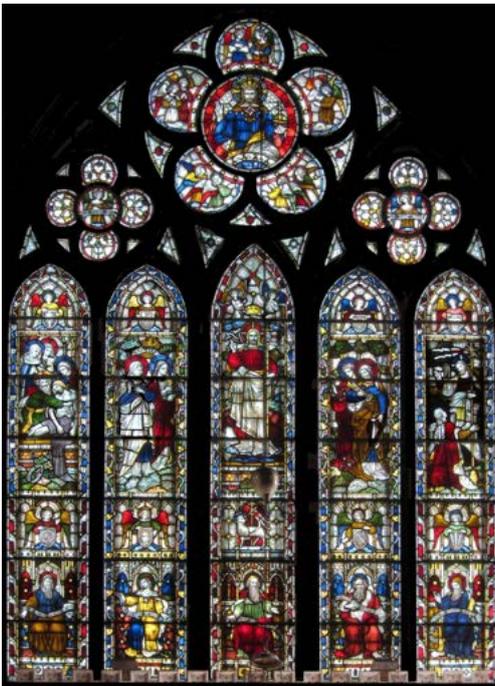


The Stained-glass Windows of St Nicholas Church

This survey of the stained-glass windows in St Nicholas Church is based on a talk given on 24 June 2010 to the Friends of St Nicholas Church and their guests, by Martin Harrison FSA, the leading expert on Victorian Stained Glass. The church was comprehensively rebuilt in the early 1880s to designs drawn up in John Loughborough Pearson's office, but some work had already been carried out in the chancel early in the 1860s, to designs by the eminent Victorian architect William Burges. The new church, built in the Perpendicular Gothic style, has been described as 'one of the best churches imaginable of its type'. However, John Loughborough Pearson did not normally work in the Perpendicular style. It may in fact have been designed principally by Pearson's son Frank (who is buried in the churchyard) and W.D. Caroe, later the architect for St Michael's Elmwood Road, who both joined Pearson's office at the time that the new St Nicholas Church was started.

The east window and many of the principal windows of the nave, all made by the celebrated and productive firm of Clayton & Bell, probably reflect John Loughborough Pearson's taste. But it was probably his pupils who were responsible for collaborations with James Powell & Sons, and with Shrigley & Hunt of Lancaster. Most of these windows were installed during the 1880s and together they comprise an important and unusually consistent programme of Victorian stained glass. Rev. Lawford William Torriano Dale (born 1826; vicar of Chiswick from 1857 to 1898) declared that the first thing that claims the visitor's attention is 'the beauty and number of the painted windows'. The outstanding example of Clayton & Bell's work is the east window (1), of the *Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, and Prophets*, set in place in 1884 and funded by the wealthy local brewer and churchwarden Henry Smith.



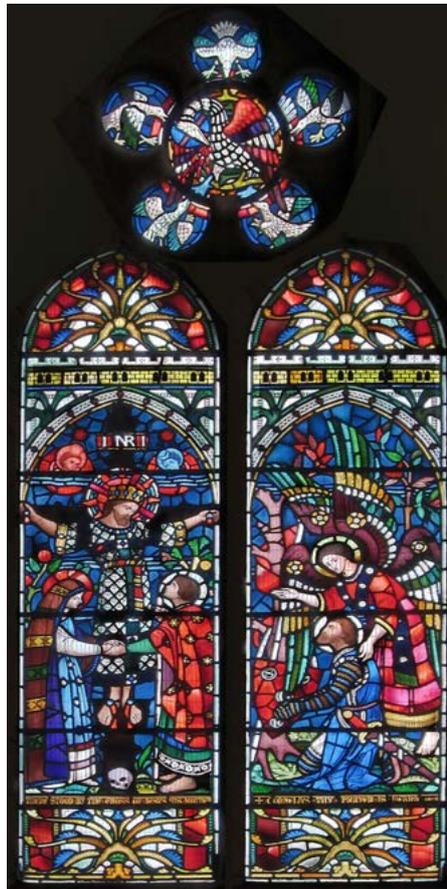
1: Chancel, east window,
Death, Resurrection and Ascension
Clayton & Bell, 1884)



2: Chancel, north side, easterly window,
Christ Stilling the Tempest and the
Raising of Lazarus
(Clayton & Bell, 1884)

By the same firm is the easterly window in the north wall of the chancel (2), *Christ Stilling the Tempest* and the *Raising of Lazarus*, installed in memory of Lord Frederick Cavendish, younger son of the 7th Duke of Devonshire (the Lay Rector), and Irish Secretary in William Gladstone's government, who was assassinated at Phoenix Park, Dublin, in 1882.

But two of the windows at the east end of the church, and the stained glass of the west window in the tower, predate the rebuilding of the early 1880s. By far the most important window in the church, historically and aesthetically, is the westerly window of the chancel's north wall (3), which shows the *Crucifixion* and the iconographically rare story of 'Cornelius and the Angel', as told in *Acts of the Apostles*, chapter 10. Dating to 1860-61, this was installed in memory of Rev. Cornelius Neale (who died in 1857) and his wife Susanna, who are buried in the churchyard just opposite the west door of the tower. The donors were their children, the well-known hymn-writer John Mason Neale (1818-1866), founder of the Ecclesiological Society and of the Society of St Margaret (which later built St Mary's Convent and Nursing Home, close by the church on Burlington Lane), and his sister.

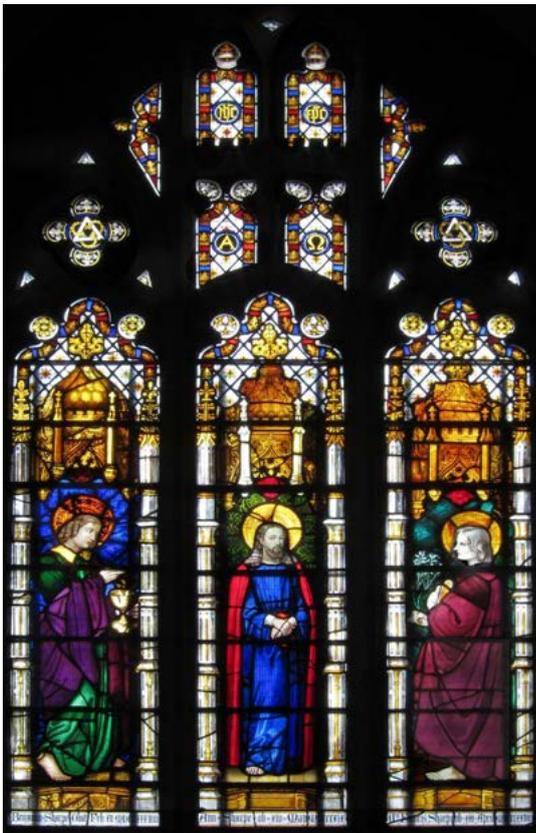


3: Chancel, north side, westerly window, designed by William Burges, *Crucifixion* and *Cornelius and the Angel* (Clayton & Bell, 1860-61)

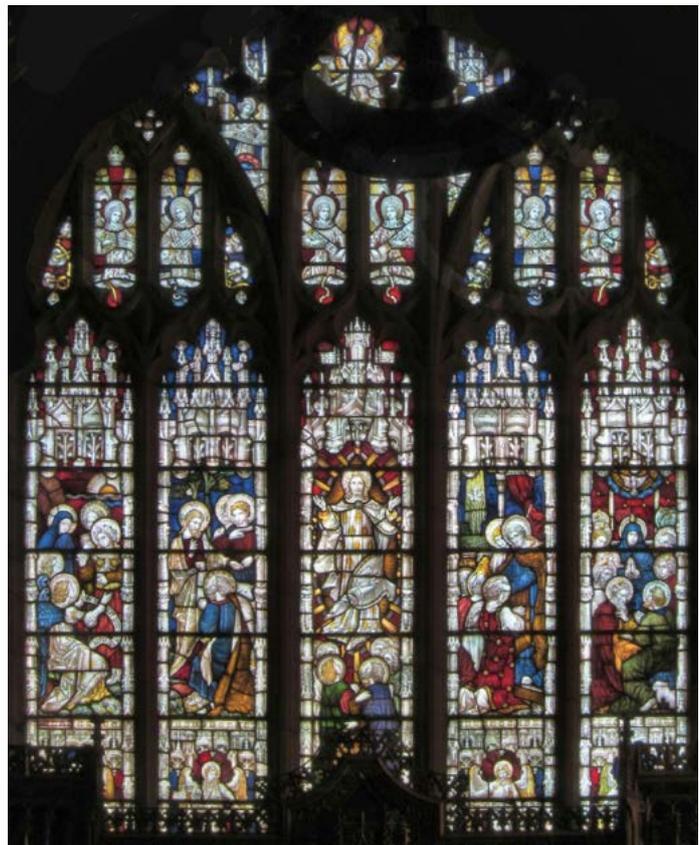
This window was made once again by Clayton & Bell, but here in a unique collaboration with the eminent Victorian architect and designer William Burges, who was undoubtedly responsible for the noteworthy design. Especially striking are

Burges's vibrant, glowing colours, including the precocious use of 'gold pink', and his keen sense of abstract, geometric pattern. This glass was originally installed in the south-easterly window of the chancel, which was renewed by Burges in 1861. It was then reused by Pearson in its current position during his rebuilding of the church in the early 1880s. In its place was installed a new window, paid for by the widow of Admiral Sir Robert Smart KCB (1796-1874) in her husband's memory; this was destroyed by bombing in World War II.

The glass originally installed in the chancel's east window was also reused by Pearson in the south window of the Lady Chapel. Legend has it that this window (4), which shows *Christ with Saint James and Saint John the Evangelist*, was originally made for the clerestory of Cologne Cathedral, but it was in fact put together in around 1850 using techniques that make it look more ancient than actually it is. Windows in other churches across England made by the same mid-nineteenth century antiquarian firm, which is yet to be identified, were given a bewildering range of mythical dates and provenances. This window was presented by John Sharpe, a banker and the architect of the sister church, St Mary Magdalen, Bennett Street (which was also destroyed in World War II), in memory of Benjamin Sharpe (died 1838), Anne Sharpe (died 1819), and William Sharpe (died 1828), a celebrated engraver who lived on Chiswick Mall. The east window of the Lady Chapel (5), of the *Ascension, the Angel at the Sepulchre, Pentecost and St Peter*, was installed in 1884 in memory of Commander Frederick Lewis RN and his wife, again at the expense of Henry Smith.

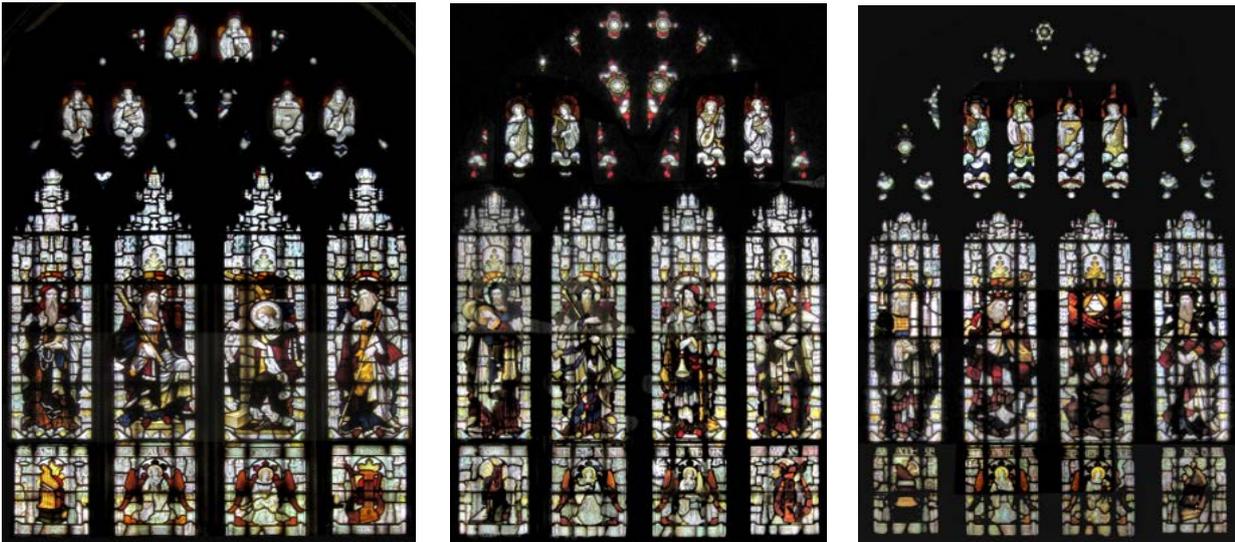


4: Lady Chapel, south window, c.1850 *Christ with SS James and John* (maker unidentified)



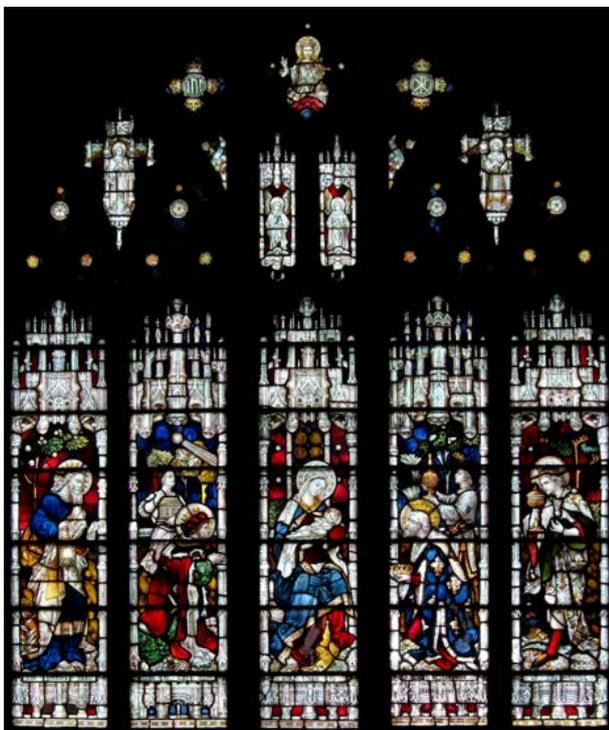
5: Lady Chapel, east window, *Ascension, the Angel at the Sepulchre, Pentecost and St Peter* (Clayton & Bell, 1884)

The three windows of the south aisle (6), all by the firm of James Powell & Sons of Whitefriars and designed by the fine stained-glass artist Charles Hardgrave (1848-1920), were funded in 1886 by a bequest of the former church organist, T.W. Wells: they show a variety of music-making prophets and angels.

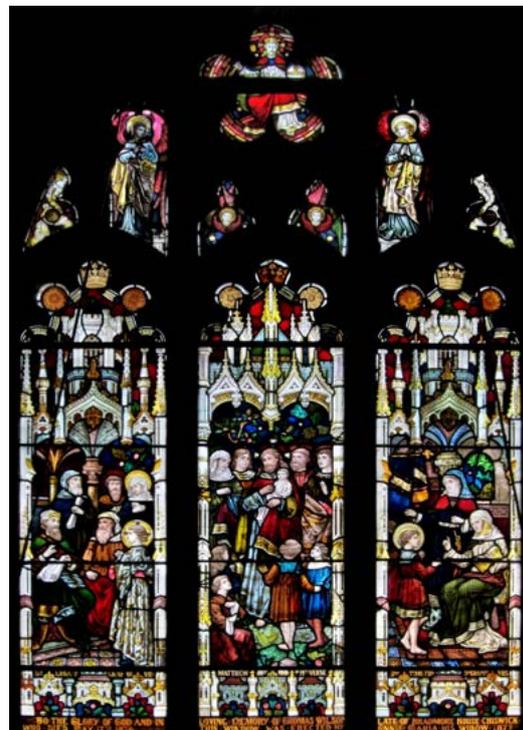


6. South aisle windows, designed by Charles Hardgrave, *Music-making prophets and angels* (James Powell & Son of Whitefriars, 1886)

The *Adoration of the Kings* glass in the west window of the south aisle (7), by Clayton & Bell in 1884, was given by John Isaac Thornycroft (1843-1928), the locally well-known Chiswick shipbuilder; and the west window of the tower (8), showing *Christ with the Doctors in the Temple* and *Christ receiving the little Children*, was designed by Arthur Louis Moore (1849-1939) early in his career, and was installed in 1877, a few years before the Pearson reconstruction of the church.

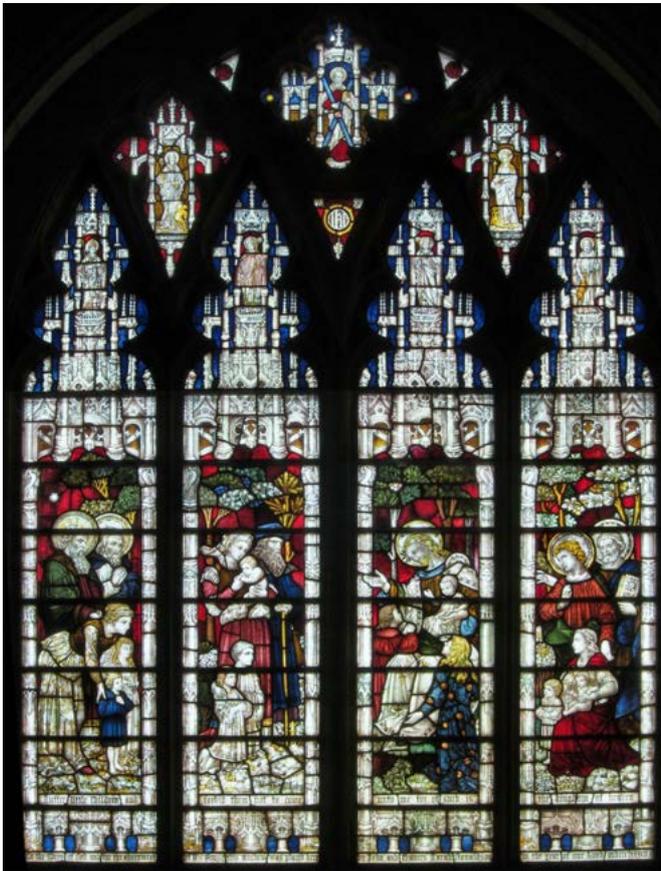


7: Rear wall, left-hand window, *Adoration of the Kings* (Clayton & Bell, 1884)

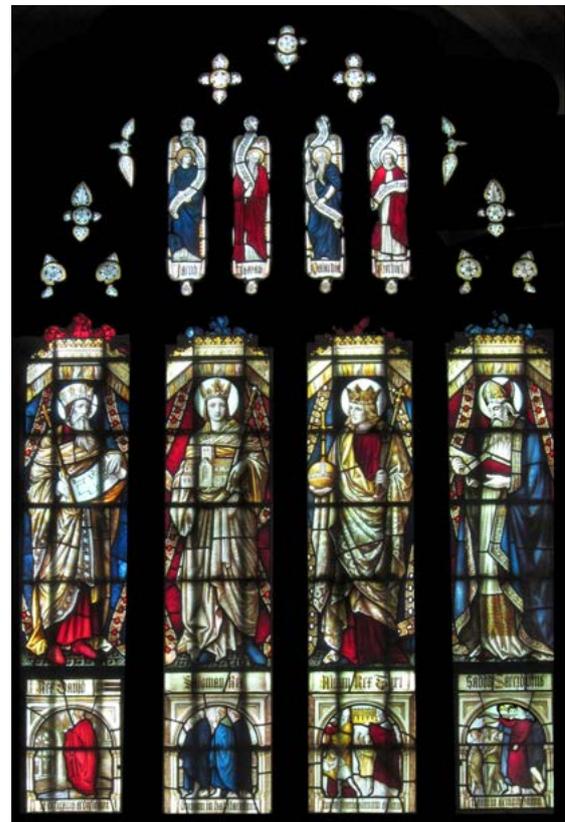


8: Tower, window, designed by Arthur L. Moore, *Christ with the Doctors in the Temple and Christ receiving the little Children*

The west window of the north aisle (9), of *Christ blessing the Children*, was given in 1884 by Sir John Donaldson (1840-1899), a partner of John Thornycroft in the shipbuilding industry. Donaldson was a Scot and accordingly the window unusually includes the patron saints of several Scottish cities: Saints Andrew, Columba, Margaret, Regulus, Mungo, Machar and Giles.



9: Rear wall, right-hand window,
Christ blessing the Children
(Clayton & Bell, 1884)



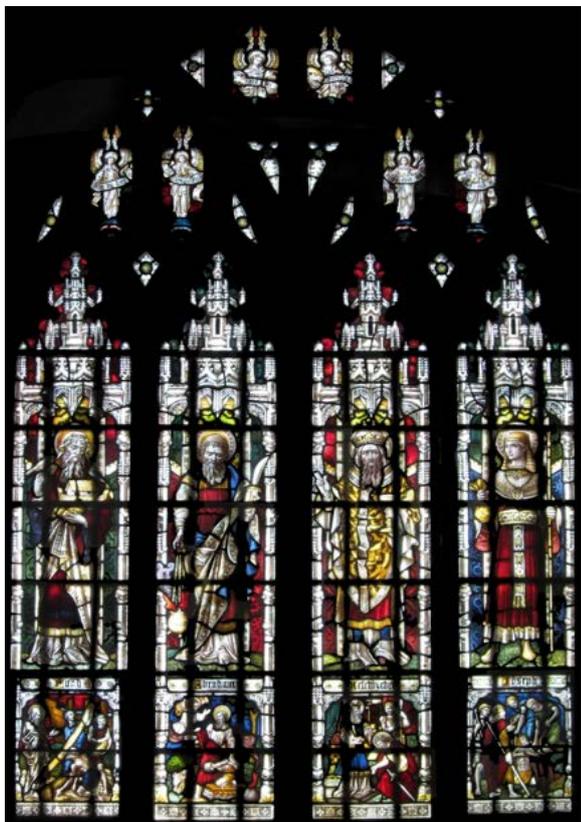
10: North aisle, central window,
designed by Carl Almquist,
Old Testament patriarchs
(Shrigley & Hunt, 1884)

The window in the middle of the north aisle (10) was given by the parishioners and congregation in recognition of Henry Smith's contribution to the re-building of the church. Appropriately, it shows a series of temple-building Old Testament figures: Kings David, Solomon and Hiram, and the High Priest Zadok. Designed in 1884 by the Swedish Carl Almquist for the Lancaster-based firm of Shrigley & Hunt, this window stands somewhat apart from the principal groups of mid-1880s windows in the church. Historically, however, it is a very important window: based in figure style on the 'Aesthetic', neo-classical style developed by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones in the 1870s, it is the best surviving example of the transition from the 'Aesthetic' to the historicist style of the mid-1880s.

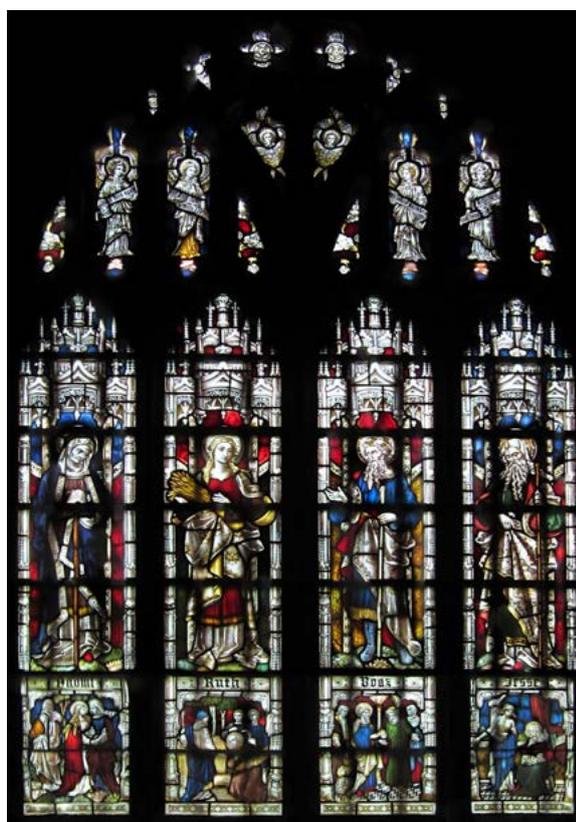
Finally, the outer pair of the windows of the north aisle are by Clayton & Bell. That to the west (11), showing four Old Testament patriarchs, Noah, Abraham, Melchizedek and Joseph, was given in 1884 by his parishioners in recognition of the contribution of Rev. Lawford Dale to the parish. As vicar of Chiswick from 1857 to

1898, Dale was in a sense responsible for overseeing both the rebuilding of the church and the installation of the cycle of stained-glass windows.

That to the east (12), given by her sons in memory of Jane Oliver Burgess, and illustrating the *History of Naomi and Ruth*, was set in place in 1891, and thus completed the entire, impressive cycle of Victorian stained-glass windows.



11: North aisle, westerly window, *Noah, Abraham, Melchizedek and Joseph* (Clayton & Bell, 1884)



12: North aisle, easterly window, *History of Naomi and Ruth* (Clayton & Bell, 1884)

In addition to the iconographical and historical interest of individual windows, the Chiswick Parish Church stained-glass windows constitute an important and remarkably consistent cycle of high-quality Victorian glass, in both design and colour. This was doubtless encouraged by the controlling roles played by John Loughborough Pearson and his assistants, and by both the Rev. Lawford Dale and his churchwarden Henry Smith.