

WHAT'S IN A NAME? - The East Window
by David Turner October 2018

Many years ago, when I was researching the story of the installation of the East Windows, I consulted the Chapter Minutes. My search uncovered that in the period 1815 to 1826, the chapter had plans for not only one, but two stained glass projects: one was the installation of the "Gally Knight" windows, with which we are all so familiar, whilst the other was a somewhat self-centred scheme to install four upper windows depicting the arms of some of the Prebendaries.

For this project, Chapter initially invited a Mr Eckington to draw up a scheme for the work. As can be read in excerpts from a selection of Chapter minutes, the progress of this second project was anything but smooth.

On 20 October 1814, the following action is recorded:

"The Residentiary to write to Mr Eckington of Birmingham to ascertain the best mode of putting the arms of the different Prebendaries into the upper windows at the East End of the Choir in coloured glass and also the expense thereof".

By 19 January 1815, when the Chapter meets, Mr Eckington is recorded as Mr Eggington: *"Mr Eggington appeared at this Chapter and exhibited different specimens as to the mode of introducing the Arms of the Prebendaries into the Upper Windows at the East End of the Choir and he was desired to prepare a pattern according to the instructions now given with an Estimate of the Expense to be transmitted for the consideration of the adjourned Chapter".*

The Chapter reconvened on 20 February 1815, with this result:

"At the adjourned Chapter, the specimen sent by Mr Eggington was approved and the Residentiary was requested to communicate the proposal of putting the plan into execution to the absent Prebendaries, previously to the ensuing Chapter."

It would appear, however, that the Chapter, a full year later, did not proceed with Mr Eggington's proposals, because on 19 October 1815, the Minute Secretary records:

"Mr Eggington to be informed that the Chapter do not consider that any order was given for his attendance at Southwell, and therefore that having only ordered one pattern which was prepared according to the instructions given him by the Chapter on 19 January 1815 when he voluntarily appeared and exhibited different specimens, they conceive that the sum of Ten Guineas is a sufficient compensation."

Whether Mr Eggington was mollified by this terse message is not reported, but no further reference to him appears in the Minutes. Although his name is consistently mis-spelled, Mr Eckington, the rejected designer, is recognised finally as William Ralph Eginton the son of Francis Eginton who was a distinguished glass artist who made windows for many churches, including Babworth in Nottinghamshire.

William Eginton advertised himself rather grandly as “Glass painter and stainer to the Duke of Sussex”, although whether this claim had any validity may be open to question. The dukedom was first conferred on 24 November 1801 upon Prince Augustus Frederick, the sixth son of King George III. The title became extinct upon Prince Augustus Frederick's death in 1843.

The Duke of Sussex to whom he refers is the only previous holder of that title prior to Prince Harry. Although Prince Augustus Frederick married twice, both marriages were declared invalid under the Royal Marriages Act and therefore Prince Harry's wife Megan is in fact the first Duchess of Sussex.

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