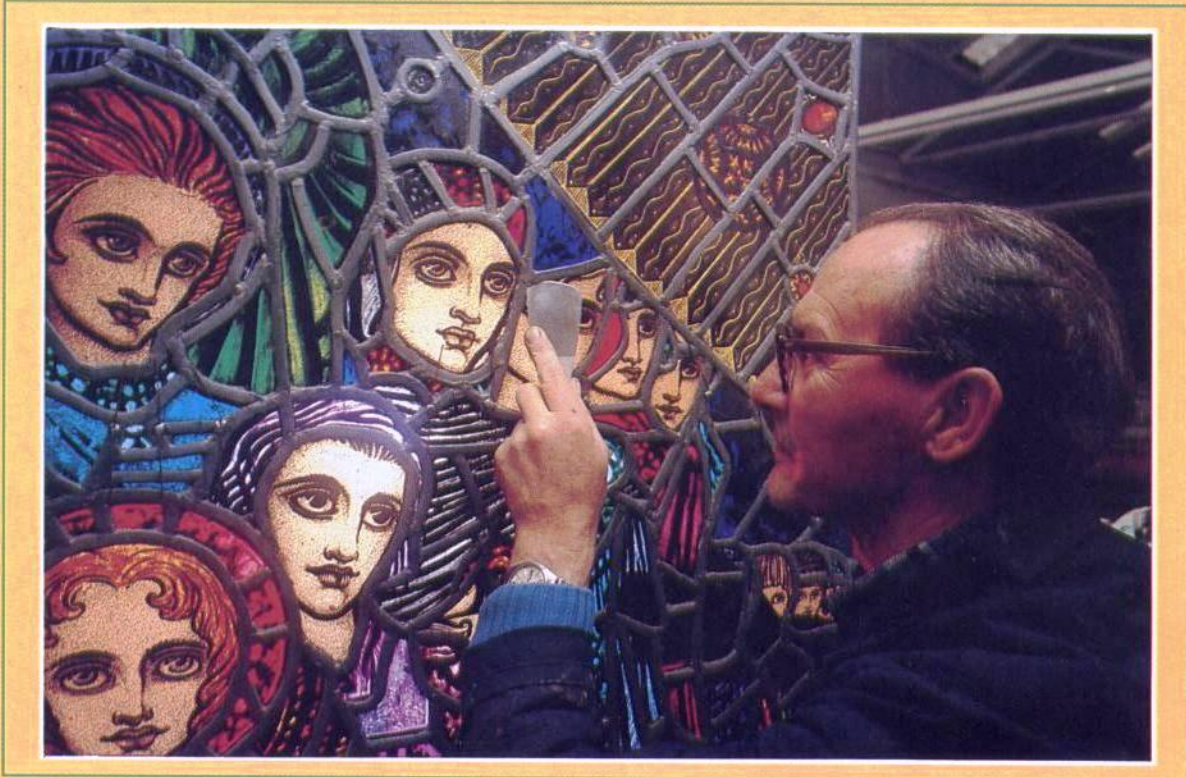




# The Restoration of Stained Glass

A large amount of restoration work has been carried out on stained glass windows throughout the diocese. The Company responsible for the work of restoration is Abbey Stained Glass Studios. Company Director Ken Ryan writes about the meticulous work of restoration.




 HE archdiocese of Tuam is particularly fortunate in that it houses a wealth of Stained Glass by Irish Artists of the highest calibre. There are Stained Glass windows within a forty mile radius of Tuam by the following Irish artists:

Harry Clarke, Michael O'Connor, Michael Healy, Hubert McGoldrick, A. E. Child, Wilhelmina Geddes, Evie Hone, Ethel Rhind, Catherine O'Brien, Sarah Purser, Richard King and many others.

 HE most outstanding work is by Harry Clarke and windows by his hand and his artists are in the following locations:

Ballinrobe, Tuam Cathedral, Presentation Convent Headford, Ballindine, Claremorris, Knock, Glenamaddy, Roundfort, Newport, Cong, Mercy Convent Tuam, Innismaan,

Tooreen, Friary Ballyhaunis, Brooklodge, Tullycross, Cashel and Westport.

 T is fortunate that men of vision such as Most Rev. Joseph Cassidy, Archbishop of Tuam, the Very Rev. Thomas Shannon, P.P. from Ballinrobe and the priests of the Archdiocese have taken such a close interest in their treasures in Stained Glass. They have been largely responsible for the re-awakening of awareness of the high quality artistic work around them. It was Fr. Diskin who pointed out to Fr. Shannon that his beautiful windows by Harry Clarke were badly buckled and in danger of breaking up. Fr. Shannon then took advice from Ray Carroll (Church Architect) who recommended that he seek expert opinion on the condition of the windows.

Continued inside





- ◆ Top; St. Patrick's Church, Newport.
- ◆ Inset left; Jim Coffey of Abbey Stained Glass Studios fitting a panel - "The Last Judgement".
- ◆ Right; Kieran Malone of Abbey Stained Glass Studios refitting the Last Judgement Window in St. Patrick's.

*Continued from previous page*

**T**HE Abbey Stained Glass Studio prepared a comprehensive report on these fine works by Harry Clarke setting out the remedy by which they could be saved from self destruction. Copies of the original orders and correspondence from the 1920's were made available and Fr. Shannon made an intensive study of Harry Clarke and his work.

**T**HE restoration work in Ballinrobe snowballed and soon restoration on Harry Clarke's Stained Glass was widespread in the Archdiocese. The next restoration contract came from Fr. Brendan Kavanagh in Cong, then Mgr. Michael Moran in Newport, Fr. James Carter in

Kilmaine, Mgr. Thomas Waldron and Fr. Joseph Cooney in Tuam Cathedral. The restoration work in the Cathedral was a mammoth task and is just now complete after a twelve month period of work.

**T**HERE is still quite an amount of work yet to be done in the Archdiocese and whilst work by some of the lesser known Artists does not get much publicity these windows are most pleasing to their congregations. Expert opinion is always available and it should be sought and the condition of Stained Glass windows must be constantly monitored.

**F**OR those wishing to get an instant view of the well known Irish Artists a visit to St. Brendan's Cathedral in Loughrea in the Diocese of Clonfert is a must. The Artists there include Michael Healy, Evie Hone, Sarah Purser, A. E. Child, Beatrice Elvery, Hubert McGoldrick,



Catherine O'Brien and Patrick Pye. Sadly Harry Clarke is not represented here but then he is more than adequately represented in the Archdiocese of Tuam.



I set out hereunder the sequence of events which cause Stained Glass deterioration.

Over the years the lead in the Stained Glass windows perishes and its life is approximately fifty years. The glass will last indefinitely provided that it is properly maintained. In the major Cathedrals in Europe there are craftsmen permanently employed removing Stained Glass, re-leading it, and re-installing it. By the time the work is finished it is time to start the whole operation again.

In our experience we have found that Stained Glass windows have always been too tightly fitted, both at the sides and top and bottom. Also each panel is fitted immediately on top of the panel below which does not allow for upward expansion and it also has to take the weight of the panels above. This method of fixing is incorrect and we will describe the correct method hereunder.

Most of the Stained Glass windows are exposed to the rays of the sun and are very heavily painted and the dark colours attract the heat. If you felt the Stained Glass on a sunny winter's day the glass would be quite warm and of course on a sunny summer's day the glass becomes very hot. This build up of heat makes the lead pliable and the lead then sags and makes the window lose its shape. When the lead cools it does not revert to its original shape and so the window becomes distorted. This process is repeated every day that heat is generated and eventually the window becomes completely buckled.

As the shape of the windows change extreme pressure is exerted on the sections of glass and these eventually break. This also causes the edges of the broken glasses to chip and as the paintwork is on the surface of the glass it falls away and begins to look unsightly. The sections of glass also become darker over the years as the dust and grime of generations adheres to them.

Usually these windows are fitted tightly into the openings with a hard putty and the panels are fitted one immediately on top of the other. There should have been room for expansion at the sides of the panels and at the top. This can be done easily by enlarging the side grooves in the stonework and by

replacing the panels using T-bars. By using a T-bar section horizontally the next panel on top is held independently and allows room for the lower panel to expand upwards as necessary. The sealant to be used should be a mastic compound which does not solidify and whilst it seals the windows it allows for movement.



**Ken Ryan of Abbey Stained Glass Studios.**



Usually stormglazing is in roughcast glass and this should be removed and replaced with clear glass. This would have a double effect in that it would keep the temperature down and also not obscure the Stained Glass by allowing as much light as possible through. The cavity between the Stained Glass and Stormglass must be properly ventilated to prevent a build-up of heat and to prevent condensation and consequent vegetation in the cavity.



As time goes on because of the pressure the windows are already under the rate of deterioration accelerates and if the windows were not maintained their value would begin to reduce

*Continued overleaf*





THE remedy for re-instating distorted Stained Glass windows is as follows:

Remove the stormglazing and replace it with new clear stormglazing. Use 6 m.m. clear float glass to reduce the build-up of heat and allow for adequate ventilation at the base of the stormglazing.

Take out the Stained Glass windows. Take them to the Studios and completely restore them. Whilst they are being restored each section of glass would be cleaned individually and when the windows are replaced they will sparkle as the Artists had originally intended them.

The windows should be dismantled and set in new lead and cement, made up in sections. Any glass which has cracked due to being strained should be treated by either of the following methods:

A clear piece of glass should be fixed behind the cracked section and glued to it with clear adhesive and then the cracked portion should be replaced. This method should be used particularly in the case of damage to glass depicting faces, hands or parts of the body. In less important sections the method used should be by adding a new piece of lead where the crack occurred. The emphasis is on the fact that the existing Stained Glass should be re-used so as not to devalue the work of the Artist.



IN view of the value of the windows and their artistic content this work must be carried out by experienced craftsmen and it cannot be entrusted to anyone without proven ability. Our Company has been working in this medium since 1944 and most of our craftsmen have been with us for over thirty years.



ONE of the oldest windows which the Abbey Stained Glass Studios have restored is the East Window in the Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam depicting the Virgin Mary and the Four Evangelists by Michael O'Connor which was first installed in 1832. Another earlier window which we restored is in the Synod Hall of St. Mary's Cathedral, Tuam by George M'Allister and is dated 1812.



WE are proud to have been entrusted with the priceless treasures in Stained Glass from the Archdiocese of Tuam and the Craftsmen of our Studios derive great satisfaction from being associated with the works of such great Artists.

♦ KEN RYAN.



Founded in 1944

# **The Abbey Stained Glass Studios**

## **Specialists in Ecclesiastical Work**

### **Restoration of Harry Clarke Stained Glass at**

Lough Derg Basilica; Ballinrobe; Cong; Kilmaine; Newport, Co. Mayo; Valleymount; Belvedere College; Rochfortbridge; St. Columbanus Home; Wicklow Town; Tuam Cathedral; Cloughjordan; Kilrush; Two Mile House; Franciscan Friary, Killarney; Donnybrook; Athlone; Millstreet, Co. Cork; Balbriggan; Castleknock; St. Vincents, Fairview; Freshford.

~ **Contact: Ken Ryan** ~

• 18 Old Kilmainham • Kilmainham • Dublin 8 •  
Telephone 777285 (after Office Hours: 858760) FAX 679•7776





