

## **Moira Forsyth: designer of Emanuel School chapel windows**

The series of impressive heraldic stained glass windows in Emanuel School chapel were the result of a collaboration between the eminent historian and heraldry expert C W Scott-Giles and the Stafford born designer Moira Forsyth. The designs on the windows are associated with the ancient family Dacre; the lineage responsible for founding Emanuel Hospital in 1954 in the years before it was transformed into a school.

The background story involving the 15 windows is an interesting one. In the histories of the school it is generally accepted that CW Scott Giles was responsible for the designs and the crucial role of designer (Moira Forsyth) is somewhat overlooked. This is, in part, because the name of CW Scott Giles is well known to scholars of Emanuel School as ex-teacher, historian and author. More importantly he was one of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries most eminent scholars of heraldry, writing several books on the subject. Whilst Forsyth, at the time, wasn't particularly well known and was a jobbing glass designer. In the case of this project she was probably given the designs by Giles and carried out the glasswork before moving onto her next project whilst her role was forgotten. This was a common procedure which often led to the role of the craftsman being minimised.

As her career progressed Forsyth was to become a master of her trade and became renowned for her work in a mixture of mediums including pottery, murals and glasswork. She was born in north Staffordshire into an artistic family and studied at Burslem School of Art from 1921, and the Royal College of Art. It was at these colleges where she began her career in the pottery industry. In 1925 She was asked to exhibit her ceramic figures at the White City Exhibition and as a result orders flooded in from all over the world. Sadly the General Strike of 1926 meant that she could not get all of her work fired and, perhaps, as a result didn't get the international attention and recognition she deserved at the time.

At this point she won a National Scholarship to the Royal College of Art and changed from working with ceramics to glass. It was in the following years that she worked with CW Scott-Giles on the designs now on display in Emanuel School chapel. They were probably created at the celebrated Glass House in Fulham where she worked for numerous years.

In later years her work was frequently exhibited at the Royal Academy and other prominent art galleries. Although she worked in many mediums in her later years she primarily worked in stained glass, and it is for her work in this medium that she is best remembered. Other work by the artist can be seen in Guildford Cathedral, Eton College Chapel, Norwich Cathedral and elsewhere in various stained glass museums around the country.

Although numerous catalogues exist of Forsyth's work exist none feature the work she did at Emanuel School. Why this impressive collection of 15 windows has been overlooked is a question which will probably never be answered. However, recently a researcher studying Forsyth's work was interested enough to pursue a reference at the Victoria and Albert Museum which connected her to Emanuel School and the result was these windows coming to light. Indeed, there is even a plaque celebrating her involvement in one of the window panes near the door. This discovery was a significant find to the art world and will provide much interest when her work is reevaluated in the future and will certainly prove to be a major and important addition to an already wide ranging body of work by a celebrated artist.