

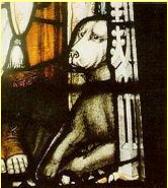
CHARLES EAMER KEMPE 1837-1907



St Bridget's and Cady are beautiful churches, and for this we have good reason to be grateful to Charles Kempe, the centenary of whose death is marked this year. Kempe was one of the very best designers of Stained Glass in the nineteenth century, and St Bridget's contains examples from every stage of his career, from the late 1860s glass in the chancel to the dormer windows of 1906-7. As well as stained glass he also designed other Church features, including the ironwork in the chancel at St Bridget's. At Caldby, Kempe was also heavily involved, and his several of the windows are to his design.

Kempe was born in Ovingdean, near Brighton, and originally had intended to seek ordination, but he was afflicted with a stammer, which made this impossible. Instead he pursued his interest in church decoration and stained glass, saying that if he could not serve God in the sanctuary, he would make decoration of the sanctuary his life's work. After his death, the work was continued by C.E. Kempe and Co, until it closed in 1935.

Kempe was very prolific, and his work can be found all over the country, ranging from cathedrals, such as Gloucester, Winchester and Chester, to small parish churches. Kempe's windows are distinguished by their rich colours offset by horn white glass and by the quality of their composition and draughtsmanship, particularly the faces. Among interesting characteristic details are the peacock feathers often included in the wings of his angels.



As well as our Churches there are other local examples of his work. The 1870 window at the top left is in the vestry of St John's, Frankby and the 1891 St Thomas above is at the west end of the north aisle of St Peter's, Heswall. Animals also often play an amusing role in Kempe's windows: the dog is from St John's Frieth, in Buckinghamshire, and take a look at the donkey in the window near the font in St Bridget's.

