

A HISTORY OF GRAY'S INN IN 20 OBJECTS

NO 1: THE VICTORY WINDOW

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Following the Great War, the Benchers of the Inn were much exercised about what memorial ought to be erected within the Inn to mark the sacrifice of those members who had given their lives in the conflict. That task was made easier when, in June 1919, Sir Miles Mattinson KC, a former Treasurer (1897) and the architect of the Inn's financial revival, offered to cover the cost of such a memorial. On 25 June 1919 Pension gratefully accepted Master Mattinson's generosity and agreed to consult him on the design.

In the event, Master Mattinson paid for two war memorials: a sculptured tablet listing the names of the fallen of Gray's Inn, the work of F.W. Pomeroy RA (now replaced following the destruction of the Chapel in the Second World War) and a large Victory Window designed by Christopher Whall. This window, removed to safety during the Second World War as protection from bomb damage, is in place now, as previously, on the north wall of Chapel. The Victory Window and Tablet were dedicated by the Bishop of Kingston at a service held on 18 April 1920.

The Victory Window consists of three lights or panels in stained glass, which are in lancet form. In the centre of the window is the figure of St Michael, revered by Christians, Jews and by Islam alike. As the Archangel who led the Armies of the Almighty against the forces of Satan in the Book of Revelation, St Michael represents the triumph of good over evil. He holds the scales of justice by which it is said he weighs the souls of the departed. Depicted below St Michael is 'the ancient arch' that in 1919 connected the Member's Common Room (then in the building now known as 10 South Square) with the Hall. It is familiar to us in its modern newly built form as the Bridge (and bar).

On the left is the figure of St George, 'the young soldier of the early days of Christianity whose name rang out at Cressy – St George for England!' He stands for the chivalry of the Empire. Behind the head of St George is a burning city representing the destruction that is wrought by war. On the right is St Louis, King of France, our principal ally in the conflict. Below St Louis is a shield of fleur-de-lis. The Latin inscription begun on the left hand base panel and continued on the right is to Master Mattinson.



One of the great glories of sitting in Chapel on a bright Sunday morning is to marvel at the sun streaming through the Victory Window, setting on fire the silver armour of St Michael and the golden rays above his head. Likewise, the armour of gold worn by St George and the cloak of deep blue adorning St Louis are rendered almost wondrous by beams of sunlight breaking through making us believe that we are in their saintly presence. ■