

A short history of the stained glass windows of St John's Church

The small, Victorian Gothic Church of St John the Evangelist, at the corner of Page and Campbell Streets in Moruya, has two claims to fame. The first is that it was designed by Arthur Blackett, a member of the Blackett family of architects who designed many of the early churches in eastern Australia; and, secondly, all the windows in the main body of the building are of stained glass.

When the design of a simple Gothic style church was chosen, there were many who disapproved, as it was noted that the design had been used previously for a church that had been built at Junee. Those who dissented felt they were getting a second-hand plan, but for all that, the church was built according to the drawings submitted by Arthur Blackett.

There are ten windows in the main body of the church. The artwork of the windows varies from the traditional, as seen in the north wall, and a more modern style, such as the east and west windows, to the very modern style of the two windows nearest the vestry door on the south wall.

The best time to view the windows is during a daytime service on a sunny day when all the rich colours are brought alive and really enhance the fine artwork evident in each of the ten windows. The atmosphere of quiet organ music adds to the setting, giving all a sense of peace and wonder at the beauty of all creation.

Sources for notes about the windows:

1. Archives of Moruya and District Historical Society; and
2. Moruya Pioneer Directory, published by the Moruya and District Historical Society.
- 3.

East Window

It would be appropriate to begin with the east window that is behind the altar. This window has three panels topped by typical Gothic tracery. It is a reproduction of "The Last Supper" as painted by Leonardo Da Vinci. The window was installed in 1970. The inscription reads:

*To the Glory of God – in Memory of
Abraham, Ada, Raymond and Phyllis Holroyd 1970.*

The members of St John's congregation found that the glare of the sun through the original window made it difficult to see the altar. There had been a bequest from a member of the Holroyd family so it was decided, in 1968, to add to the bequest and install this particular stained glass window to fulfil the terms of the bequest, and, to stop the glare. People contributed willingly so that \$574.00, the cost of the window, was raised in a short time. On the first Sunday of October 1970, the window was unveiled. The dedication took place on 19th September 1971.

Abraham Holroyd was born at Moggendoura on 28th October 1849, the third child of a family of six born to ex-convict Abraham Holroyd (who had been assigned to John Hawdon) and his wife Elizabeth (nee Russell). Abraham junior married Ada (nee Helmes) at St John's on 4th August 1886. Ada was not quite 23 when she married 37 year old Abraham. She had been born at Nerrgundah on 1st December 1863.

In the Obituary, printed in *The Moruya Examiner* on 15th September 1923, Abraham was described as being "of a quiet unassuming nature; his outstanding characteristic being his strict honesty and straightforwardness in all transactions". Raymond and Phyllis were the two children of Abraham and Ada.

St Matthew Window

The window on the north wall and nearest to the pulpit, like all the side windows, is of a simple lancet shape with no tracery. These north facing windows are very traditional in design and depict the writers of the four Gospels that begin the New Testament of the Bible. The first Gospel writer is St Matthew. He is shown holding a book and a pen, which indicates his writing of the first Gospel. In the inscription panel, money bags and a sword are shown. The money bags represent his background as a tax collector while the sword represents his martyrdom. The inscription reads:

*St Matthew, to the Glory of God and In Memory of
Marjory Stewart 1897 – 1993. A Generous
Benefactor of this Parish.*

Marjory and her husband John were regular worshippers at St John's and gave generously with their time and money. John served on the Parish Council for many years.

The St Matthew window was designed, made and installed by Mr Kevin Little, a respected Sydney-based stained glass artist and restoration expert.

St Mark Window

St Mark is the subject of the second window and the writer of the second Gospel that is indicated by the book Mark is holding. The design of the window is still very traditional. The inscription reads:

Memorial to the Du Ross Family Pioneers of the Bingi District.

John Du Ross Senior was born in County Tyrone, Ireland in 1816. Her married Isabella (nee Duncan) in 1836 in Ireland. Their first child, Charles Du Ross, was born in County Tyrone in 1836. The family decided to migrate. They arrived in Australia in 1837. Their three sons and four daughters were born in Liverpool. The youngest, Isabella, was born in 1850. John Senior died in November 1857, at Campbelltown. The remaining members moved to the Moruya district during the 1860's, settling mostly in the Bingie area.

By the late 1880's George Duncan Du Ross and John Alexander Du Ross were on the Building Committee responsible for the erection of the present St John's Church.

John Du Ross died on 31st July 1910 and George died on 26th August 1911. The third brother, Charles, had died on 15th July of the same year. The name Du Ross does not appear in the current telephone directory for the area.

St John Window

St John is the subject of the third window on the north wall. He was the writer of the fourth Gospel. Again the design is very traditional. St John is shown holding a pen above a scroll which folds over the writing desk to display the words: "God is love".

The inscription reads:

*To the Glory of God and in loving memory of John and Angelina Bartlett of Yarragee.
Erected by their daughter Mary.*

John and his wife, Angelina, were both born in 1836 in Somerset, England. They married in 1858 and arrived in Australia aboard the "Queen of England" on 8th July 1859. Their first child, Alice, had been born before they set sail for Australia but died on the voyage and was buried at sea. Ten more children were born while they farmed in the Kiora area – five boys and five girls, the youngest of whom was Mary, born in 1878. John died at Kiora on 1st May 1909 and was described in his obituary as being, "in the truest sense of the term, an honourable and conscientious man and one who had the respect of the whole community". Angelina lived on until 1927. She was spoken of as "a devoted wife and mother, whose first claim was for her loved ones; she spent her time within the precincts

of her home, but whenever occasion arose, she was one of the first to render her neighbours' assistance in sickness or distress". Angelina, like her husband, John, is buried in the Anglican section of the Moruya cemetery.

St Luke Window

The window nearest the porch and entry door is in recognition of the third of the Gospel writers, St Luke, the Physician. This window is still very traditional in its artistic style but the ornamentation is pure Australia!

St Luke is portrayed as a bald and pensive man, standing at a desk, pen in hand and a scroll curling down the front and back of the desk. The usual embellishments around the window are of Australian plants – banksias, bottlebrush and wattle, with a backdrop of gum leaves. This window, on our journey around the church, is the first to have any sort of Australian theme.

It is interesting to note that St Luke is shown to be bald. All the other figures, be they saints or sinners, are drawn with flowing locks of curly hair, but in this window, St Luke the Physician, is bald with short hair!

The inscription reads:

*In loving Memory of Percy Davidson (1879 – 1959) and Maud Davidson (nee Bartlett)
1878 – 1958.
Erected by their Loving Children.*

Maud was born on 26th August 1876 at Kiora, the tenth of the 11 children of John and Angelina Bartlett. She died at Bondi on 2nd August 1958. Her husband, Percy, was born in Eden in 1879 and died a year after his wife. They are both buried in the Rockwood Cemetery.

West Window

The design of the west window is free of ornate embellishment and, as with the east window, has been divided into three panels, which are capped by tracery, and small decorative spaces that emphasise the message of the three panels. Each panel depicts a particular phase of Christ's life.

In the left panel, Christ is shown as a small child, held in the arms of his mother, Mary.

The middle panel shows Christ being baptised by John and receiving the Holy Spirit, shown as a dove descending from Heaven in a ray of light.

The third panel shows Jesus as the shepherd of his flock.

The inscription reads:

In Memory of Miss Ilma Walter, Faithful Servant 1890 – 1971

Irma Walter was the second youngest daughter of Thomas Edward Walter, who was the secretary of the Building Committee that had to steer the Parish through the negotiations and problems of building the present church. She was born in 1890, the middle of all the busy activity of construction and was photographed, as a baby, at the laying of the foundation stone for the church. Oral history has it that Thomas Walter had been involved in the building of the rectory between 1870 and 1873.

From her earliest days, Ilma was involved in the life of St John's. It is thanks to her that much of the correspondence that occurred between her father, Arthur Blackett, Bishop Mesac Thomas and others during planning and construction of St John's, has been preserved. One parishioner remembers Ilma as a large lady who had her own special place in the church where she left a cushion for her comfort. He also remembers her good, strong soprano voice that allowed her to lead the singing at regular church services.

She was very generous to the church. Her assistance included the donation of an organ that was rededicated in her memory, in 1973. It served well until replaced in 1995 by the present instrument. In her will, she left virtually her whole estate to the Parish of Moruya at a time when it was facing a very lean financial period. Her bequest was significant and enabled the Parish to survive that difficult time.

Ilma died on 1st November 1971. On 17th February 1972, there was a hail storm which resulted in the destruction of the west window:

The Anglican Church had its leadlight west window strewn up the aisle like confetti in a storm in which hail, the size of boulder marbles, many more than an inch and a half across, belted down for half an hour.

The replacement window was dedicated to Ilma Walter.

St Peter Window

Moving back towards the altar along the south wall, there are two more windows designed in the traditional manner. The first is of a grey headed and bearded St Peter, The Rock, upon whom Christ said He would found his church. Peter is shown as a solid, resolute man holding the keys and a scroll where several words are easily read, and the rest obscured by the keys. It appears to say, thou art Peter, (you) are (the) rock.”

The inscription reads:

In Memory of Eva Batt 1890 – 1968.

A little searching revealed that Eva Batt had been born Mary Constance Eva Yardley in 1890 at Woollahra, Sydney.

6th June 1912, she married Thomas Pugsley Batt at Annandale, Sydney. Eva's mother was Mary Holroyd, the fifth of Abraham Holroyd Senior's children. She returned to Moruya where she became a part of the noted Batt family that could boast that the world renowned, Lady Bass, Miss Maud Batt, was a family member.

Eva Batt ran the St John's Sunday School for many years while Tom was a handyman/come engineer who had worked in mines in Western Australia, New Zealand and the eastern states of Australia.

They had two children, Lance Batt of Sydney and Mrs Filmer, who would be the mother of baker, Ken Filmer.

Healing the Leper Window

The next window, and also last in the main body of the church made in traditional style, is also the most recent to be installed. Kevin Little, of Arncliffe Studios, Sydney, designed it. He was the designer and maker of the St Matthew window. Several design choices were offered but the donor of the window,

Hilda Catlin, chose the roughly sketched design of the Leper who, once healed, came back to Christ to express gratitude and affirm his faith that healing had happened.

There were two versions offered – one with people in the background and the simpler design that Hilda chose, with a cross at the apex, across which was written the word, "Hope".

Hilda and her family have had a long association with the Leprosy Mission and had a strong affinity with the story of the one Leper who came back to give thanks.

Though her sight is now impaired, Hilda regularly sits where she can see the light through the window she gave in memory of her parents.

Coastal Wetlands Window

We now come to a radical change in design; the last two windows along the south wall as we move back to the altar are totally Australian, and modern. The best way to identify the next window is to quote the text: "Consider the birds and the lilies of the field". The Burgess family commissioned it after the sudden deaths of two family members –

daughter, Jenny (15th October 1947 to 19th August 1965, and her mother, Elsie, 7th July 1911 to 9th July 1966.

The family had moved frequently as Reg had been a banker. At every one of their postings, Elsie had quickly made contact with the Anglican Church in their new town and, being a true banker's wife, soon found herself as Treasurer of the Moruya Anglican Women's Association after their arrival in Moruya in the early 1960's.

The designer of this window lived in South Australia but listened carefully to Reg Burgess's instructions of what he wanted the window to depict. Reg and his remaining daughter, Lesley Pheaney (nee Burgess), were delighted with the resultant design as they felt that it truly represented the Moruya area.

The window shows a coastal wetlands area with a flight of swans crossing the sky; there are also two king parrots perched in a flowering gum. A little lower down is a close-up view of two black swans in flight above the wetlands where one can see a moorhen and two ducks in the water. A "running postman" creeper, in flower, twines its way up the trunk of the gum tree and, if one looks carefully, a ladybird beetle and a green caterpillar can also be found. After the text one can see two crested birds near a large fern.

The inscription reads;

In Loving Memory of Reg Burgess 8.7.13 – 11.5.94; Elsie Burgess 7.7.11 – 9.7.66; Jenny Burgess 15.10.47 – 19.8.65

The original inscription was to Elsie and Jenny and was on a white background. When Reg died in 1994 his name was added and the inscription panel coloured as it can be seen today.

The Sower Window

The last window on the south wall is known as "The Sower". The outstanding feature in a typical Australian rural scene is the large red tractor. There is a farm house in the background in front of a belt of trees. The tractor and plough fill the mid-ground, while a large tree, rocky ground and big thistle in flower, fill the foreground. Seed can be seen strewn across the stones and thistle.

The inscription, under the title, "The Sower" reads:

In loving memory of Donald Wharton 1926 – 1982. At Rest.

Don Wharton farmed in the Forbes area before he and his wife, Nancy, retired to live at Millers Crescent at South Head, Moruya a few years before his death in 1982. Nancy commissioned the window from Melbourne artist, Gerry Cummins, of Eden Park.

She asked for a modern version of the parable of the sower and the seed. She wanted the design to reflect something of the life at Forbes. The result is really unique.

As part of the Centenary of Federation celebrations a design was made to compile a register of monuments and memorials constructed in Australia. Items such as the 'Big Oyster' at Shellharbour or the 'Big Banana' were not to be included, but items like the plaque in a Penrith pub commemorating a popular patron and "The Sower" were included as unique memorials. "The Sower", in St John's Moruya, was the favourite of Beryl Henderson of the Royal Australian Historical Society who was in charge of this project. The Moruya and District Historical Society nominated the window and Kate Boyce and Ann Norfolk carried out the research.