

Hidden Portraits

There is no documentary evidence as to who provided the stained-glass windows, and unusually, there are no coats of arms or family symbols to indicate ownership. We know that John Tame paid for the re-building of the church, but he died in 1500 when the church was not completely finished. His son Edmund carried on the work and put in the memorial and screens, and it was after John Tame's death that the stained-glass windows were installed, between around 1500 and 1515, completed by 1517. Edmund Tame would have been in charge for the majority of the time the glass was being installed. Edmund Tame was keen to advance and find royal favour. There is no evidence that he had the expertise and interest in the Netherlandish style in continental art that the windows display, but the scheme shows signs of royal patronage.

It is now thought that King Henry VII was a patron, and the Fairford windows were made by royal appointment. One reason for thinking this is that there are believed to be royal portraits of Henry VII's family in some of the windows. Symbolic representations of wealthy donors and their families shown as religious figures were popular in continental Art of the time, and the Netherlandish style was prominent.

Henry VII's wife and children are all thought to be included, together with some lay figures involved in the creation or installation of the window scheme. These windows were started when an event of huge importance to Henry VII, both personally and politically, was being planned. This was the marriage of his son and heir, Prince Arthur, to the Spanish Princess Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, the rulers of Spain. Spain was the foremost political power in Europe at that time, and the alliance with Spain that the marriage sealed would guarantee support from Spain against the French, with whom England had been at war for many years. The marriage took place in November 1501

These portraits would celebrate the marriage, but would also demonstrate Henry's prestige and status, and that he was cultured and familiar with all the latest trends in continental Art. They also gave an opportunity to spread the Tudor 'message' – that the turmoil of the Wars of the Roses was past, the rival houses of York and Lancaster were completely united in the new Tudor line and that the Tudor dynasty was stable and secure, and making wise and effective alliances and plans for the future.

The Hidden Tudor portraits

1.Elizabeth of York. The first of the royal portraits is in Window 1 light 4 which depicts the Queen of Sheba bringing gifts to King Solomon. The Queen is not wearing biblical robes as in other windows, but Tudor Court dress of the early 1500's. Her head-dress has hanging lappets edged with pearls, as shown in the painting of Elizabeth of York, wife to King Henry VII. This marriage united the houses of York and Lancaster at the end of the Wars of the Roses. Since Fairford had been held by Richard, Earl of Warwick, the

most important Yorkist supporter, Fairford would have been a Yorkist town, and it was important to show that Elizabeth, the last Yorkist heir, had joined the Tudor dynasty and the Yorkist line would continue in her children.

Pictures: window 1, light 4 Queen of Sheba, and Queen Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII representation from the window in Christ's College, Cambridge



2. Prince Arthur. In Window 3, light 3 there is an addition to the traditional 3 wise men, a fourth figure, a crowned young man carrying the orb and sceptre, the symbols of royalty. Prince Arthur was eldest son and heir to Henry 7th and Elizabeth of York and seen as the great hope of the newly established House of Tudor. Betrothed in 1489 to Catherine of Aragon to forge an Anglo-Spanish alliance against France. This window is thought to celebrate the marriage, which took place in November 1501. Prince Arthur's court was at Ludlow Castle, where he died in April 1502. Ludlow Castle was also the centre of administration for Wales. There would have been much coming and going between Westminster and Ludlow in preparation for the marriage, and Fairford was a staging post on the route.

Pictures: section from Window 3, light 3, and Prince Arthur from the window at Great Malvern Priory



3. Catherine of Aragon. In Window 3 lights 2 and 3, two pictures of the Virgin Mary are different from the portraits of the Virgin Mary seen in the other windows, with a bigger nose and heavier jaw. Catherine stayed in England after Arthur's early death only 5 months after the marriage. She eventually married his younger brother Henry after he came to the throne as King Henry VIII in 1509

Pictures: window 3, light 2 and a picture of Catherine of Aragon painted as Mary Magdalene by Michael Sittow, court painter to Queen Isabella.



4. Princess Margaret Tudor. The scene depicts an attendant bringing 2 doves in a wicker cage as a thanksgiving for the birth. Again, she is not wearing biblical robes but Tudor court dress. Princess Margaret was betrothed in a treaty with Scotland in 1499, to make alliance with Scotland. She married James IV of Scotland in 1503. They were the grandparents of Mary, Queen of Scots. This line brought James VI of Scotland to the English throne after the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603.

Pictures: window 3, light 4 and Princess Margaret of Scotland a detail of a portrait from the Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek Vienna



5. Prince Henry Tudor. The window shows Jesus around 12 years old when he was found in the Temple, discoursing with the elders. It could be a portrait of Prince Henry who came to the throne as King Henry VIII in 1509. He would have been nearly 11 years old at the time of the marriage. Henry married Catherine of Aragon (his late brother's widow) in 1509 when he became King on the death of his father. His desire for a male heir eventually led to annulment of the marriage and a break with the Pope and the Establishment of the Church of England.

Pictures: window 4, light 5 and bust of Prince Henry Tudor, age about 7 from the Royal Collection



6. Princess Mary Rose Tudor. The scene shows three Marys meeting Christ in the garden after finding his tomb empty. The figure nearest to Christ has no halo and is wearing a headdress and colourful top which were the latest fashion in Antwerp at the time. The suggestion is that this figure of a royal princess was produced by a Netherlandish artist to represent an adult portrait of Princess Mary who would have been aged 6 at the time of Prince Arthur's marriage. Princess Mary was married in 1514 in alliance with France, as third wife of King Louis XII, who was 30 years older than her. She was Queen of France for only 3 months before he died.

Pictures: window 7, light 5 and Princess Mary Tudor about 1514, from the Musée des Arts Décoratifs Paris



7. **Henry VII.** The souls entering the golden gate in window 15 include a pope, bishop and a King. The King is thought to be Henry VII who is known to have been very penitent and concerned for his soul at the end of his life. Was Henry intentionally putting himself amongst those going to heaven? Henry VII is thought to have been the patron of the Fairford Windows and to have instructed Bishop Foxe to plan the scheme

Pictures: Window 15, Lower light 1 and portrait of Henry VII, 1515 by an unknown Netherlandish artist, attributed to Michael Sittow



In addition to Henry VII and his immediate royal family, there are other figures.

8. **Sir John Savile.** The noticeable figure on the left in Window 5 is shown as a foot-soldier but has a very eye-catching jacket and wears a gold chain with the name JOSAVELE on it. This is thought to represent Sir John Savile, who was a soldier and administrator who became Knight of the body to Henry VII. His family home was at Thornhill in Yorkshire where they added a Savile chapel to the local church and installed

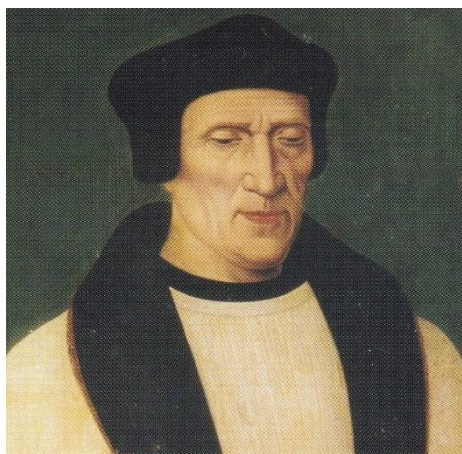
stained-glass family portraits. The windows recorded that Sir John Savile had overseen the installation of the glass in 1493. So, he had experience of working with the Flemish glaziers and it's thought he supervised the installation of the early part of the Fairford glazing scheme.

Picture: window 5, upper light 1



9. Richard Foxe (1448 – 1528) Lord Privy Seal and senior diplomat to Henry VII. Appointed Bishop of Durham 1494 and Winchester from 1501. He was chief advisor to Henry VII and also served Henry VIII. He arranged the marriage treaties/alliances for Prince Arthur, Princess Margaret, and Princess Mary. He is thought to have devised the religious scheme for the Fairford Windows, because of the similarity to the early windows in King's College, Cambridge, and King Henry VII's chapel at Westminster. He is known to have commissioned both of these for the King and to have given detailed instructions for their design.

Pictures: window 17, light 3 and Bishop Richard Foxe, portrait from King's College Taunton



10. Michael Sittow, (1469 – 1525). Michael Sittow was born in Reval (now TallinnTallin, Estonia), studied under Netherlandish painter, Hans Memling and became a leading exponent of the Netherlandish style. Thought to be in London in the early 1500's probably associated with the wedding of Catherine of Aragon. He was a brilliant painter of religious subjects, with outstanding qualities as a portrait painter He was Court painter to Isabella of Castille and painted several portraits of Catherine in religious guises.

Keith Barley, who spent more than 20 years restoring and studying the Fairford windows, has suggested that he was the artistic designer.

Pictures: window 16, upper light 5, the Messenger and Man in a Red Hat, ca. 1512 by Michael Sittow, Detroit, Institute of Arts

