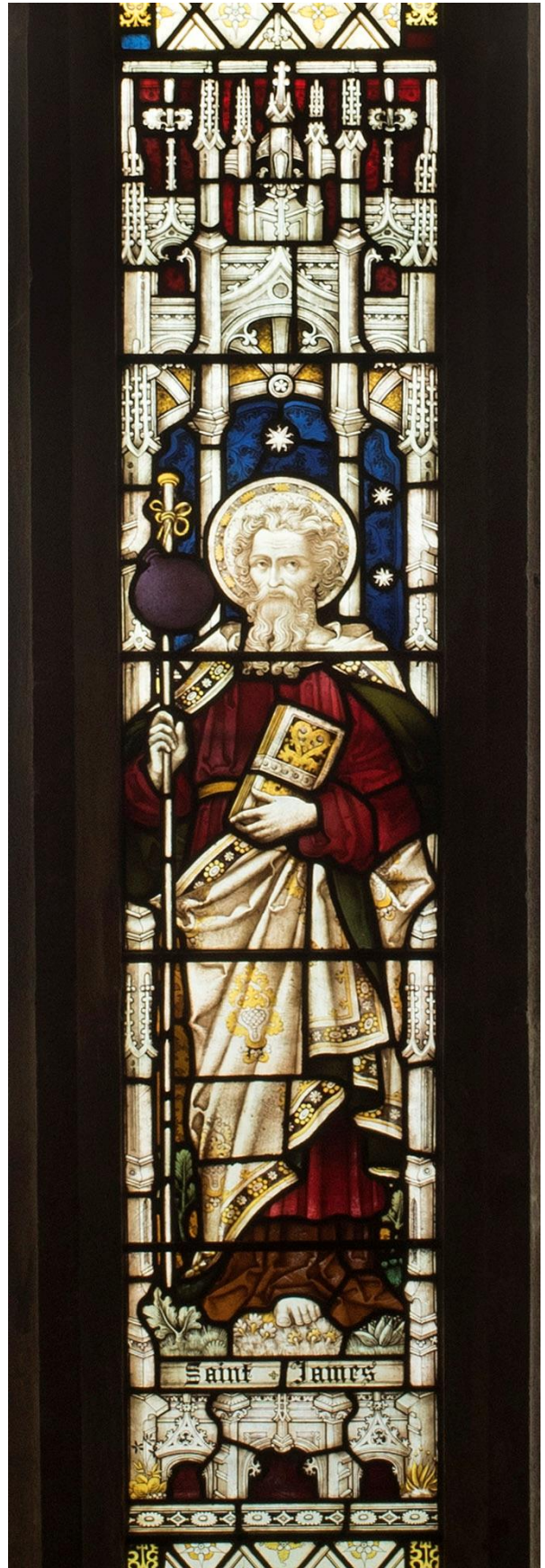
The Side Chapel Windows

On the East side, in the side chapel, there is a very simple picture of St. James ("St. James the Great"), the saint which the church is named after. St James was a simple fisherman, who with his brother John, responded to Jesus's call to follow him. The two brothers followed Jesus for the next three years, learning from him, making mistakes, and finally discovering that Jesus had defeated death and was the Son of God. Although not much is known about James after Jesus's death, we have him as an example of following faithfully and learning what Jesus taught. He presents us with a challenge to do the same.

His symbols include a staff, a book, water bottle and a scallop shell, the sign of pilgrimage in medieval times, when many people travelled to his shrine in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Simplicity of lifestyle and following the example of Jesus is something that Christians are called to adopt.

In contrast to the simplicity of James, the side chapel also contains the arms in the windows of the Yea, Labouchere, Egremont and Lethbridge families, all of whom had associations with the church and town. These are windows which catch the light on a sunny day and reflect their patterns on the floor. The Yeas were landowners and resided at Pyrland Hall, and in the North Aisle there are memorial tablets of the family. Henry Labouchere was a wealthy, well-connected and active MP for Taunton from 1832-1859, and a government minister. He was elevated to the Lords and took Taunton as his Barony title. However, he was also the last Baron Taunton as he died without male heirs.



The Earls of Egremont are associated with the Wyndham family of Somerset, who had extensive landholdings in West Somerset. In the 17th and 18th Centuries, members of the family were members of parliament. Sir Thomas Buckler Lethbridge was at a patron of the benefice and benefactor. It was he who gave land to the church on which the 19th Century school was built (now our church hall).

It is a timely reminder that death is a great leveller, and all, humble or high born, have to face the ultimate journey and adventure.

There is also the seal of Taunton Priory in the window which commemorates the connection to the nearby Priory which existed from the 12th to the 16th Century, and quite possibly earlier, as a monastic foundation.



The Yea, Labouchere and Egremont family crests



The Lethbridge family crest

The South Aisle

The South Aisle has four impressive windows.

The first window over the South West door contains pictures of three women; these are the Three Graces. Faith, Hope and Charity (or Love), (or Faith, Charity and Hope given their order in the window).

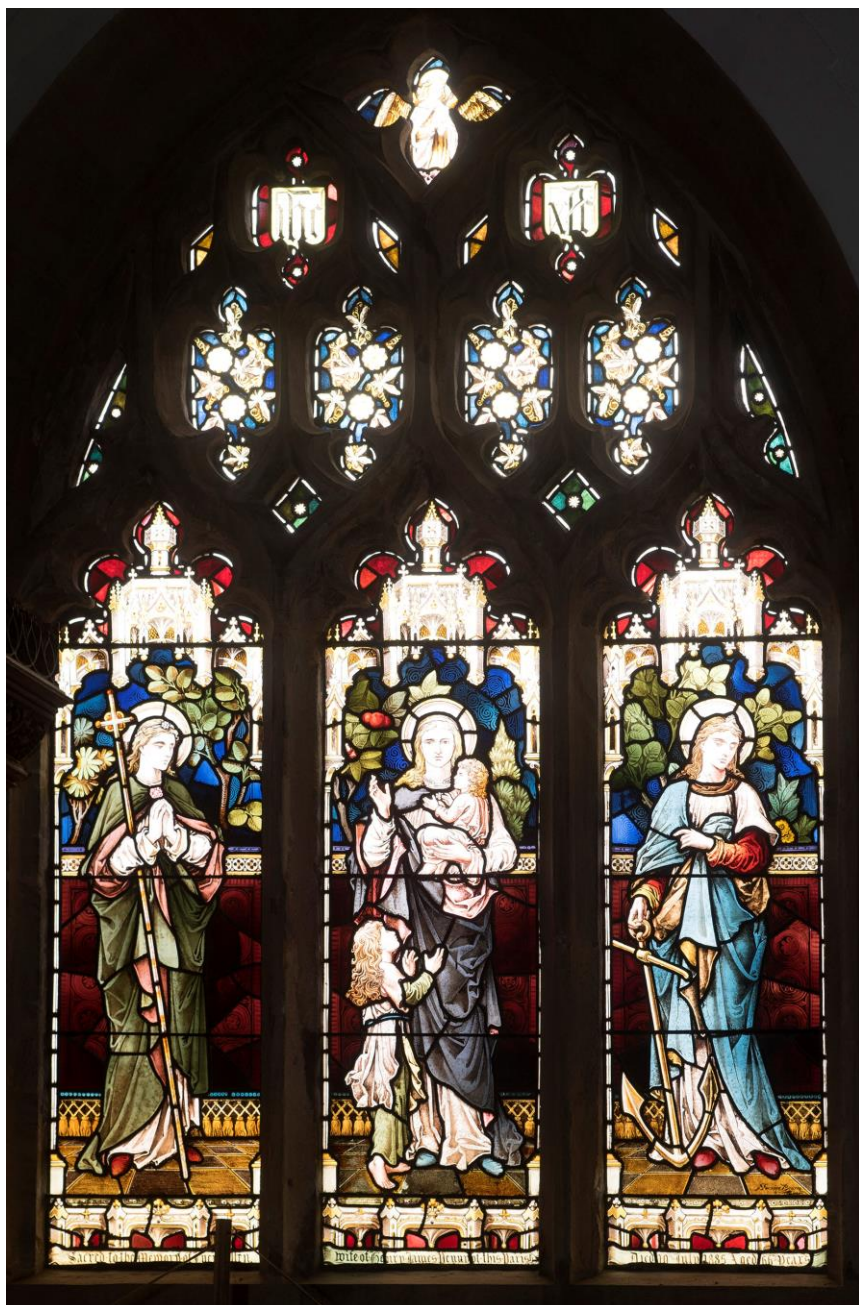
The window reminds us of the words written by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 13: *“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love”*

Above the figures in the small tracery windows are the figures of the four patron saints St George with his dragon, St Patrick with a shamrock, St. Andrew with his cross and St. David with his bishop's crozier.

The window is in memory of Lucy Ellen Penny who died in 1885. Lucy was the wife of Henry James Penny, who was the retired Deputy Inspector of the Madras Medical Service. They had been married in India in 1846. The Penny's have a family grave in the churchyard.

The three other windows tell of well-known events or parables from the Gospels, which illustrate the profound wisdom of Jesus and his compassion for ordinary people.

They would all have been put in after the widening of the South Aisle which occurred in 1837-8.



The Good Samaritan Window

Jesus did not tolerate discrimination. He told the story of a man who was robbed and injured by thieves while travelling to Jerusalem. His plight was ignored by two religious leaders and he was only helped by a Samaritan, who would have been regarded by the Jews as an outcast. It's a simple story which has a message for us today, as it always has, down the centuries. At a time, when intolerance to those who are "different to us" is increasing, we need to recall this well-known parable, and respond with compassion and generosity, not hatred and prejudice.



The window is in memory of James Hardwill who died in 1887, at the age of 47. James was a butcher who lived in East Reach, and it was donated by his brother Edwin.

Three Stories of Healing



Left: The healing of a sick man

This could have been any of a number of healings that Jesus performed for people who would have been forced to beg for a living as there was no alternative means of support. It may even have been the man, whose friends lowered through the roof of the house where Jesus was staying, recorded in Luke chapter 5 v 17ff and also in Mark and Matthew. In this case Jesus chose to forgive the man's sins, healing his mind before healing his paralysis.

Centre: The Raising of Jairus' Daughter

Jairus was a well-known leader of the Jewish people, but when his daughter fell sick, he put aside his pride and went and asked Jesus for help. Jesus responded and although everyone thought the little girl was dead, Jesus returned her to her parents alive and well.

Jesus was a powerful healer, and people flocked to him for help. God's power of healing both mind and body was made available to Jesus' followers and is still available today.

Right: Giving sight to the blind

In the last panel, Jesus touches the eyes of a blind man, enabling him to see again. It is hard to imagine what it is like to be unable to see the world around us; no wonder the gospels often record people whom Jesus healed as leaping for joy and praising God.

This window is in memory of William and Abigail Goodland. The Goodlands were coal merchants in the town, and there are many reminders of their family's existence in the town; Goodland Gardens, Coal Orchard Car Park and the Coal Orchard pub to name three. One of their grandsons, Colonel Tom Goodland, worked as a senior officer in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which laboured after the First World War to give dignity to the thousands who had died in the conflict.

Scenes from the Life of Jesus

Embedded in the three panels of this window are three statements:

Left: “I go to the lost sheep of Israel”

Here Jesus is sending out his disciples on a mission to heal and tell people about the Kingdom he has come to proclaim (Luke chapter 9). They are told to travel lightly without money and rely on being supported by the people they met.

Centre: “Mary has chosen the good part” and

Right: “And he cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus come forth.*”

These two scenes tell of the special friendship and hospitality given by Martha, Mary and Lazarus, a family who lived in Bethany. Martha, the fussy housewife, remonstrating with the Lord about Mary the dreamy girl, who liked to sit and hear Jesus teaching (avoiding the household chores), and Lazarus, the brother. When Lazarus suddenly dies, we hear that Jesus went to their home, and miraculously called him from the grave. It is an amazing story, just as the story of Jairus's daughter is, but the New Testament is an amazing book, and Jesus is a unique person. If you haven't read his story, then do pick up (and take with you) one of the gospels in the rack by the door.

This window is in memory of John and Mary Showers, who died in 1869 and 1873, given by her daughter, Susan who in 1891 was living in Melbourne, Australia. It seems from online records that John was born in Chard and saw service in



the army in India, where in 1822 he married his wife, Mary. Three of their children were born in India, a fourth and fifth in Glasgow and the youngest, Susan, in Ireland. In 1841 the family had returned to Somerset and lived in Coal Orchard near to the church. John aged 54 in 1851 is recorded as a Chelsea Pensioner, and records state that he was admitted as a Chelsea Pensioner in 1838, having served in the 2nd Battalion 1st Foot (Royal Scots) Regiment as a sergeant. He had enlisted in Taunton in 1813 as a 5 foot 4 inch, brown haired, hazel-eyed 17 year old. Three sons and his youngest daughter emigrated to Australia in the mid-19th Century.

The West Window

The West window is situated much higher than the other windows and is more difficult to see and decipher, however, it holds many fine features. Revd. Edwin Hirst, in his history of St. James calls this a Mary Window, because a Mary from the New Testament features in each of the scenes.

At the top there is the Borough arms. Below this are the figures of St. James on the left and St. Andrew on the right. Heraldic designs flank these figures, on the left the Yea family and on the right the Grants. The window is in memory of Louisa Yea and her sister, Charlotte (Grant) daughters of William Walter Yea (son of Sir William Yea the first baronet) and donated under the terms of the will of Louisa who died in 1872. Installed following the rebuilding of the tower, the £150 allocated was insufficient but the additional cost was provided by a member of the Grant family and is based on 14th Century drawings. The windows are in pairs.

Left: shows the nameless woman in Luke 7, often identified as Mary of Magdala, washing Jesus's feet with her tears, scornfully observed by Simon the Pharisee.

Centre: shows Mary Magdalene, recognising the risen Lord.

Right: shows three women, including Mary at the tomb being addressed by the angel, who tells them that Jesus has risen from the tomb.

Below are three scenes illustrating the life of the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany, where Jesus often found hospitality and friendship. On the left the two sisters grieve at the death of Lazarus, in the centre Lazarus is raised and on the right Mary and Martha are in their home. These themes repeat the story from the window in the South wall.

The celebration of women in this window is noteworthy, and perhaps reflects on the relationship between the donor and her sister. Perhaps it is also a reminder that women played a very special part in so many aspects of Jesus's life, from his birth to his death and resurrection. In a male dominated era, that was remarkable.

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Answer to the challenge question about the East Window inscription also to a woman

Louisa Liddon
In Pace Ac Misericordia Jesu Obdormivit
Fer IIIA Hebd Stae 1858 Aetat 69

The second line is reasonably easy: Pace = peace, Misericordia = mercy and Obdormivit = fell asleep. So this translates as: *In the peace and mercy of Jesus, fell asleep*

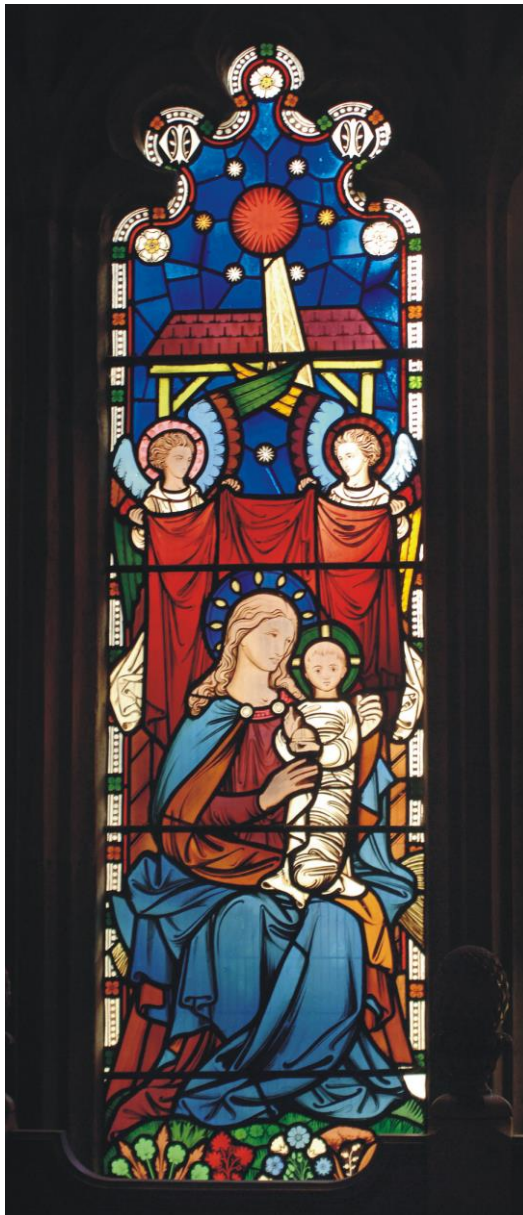
The third line is not at all obvious, with a sort of coded date with Latin abbreviations. A nearby tablet on the South wall of the chancel helps by giving the date of death for Louisa Liddon as "Tuesday in the Holy Week 1858 aged 69 years."

The abbreviations are: Fer = Feria = weekday; IIIA = third day of the week = Tuesday; Hebd = hebdomada = week. Stae = Sanctae = Holy. So, surprise, surprise, this translates as:

on Tuesday in Holy Week, 1858 aged 69.

The West Window





Detail from the East Window