



16.

The Mansel window

Date: around 1810

A HISTORY OF ST ANDREW'S IN 100 OBJECTS

The window at the east end of the south aisle is our oldest stained glass—and may also contain medieval fragments in the canopy work (all the early stained glass was destroyed at the Reformation). It was commissioned by William Lort Mansel (vicar, 1788-1808) who went on to be also Master of Trinity College (1798-1820) and also Bishop of Bristol (1808-1820). He was a renowned wit, mimic and satirist—but, in revolutionary days, was also conservative, orthodox and a safe pair of hands, trusted by William Pitt and his government. He was elected as public orator in 1788 and perhaps his rhetorical skill is reflected in St Peter (central light) who carries the written word and St Paul (right hand light) who wields the sword of truth (which, in the New Testament, is the word of God).

The window was installed in memory of Mansel's wife, Isabella, who died in 1803 at the age of 36, but not before bearing him twelve children. It is likely that William and Isabella were resident in the parish (unusual in those days) from 1788 to 1798 and played a full part in local life—which is why it was appropriate for Isabella to be buried here under the gaze of St Andrew (left hand light). In the bottom panel the day of Pentecost is depicted. The Holy Spirit comes upon the male disciples, giving them the gift of utterance in tongues (reflecting William's inspired utterance?) - but also, notably, upon Mary, perhaps an affirmation of Isabella's graced role as vicar's wife and loving mother.