

Foreword and Acknowledgements



This book, like its subtitle, is divided into three parts. In Part One I offer an account of the life and work of Charles Eamer Kempe (1837–1907); but it is impossible to explain his work without also focusing on the people who worked so closely both with him and for him – the Kempe Studio and its leading members: Wyndham Hughes, John Carter and John Lisle. These three, together with Alfred Tombleson, Kempe’s master glazier and the manager of the Studio’s glassworks, were instrumental in creating what came to be recognised as the Kempe style. The loyalty and affection of Kempe’s closest friends and associates is an important part of this story. Inevitably, the history of Kempe’s career must concentrate on his stained glass, but his contributions to other spheres of church decoration – wall-painting, furnishings, vestments and embroidery – matter too, and not least because they are less durable and more easily lost or overlooked. The same is true of Kempe’s work in garden design.

Part Two presents a small number of case studies, examining the design and significance of particular windows, as seen not only in large Cathedrals but also in small towns and country villages across Britain. The purpose of such close-up analysis is both to draw attention to key themes and evolving features in Kempe’s work and to explore the extraordinary and intricate networks of family and friends, patrons, clients, and influences, within which he moved skilfully and profitably.

A second volume, *Espying Heaven*, is due shortly to follow *Kempe*. This larger-format full-colour book will complement and supplement the present volume. It will provide opportunities, through commentary and illustration, for further detailed description and analysis of Kempe’s style and techniques across an extensive range of examples.

Part Three focuses on Kempe's legacy. I have approached this through three chapters. The first focuses on Old Place, the Sussex home he created consciously to be both a Palace of Art and the work of art by which he hoped to be judged after his lifetime. The efforts he made to ensure that Old Place should survive as his own best memorial are described in the succeeding chapter. This deals with Walter Tower, his young cousin whom he appointed his heir and groomed to take on both Old Place itself and the business he had built up into a brand sought after worldwide. He fully intended Tower to become the guardian of this Kempe legacy. The final chapter, 'Kempe's Reputation', traces the growing ambivalence to Kempe from the years immediately before his death up to the present day, reappraising the judgements passed on him by critics such as Ninian Comper, John Betjeman, and Nikolaus Pevsner.

Anyone writing about Kempe today owes a great debt to Margaret Stavridi, the daughter of his close friend and chief draughtsman, John Lisle. Her research over many years produced much of the rich archive collection later acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum (the V&A) and formed the basis of her pioneering study of Kempe and the Kempe Studio, *Master of Glass* (1988). Subsequent research, however, and the appearance of primary material not available to Mrs Stavridi when she was preparing her book, have meant that some of her facts and conclusions now need to be corrected or revised. Wherever possible, I have attempted to do this in the Notes and References at the end of the book, but occasionally I have been obliged to explain such corrections more formally in the body of the text.

There is one key aspect of Margaret Stavridi's book with which I take issue. *Master of Glass* was written primarily and quite reasonably to highlight the achievements of her father, John Lisle, whose contribution to the success of the Kempe enterprise she believed had been unfairly obscured. The chief culprit, in her eyes, was Walter Tower, who took over as chairman of the firm, in accordance with Kempe's wishes. Much of Mrs Stavridi's *animus* against Tower is, I believe, misplaced; consequently, in Part Three, where I discuss Walter Tower and his relationship with Kempe and with Kempe's loyal colleagues, I have attempted to redress the balance. Readers of both *Master of Glass* and of this book will be able to form their own judgement.

My own commitment to Kempe goes back more than thirty years; I have been actively preparing and writing this book for four years, and this short period has produced more new evidence about Kempe than had emerged in the previous forty. Until recently the accepted belief was that Tower, a disillusioned man, had destroyed at the start of the Second World War nearly all the surviving cartoons and records of Kempe & Co. Some remaining documents were subsequently recovered and collected

by Margaret Stavridi and a few others, including John Betjeman. What was not now housed in the Victoria & Albert Museum archives formed the nucleus of Mrs Stavridi's own archive, particularly material relating to her father; this she later donated in the 1970s and 1980s to the newly-formed Kempe Society. There were, and are, of course documents relating to particular Kempe commissions lodged in diocesan, county and other archives all over Britain; but, in general, such items tend to be scanty, and often not well catalogued. Cathedrals and churches frequently did not keep correspondence and other records of gifts such as stained glass or vestments donated by others, rather than commissioned by themselves.

In 2015, however, a small but important new archive of material surfaced and was purchased by the Kempe Trust, the registered charity founded in 1992 to protect, conserve and promote the Kempe legacy. This archive contained important photographic and documentary material about the Eamer family (from which Kempe's mother had come), about Old Place – including, invaluable, Kempe's personal Visitors' Book covering 1892 to 1910 – and about Walter Tower. Then, in 2017, an unexpected and very generous gift to the Kempe Trust produced the entire collection of diaries kept by Wyndham Hope Hughes during the nine years he had worked for Kempe as an artist and draughtsman. For the first time, it is now possible to read these systematically and they have greatly added to our existing knowledge of the Kempe Studio's early years. Again in 2017, as this book was in the late stages of revision, a large cache of drawings from the Studio, including many annotated and signed by Kempe himself, unexpectedly came up for auction. These, too, greatly enhance understanding of the Studio's working methods. It is hoped that ultimately all the currently disparate portions of the Kempe archive can be brought together under the guardianship of the V&A.

The continuing emergence of such documentary material raises the tantalising question, what else remains? Walter Tower's daughter believed her father had destroyed all Kempe's personal papers, including his diaries. These are known to have been still in existence after his death, but it has been assumed until now that they too must have been destroyed in or around 1940. Now, whenever some new Kempe material surfaces, the possibility that the diaries may have also been spared increases. Their importance, if they have survived, cannot be overestimated. I discuss this further in Part Three.

I have tried, throughout this book, to avoid speculation as far as possible; for this reason I have chosen to be reticent about Kempe's private life. Any discussion, for instance, about his sexuality would be only speculative. What evidence there is to indicate his interests, inclinations and friendships I

have provided; readers may form their own opinions. What is not in doubt, of course, is that professionally and artistically Kempe was closely involved with the Aesthetic Movement of the 1870s and 1880s, and the perceived effeminacy of that movement can be read into some aspects of High Church 'Anglo-Aestheticism'. Michael Hall, in *George Frederick Bodley* (2014) has dealt scrupulously with this subject in relation to the 'refinement' of George Frederick Bodley's architectural and artistic principles and practice, and I have tried to follow his example in writing about Kempe.

My use of the name Kempe throughout the book needs comment. The family name was Kemp, and it was Charles himself who added the final 'e' while still a schoolboy at Rugby. To avoid spelling his name in different ways at different stages of this book, however, I have chosen to call him 'Kempe' from the start. It must also be understood that when I refer to 'Kempe stained glass', I mean stained glass produced by the Kempe Studio or (after Kempe's death) by C.E. Kempe & Co., and recognisable as such. However, where it has been possible and helpful to identify the artist of the original cartoon, this I have done.

In writing this book, I have incurred many debts of gratitude. The first of these is to Philip Collins, who founded the Kempe Society and is the current Secretary of the Kempe Trust; he has also been the custodian of the Trust's archive ever since Margaret Stavridi bequeathed her remaining family papers to the Kempe Society. He edited the *Corpus of Kempe Stained Glass*, published by the Kempe Trust in 2000, and his contribution to Kempe studies generally, and to the writing of this book, in particular, has been incalculable. Other friends and colleagues in the Kempe Trust have also been of great assistance: early on, Ruth Ward taught me much about Kempe's work in Oxford; more recently, Jennifer Caunt prompted and assisted much of the research into Lichfield and Cumbria for Part Two of *Kempe*. I have to thank Tom Kemp-Evans for much invaluable family background and for kindly supplying images of Kemp and Eamer portraits. I have greatly appreciated the support of my fellow Trustees, Elizabeth Simon, John Shaw and Nicholas Rowe, and am also grateful to Nicholas for information about Kempe's early and later work at Cuckfield.

My interest in Kempe (indeed my awareness of his work) began while I was living in South Wales. My first Kempe publication was a 1985 guide to the windows of St Mary's Priory Church, Monmouth, and I owe a debt of friendship and encouragement to the man who commissioned that guide, the late Canon James Coutts – a debt I regret not repaying adequately. Later, while living and teaching in Cambridge, I was lucky to meet several people who deserve my thanks. To Tim Cockerill I owe much, especially for the early history of All Saints, Jesus Lane, Cambridge – one of the

key locations in Kempe's early career; to Tim's wife, Chloë, I am indebted for advice on heraldry in stained glass. Another friend, Michael Pearson, gave me early opportunities to lecture on Kempe at a time when audiences for talks on stained glass were not always easy to find. Among the first people to encourage my interest in Kempe was the late Carola Hicks, art historian, author and formerly Curator of the Stained Glass Museum at Ely Cathedral; I was honoured to write her entry for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. One of her successors as Curator of the Museum, Dr Jasmine Allen, has also been a great help with technical aspects of my research; to her and to Michael Hall, whose book on Bodley has been open at my side all the time I have been writing my own, I offer sincere thanks. I am grateful, too, to Dr Jane Hughes (Pepys Librarian at Magdalene College, Cambridge), for allowing me access to the diaries of A.C. Benson, housed in the College Library, and to the Master and Fellows of Magdalene, for permission to quote from them. To Mrs Katharine Simson and her family, for presenting the diaries of Wyndham Hope Hughes to the Kempe Trust Archive, special thanks are due.

I have met many people who have been generous with their time and knowledge as I have travelled across the British Isles, and further afield, in search of Kempe. I wish to acknowledge the following clergy, churchwardens, custodians, administrators, and archivists: at Lichfield Cathedral, Michael Diamond and David Wallington, Jason Dyer, and Ian Ratchford-Smith (Dean's Verger); and at Winchester Cathedral, Simon Barwood and Dickon Kelly (Deputy Head Verger), also David Rymill of the Hampshire County Archives, for his research into the re-ordering of the Ladye Chapel. Special thanks are also due to the Rev. Petra Beresford-Webb (All Saints, Newbridge-on-Wye); Janet and John Chapman (Much Marcle); Sheila and David Brown (Holy Trinity, Stirling); in Essex, to Alan Cox (Copped Hall) and Nicola Munday (Wood House); Janet Fairweather (St Peter-in-Ely); Canon Andrew Grace (St Mary, Tenby); Val Howells (Monmouth Priory Church); Philip Kendall (Springbank Arts Centre, New Mills); Gemma Lewis (Durham Castle); Keith Lister, my host and guide to the Kempe locations at Horbury (West Yorkshire); Jane Spittlehouse (St Peter, Clayworth) and Noel Simpson (All Hallows, Woolbeding). I owe special thanks to Jackie Parry for photographing the impressive Kempe glass at Salve Regina College (formerly Wakehurst) at Newport, Rhode Island.

Alastair Carew-Cox, one of the leading professional photographers of stained glass at work today, was introduced to me by Michael Tiley, a long-standing member of the Kempe Society. Alastair's contribution both to this book and, especially, to the forthcoming companion volume, *Espying Heaven*, has been invaluable. He has travelled from Stirling to

East Anglia, from mid-Wales to Cornwall, photographing Kempe glass for these two books and I cannot speak too highly of his professionalism and commitment to this project. Steve Jones, too, of Palm Photographic Processing Laboratories, Birmingham, has devoted many hours to ensuring the high-quality definition of the colour images prepared for this book and for *Espying Heaven*. Here I must also thank all those in the cathedrals and churches Alastair Carew-Cox has visited for going out of their way to grant him access and assistance, and for giving their permission to publish the photographs he has taken. One of the key locations in Britain for studying Kempe's work in a private, domestic, setting is Wightwick Manor (Staffordshire), and I am grateful to the National Trust for their permission to photograph and illustrate the glass there. In a similar context, I acknowledge with thanks permission kindly granted by the Howard family to illustrate details of the paintings by Wyndham Hope Hughes in the Chapel of Castle Howard.

There are two other debts to be acknowledged. Adrian Brink and the editorial team at Lutterworth Press have supported my Kempe project enthusiastically from its inception. I hope this book repays their confidence in me. Finally, my wife, Christine, has travelled with me to see most of the Kempe glass that I have seen during the past twenty years; on our travels we have made some exciting discoveries and shared some scary moments. Our early expedition to the Royal Mausoleum at Darmstadt was one such occasion. It began at Edinburgh airport, ended at Frankfurt, and involved four flights, one aborted take-off and one emergency landing. We were rewarded, however, by being able to find and photograph one of the most significant, least seen, Kempe windows in the world. And only this year, in a storeroom piled high with old chairs, Christine discovered a fine and unrecorded early reredos painted for Kempe by Wyndham Hope Hughes. To her this book is dedicated.

Adrian Barlow
All Saints Day, 2017