



St GABRIEL'S CHURCH, PRESTONPANS
RELIGIOUS ARTWORKS & ARTEFACTS

Photograph on front cover courtesy of James Grimley. (See ref 7.)

Introduction

This booklet was produced to record information captured about the STATIONS OF THE CROSS and the CHRIST IN GLORY cross created by Fred Carson and the RESURRECTION WINDOW created by Crear McCartney all of which are significant works of art in St Gabriel's Church, Prestonpans.

The booklet also includes information highlighting the Church's architectural significance both as one of the first churches in Scotland designed and built specifically in response to Vatican II and as an Historic Environment Scotland listed building.

Newspaper reports at the time of the church's opening capture the mood and sense of anticipation of both the congregation and the clergy. Furthermore, a very positive review in the prestigious Architects' Journal of 31st July 1968 attests to the church's landmark radical design with the sanctuary projecting deep into the nave bringing the altar to the people.

As we celebrate the richness of the artworks and architecture of St Gabriel's Church we should be mindful of the huge debt we owe to the generations who went before whose tireless commitment, energy and fundraising (over some 30 years) made the building of St Gabriel's Church possible. Many never lived to see the lovely church that we now take for granted but as in so many areas of life, the opportunities and vistas available to us today are so, because we stand on the shoulders of those who went before.

Irene & Gerry Houston

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The Stations of the Cross in St Gabriel's Church



The 1st station is on
the extreme left in the above picture
with the 14th station on the extreme right.
Stations 3, 4 and 5 form a chalice tipped over on its side.
Stations 5 and 6 form the host. Stations 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11
form a stylised sheaf. The 14 stations as a whole
maintain an overall symmetry as they follow
the curvilinear shape of the wall
of the church.

Overview

Sometimes when we pass by something on a daily or even weekly basis we stop looking at it in any meaningful way. But for Fred Carson, the creator of St Gabriel's Stations of the Cross, that just wouldn't be good enough. As the artist said 'often people will have pictures on the walls of their home which they really never look at.' He however didn't want that to happen with St Gabriel's Stations of the Cross. I think we'd all agree he succeeded in that aim.

Our Stations of the Cross are forever present: a visual, tactile representation of the stark, lonely journey which Christ took for us. Drawing us in as we pass, revealing itself in snapshots, as shadow and light play upon its 3-dimensional surfaces.

In Lent of course our eyes do gaze on each of the Stations, stopping and 'walking in prayer' with Christ on that cruel, violent journey. It is at these times and in our own personal reflection that we are drawn by the power and brooding presence of this almost life-size ceramic mural of the Stations of the Cross.

Its bold, darkened rustic fired clay surface enhances the figures which populate it in all their tenderness, pain, isolation and courage. Those under orders, those dismayed or grieving, and Christ himself, are not portrayed as a painted thing of beauty but rather reflect the raw suffering clearly seen in this depiction.

Indeed many have said that the mural greatly affected them drawing forth a range of emotions as they gazed upon it and leaving them, at times, quite overwhelmed, even isolated. Different people feel drawn to different aspects of the Stations of the Cross and others have focussed on the fact that 'Christ's eyes are on the same eye-level as our own, looking at you and drawing you into the 'journey.'

Set along the curvature of the circular church wall in St Gabriel's, it is only when people step back that they also see a more hidden symbolism which is depicted in the overall shapes of the ceramic mural. It is then that the eye is drawn to the grouping of the shapes which make up the separate Stations of the Cross thus clarifying the artist's vision and making it thought provoking

on several levels. If you look at the 3rd, 4th and 5th Stations together, these form the chalice on its side ...the symbolism of the blood of Christ poured out for us.

Looking in this way you can see that the 5th and 6th Stations together represent the Host...the body of Christ broken for us.

Letting your eyes drift onto the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th Stations you can see in this grouping the symbolic sheaf of wheat lying on its side 'unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.' (John 12:24) (see Ref 10)

We are indeed fortunate at St Gabriel's, to be able to wonder at our Stations of the Cross but how does such an art work begin?

In 1965, the then twenty-three year old artist, Fred Carson, was given the commission by Archbishop Gray (later to become Cardinal Gray) to create a Stations of the Cross for the newly built St Gabriel's church, Prestonpans. Fred Carson's idea was to create a certain sequential movement so that the eye would flow comfortably through the entire journey of the Stations of the Cross, not stopping at each one, though in a service we would, but rather becoming a complete unit which flowed in a logical way, reflecting both Christ's journey and also the quality of the curving wall of the church itself.

However what we see today is not Fred's original idea which though containing the same shapes had much simpler, more formalised figures which were quite 2- dimensional, indeed the entire Station of the Cross would have been similar to the halos above Christ 's head as we see them depicted in the church today. In further discussion with the Archbishop however, a sharing of thoughts developed this initial design to become our own unique Stations of the Cross.

Fred did admit that in creating a piece on a religious subject, whether a crucifixion or Stations of the Cross, 'there is a difficulty because they have been done so many times before, either poorly or well over many generations. Therefore it would be easy to copy something yet it is paradoxically this which drives you on, in all humility, to add your own unique interpretation. This, however, carries a weighty responsibility for the artist.'

When the Stations of the Cross were finally erected in the church I'm sure that their size and unique quality stopped people in their tracks to ponder them too. Fred received all sorts of different kinds of feedback all of which he appreciated since, as he said, 'I feel that if an artwork causes or encourages discussion then that's a great thing. It's really important.' And over the intervening 50 years the pondering and analysing and positive feedback still continues, stimulating new compliments, insights, questions... and a new faith community. -Thank you Fred.

The Making of St Gabriel's Stations of the Cross

And this is St. Gabriel's Stations of the Cross, the ceramic mural that Fred Carson created.....



A large, imposing ceramic mosaic, St Gabriel's Stations of the Cross, hugs the curving wall of the church and at the same time proclaims its power. It is perhaps strange to consider that this work is not one complete piece but hundreds of fired clay pieces, all erected separately and painstakingly in exactly the right order and position to allow Christ's journey to unfold before our eyes. Each part of the mosaic is dooked into the wall of the church, secured by big screw bolts, with blobs of fired clay put on top to conceal the fixings.

Fred Carson wanted a rough natural feel to the mural to contrast with the small areas of glass, as seen in the halos around Christ's head, so that the latter would appear like jewels. The natural look to this inspiring artwork is achieved by firing stoneware clay in a kiln at an extraordinarily high temperature. Iron oxide is mixed with the clay and also applied as a glaze, to the surface of the tile, prior to firing in the kiln. The stoneware clay used was fired at about 1300°C, as hot as porcelain temperatures.. 'you can't get it hotter.' This results in the intense colour we see.

Though the Stations of the Cross look completely solid only certain tiles or parts of tiles are solid. Each tile of clay must be the same thickness to be fired in the kiln otherwise they will crack. To avoid this happening, Fred hollowed out areas of the clay tiles before firing, particularly seen in the figures depicted. 'You are limited by the size of the pieces fitting into the kiln. I cut the tiles in such a way that the cutting emphasises the form of the 3-dimensional figures portrayed. '



Another task which was undertaken pre-firing, was the effective texturing of the clay surface in parts, adding to its interesting design but also to that rustic, raw, harsh quality akin to Christ's journey to his crucifixion, the theme of the mural. On being asked about the durability of the colours used in the mural, Fred confirmed that the colours will change over time due to the iron oxide in the clay and on the surface. If you look closely at the surface of the mural you will see lovely

signs of the iron oxide coming to the surface, still growing and developing in this life of its own.

Another aspect of interest in the Stations of the Cross is in the focus on colour in Christ's halo. The colours were achieved by mixing the chemicals cadmium and selenium with molten glass and firing in a kiln. The variation of colour is dependent on the position of the tiles in the kiln, the temperature of the firing and the thickness of the application of iron oxide and the selenium/cadmium mix in each tile. A fairly tricky process but important in highlighting the stages of darkness and light on Christ's journey to the cross. The colour change also highlights the different episodes in the Stations of the Cross, emphasising a dimension of change throughout the artwork. Indeed, as far as it was possible using such volatile ingredients, hues of a darker nature in the halos represent the darkest hours for Christ whilst scenes leading us toward the resurrection have a brighter tone. Fred felt it was very important symbolically that Christ's halo on the fourteenth station should be bright red in colour.

After the individual ceramic tiles were fired, the hundreds of tiles were delivered to the church. Each unit or Station comprised of a great variety of pieces which were all to be placed together like a giant mosaic. Fred's

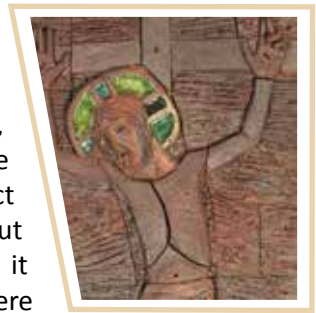
next job was to undertake a very large yet delicate jigsaw puzzle, laid out on the church floor, piecing all the parts together to depict Christ's journey. No mean task! However when he finished he discovered that there was still one piece remaining and Fred had no idea where it should fit. After much puzzling and possibly no end of muttering he finally discovered that a 'friend' (who had been helping with the firing process) had stuck in an extra tile as a joke. That must have led to an interesting conversation between them! In all, with specialist craftsmen attaching the ceramic mural to the church wall and Fred supervising, six months of work had passed.

As part of the commission Fred also created the original cross which hung above the altar and also the holy water fonts and Baptistry door handles in the shape of a cross. The original cross began as an idea for a resurrection 'Station' for the Stations of the Cross, depicting Christ's resurrection. Tradition, however, did not decree a fifteenth Station and Archbishop Gray asked Fred to create a Cross instead to hang in the Sanctuary. Thus the bold and yet simple wooden cross portraying 'Christ in Glory' was created as a cross rather than a resurrection panel.

Many have commented, on seeing the cross for the first time, that its position hanging high above the altar, unattached to the sanctuary wall, suggested it was miraculous, appearing to float in mid-air. A delight for the eye! Later the cross was repositioned and now hangs in a rather secluded spot in the side chapel.

It is interesting to observe that 50 years on, having a fifteenth station is not as radical a suggestion as it once was. As an example see Cafod's 15 Stations of the Cross Lent 2017.

Fred did admit that it was a very strange experience seeing this commission after 50 years, such a long time. 'It was a very demanding piece but once finished you don't usually see a project again partly because it no longer is yours but rather it now belongs to the people you created it for, in this case the people of St Gabriel's who were going to be using this space. It is also true of any artist that their critical appreciation of self is maturing faster than their ability to create so there's always an element of frustration...if you don't feel this then you've stopped being creative.'



First Station Jesus is condemned to death



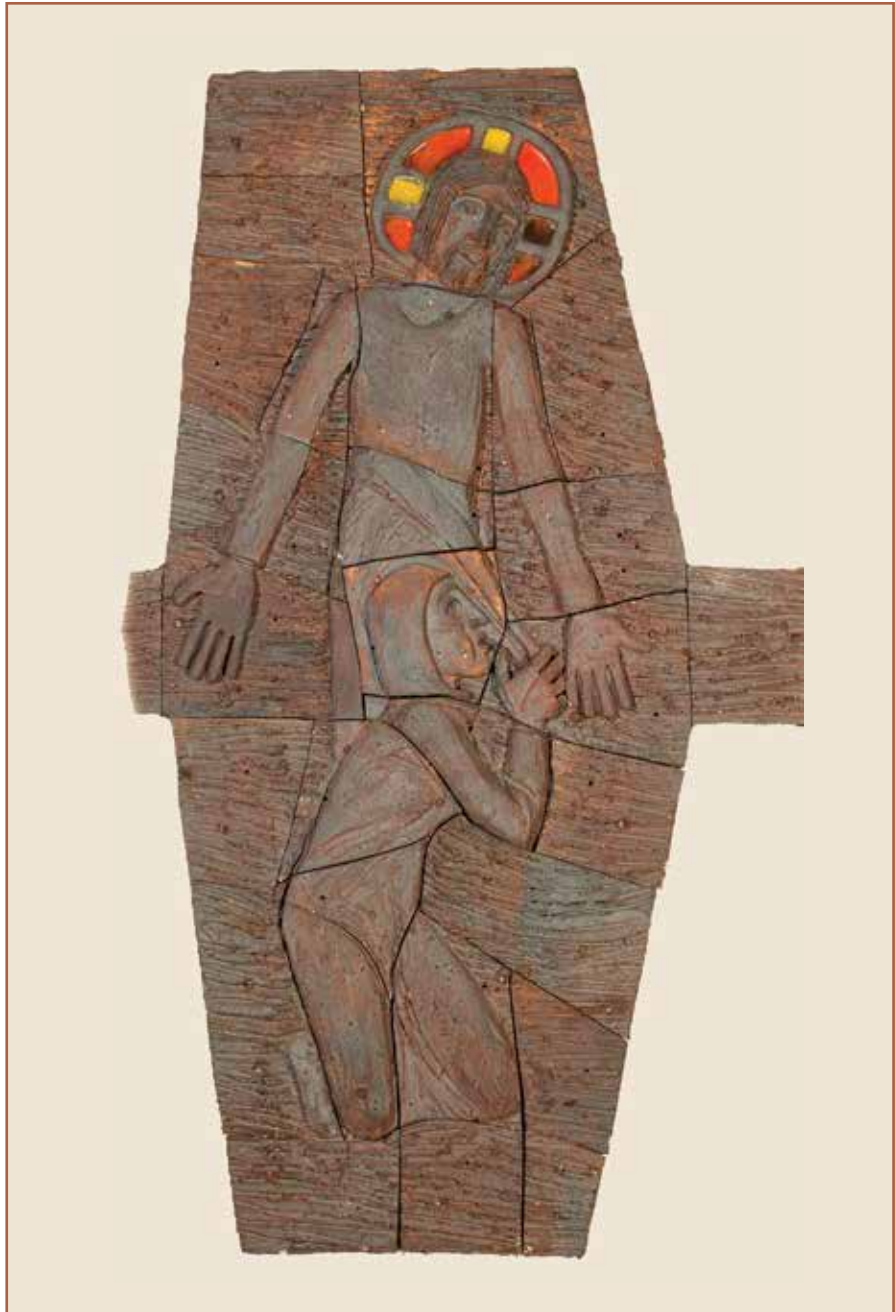
Second Station Jesus takes up his cross



Third Station Jesus falls the first time

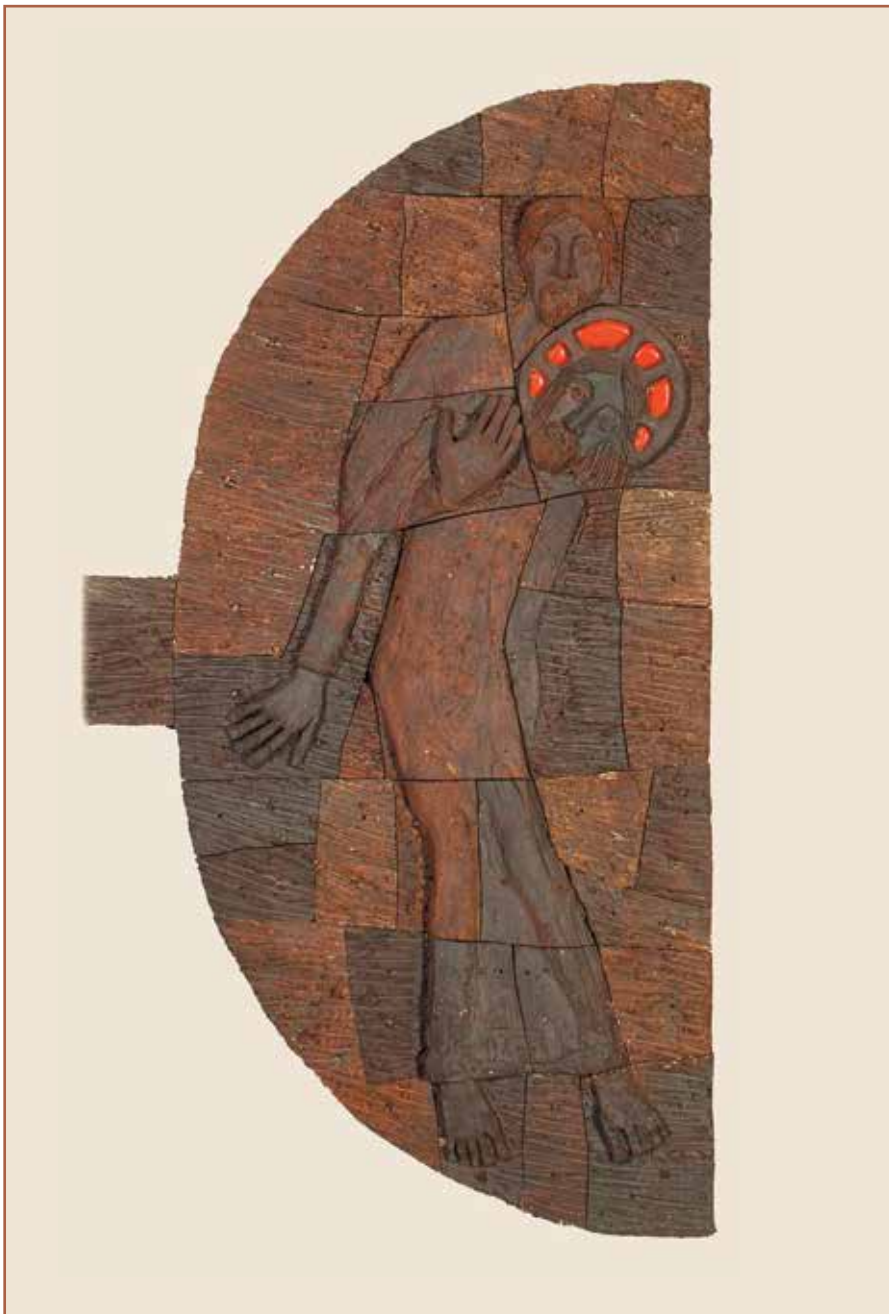


Fourth Station Jesus meets his Mother



Fifth Station

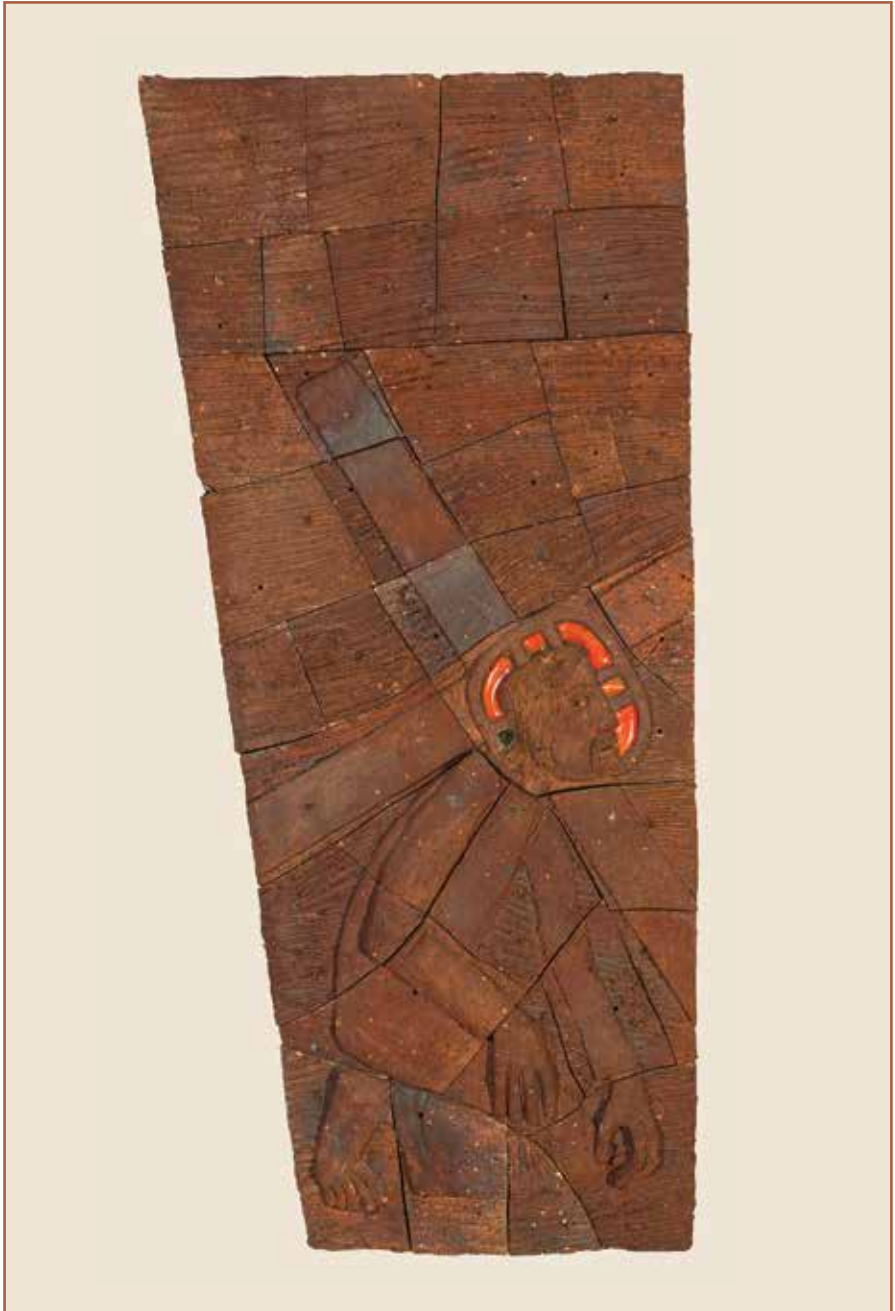
Simon helps Jesus to carry the cross



Sixth Station Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



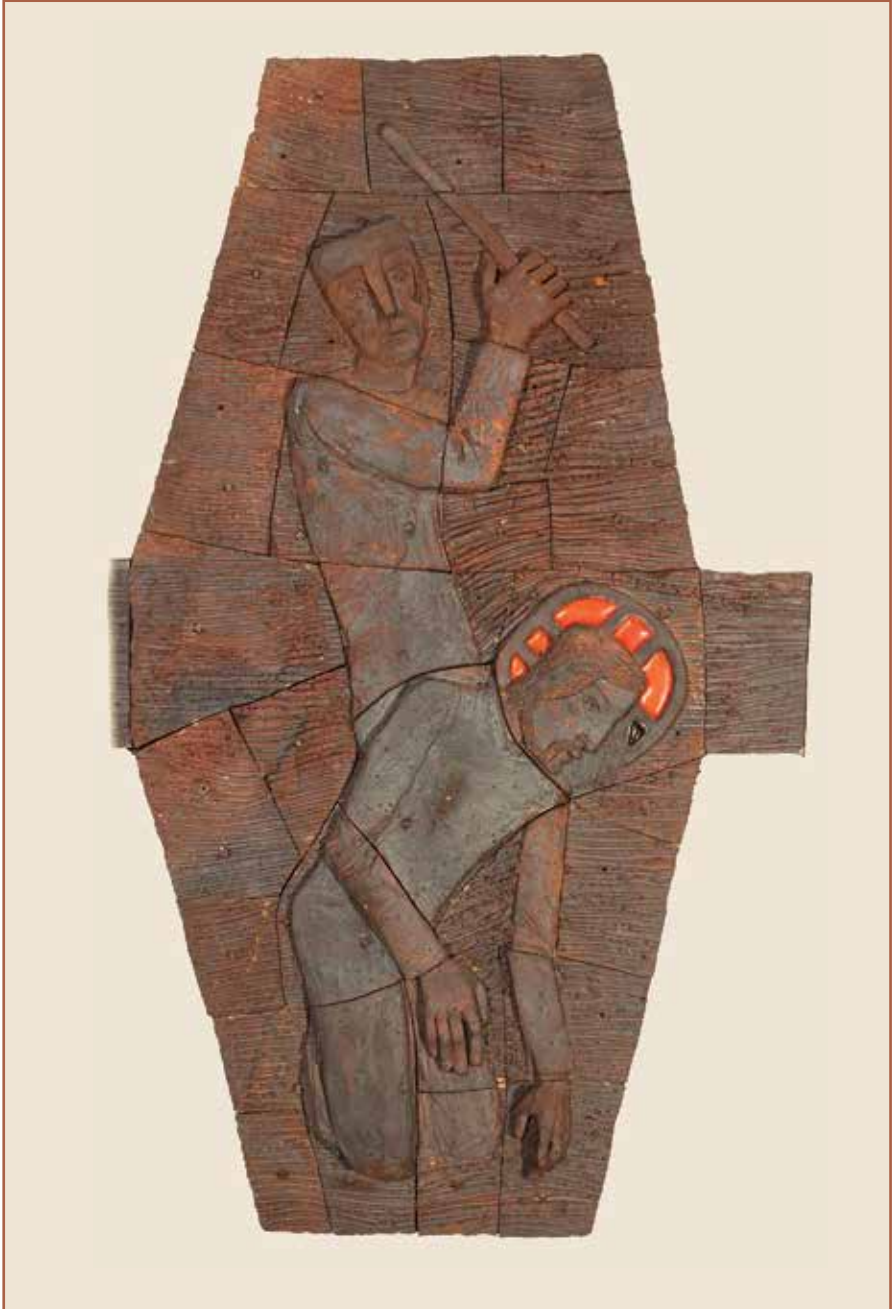
Seventh Station Jesus falls the second time



Eighth Station Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem



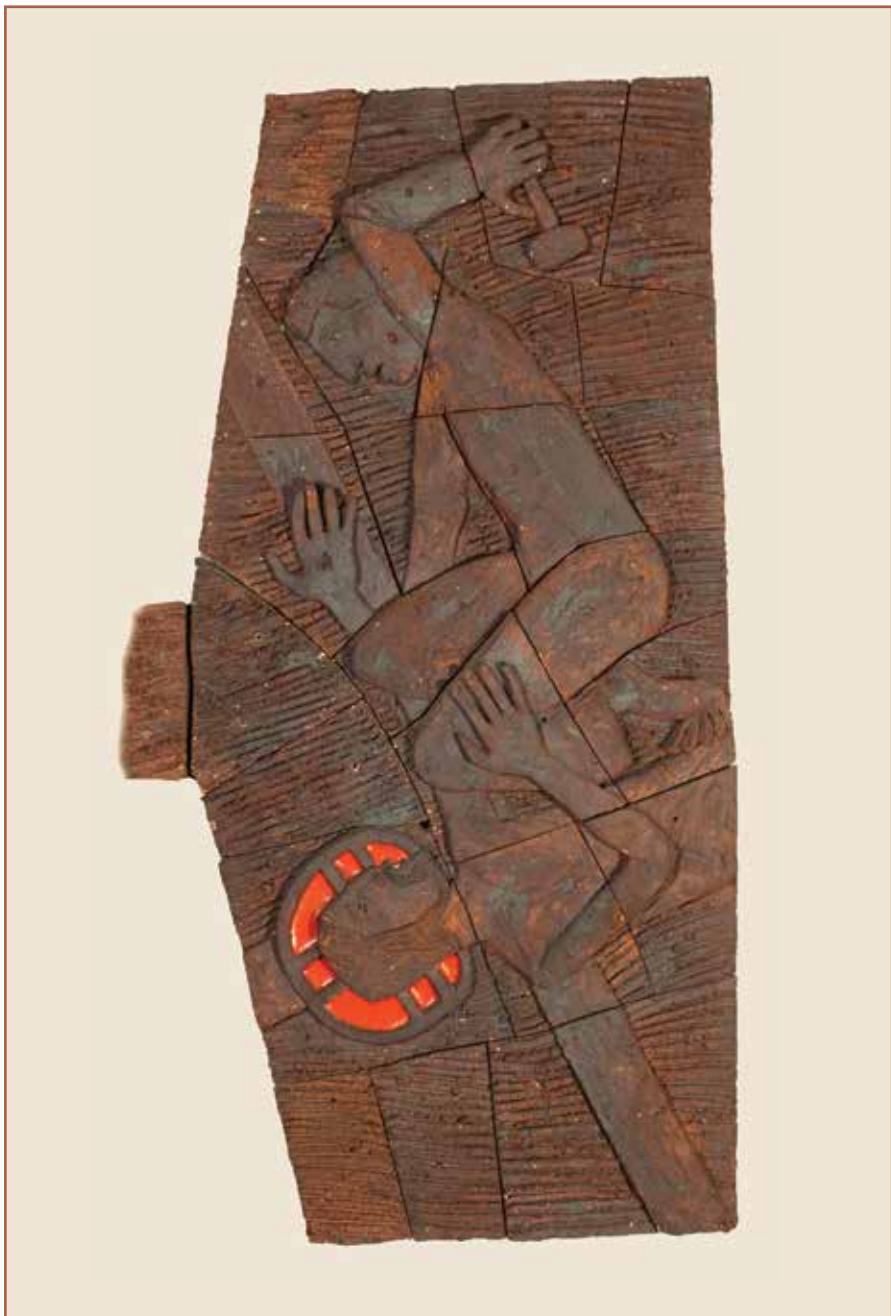
Ninth Station Jesus falls the third time



Tenth Station Jesus is stripped of his garments



Eleventh Station
Jesus is nailed to the cross



Twelfth Station
Jesus dies on the cross



Thirteenth Station Jesus is taken down from the cross



Fourteenth Station Jesus is laid in the tomb



Christ in Glory Cross

'The Fifteenth Station'

(Fred Carson)

St Paul says in 1 Corinthians (15:19-20) 'If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people. But Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep.' (See Ref 10)

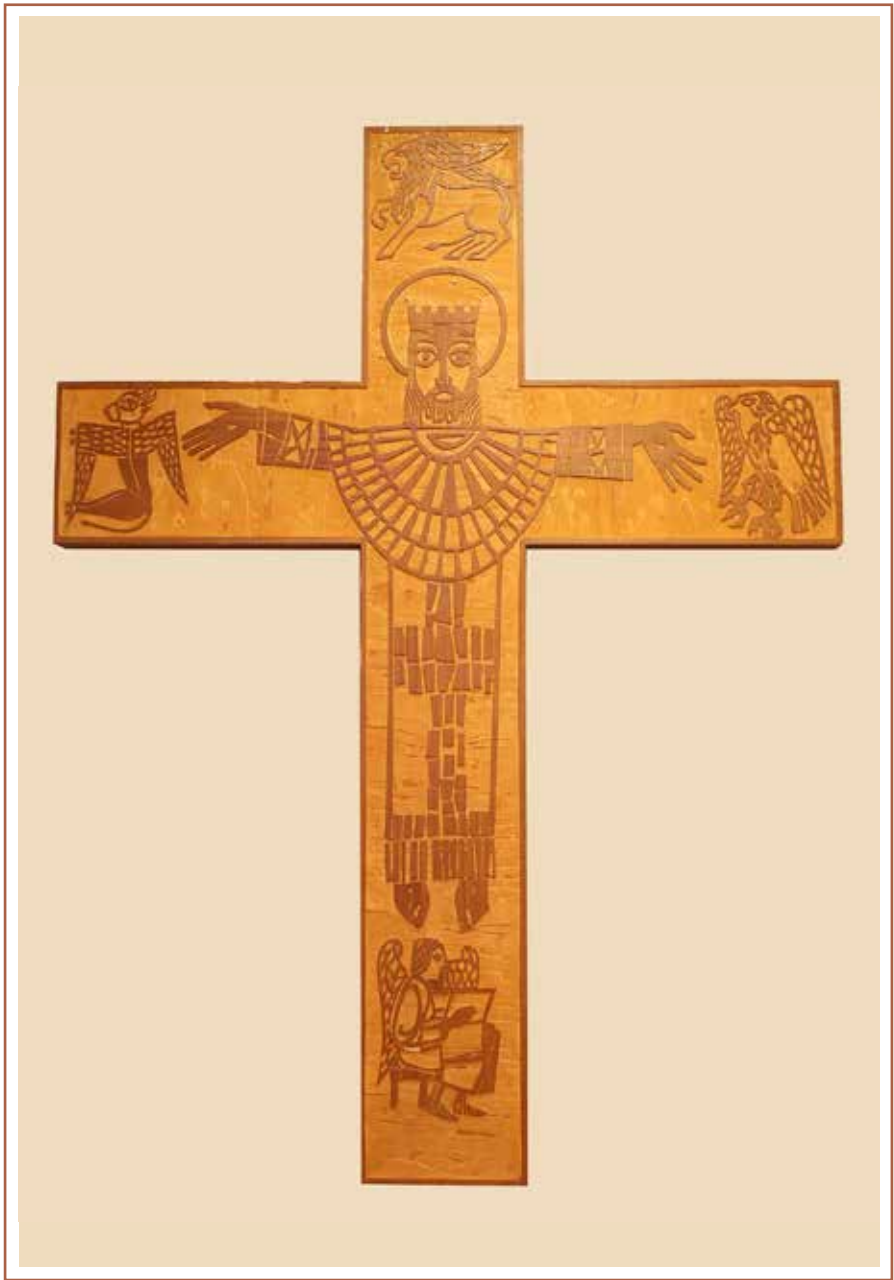
We are a people of the Resurrection, an Easter people.

When the option of a 15th Station was off the table, following discussions with Archbishop Gray, the Archbishop asked Fred if there was enough money in the budget to provide a cross for the sanctuary. So Fred set to work to provide one. The theme — a resurrected Christ... 'Christ in Glory'. In its original location, as you followed the flow of the Stations of the Cross round the curvature of the Church, your eyes naturally came to rest on the resurrected Christ on the cross in the sanctuary.

Fred Carson's 'Christ in Glory' cross was originally suspended in the sanctuary hovering high above and behind the altar. The cross is made as a hardwood box construction with the figures first drawn on the surface and then masked allowing precision sandblasting to remove the hardwood veneer, leaving the figures of Christ and the evangelists in relief.

The overall effect is to give the wood a bleached look similar to wood which one might find on the seashore. This roughness was to mirror that of the Stations of the Cross. The four figures at Christ's head, outstretched hands and feet represent the four Evangelists; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - the creators of the four gospels in the New Testament.

Although some variation exists in assigning representations to the Evangelists, especially in some very early Christian texts, a common form has Matthew represented by an Angel, Mark by a Lion, Luke by an Ox and John by an Eagle.



The Creative Journey So Far of Fred Carson

Asking Fred Carson, the creator of St Gabriel's Stations of the Cross, to give information for a few words about himself, stunned this creative man into silence. However after much persistent encouragement, we did manage to reveal a picture of his journey.

Fred grew up and went to school in Edinburgh where, in his Secondary School years, he was fortunate to have an intuitive and creative art teacher in Felix McCulloch. Indeed, it was through his guidance and inspiration that Fred was introduced to many diverse areas of art, including stained glass, which he returned to in later years.

On leaving school, he went onto Edinburgh College of Art, now part of Edinburgh University, where he completed a post graduate degree in sculptural ceramics. The next phase of his journey began when he was awarded a travelling scholarship in Italy. On his return to Edinburgh, fuelled by many new inspirations, he set up an exhibition of his most recent work in a city art gallery and it was to this opening that he invited, amongst others, a number of architectural companies. To this exhibition came a representative from the well respected company of Alison & Hutchison & partners. This was fortuitous for it was they who had the brief to create St Gabriel's Church and it was they who commissioned the young artist, Fred Carson, to design the Stations of the Cross mural for St Gabriel's, Prestonpans.

At this time the drawings for the church were still in sketch form and so it was that Fred felt privileged to be able to make a contribution, at an early stage, in this adventurous project. His studio was not large enough to 'lay out' this massive ceramic creation on one level and so he had to use two floors to inspect his mural. No doubt many a logistical difficulty occurred during the carving, and firing of these substantial 'jigsaw' pieces. Indeed the complete composition only came together to be seen as one when the individual sections were finally delivered on site at the church. Then came the job of sorting them into their appropriate positions on the floor in front of the curved church wall. Fortunately, and to his immense relief,

no doubt, his measurements were accurate, each piece fitting just where it should and finally the mural was revealed. Only now could it be expertly bolted into the curvature of the wall.

It was on completion of the mural that Archbishop (later to become Cardinal) Gray asked Fred if he could create a cross to hang above the Sanctuary. This wooden cross was intended to be seen as a 15th Station.. the culmination of Christ's journey to Resurrection. Christ in all his glory completing, in one sweep, Christ's journey. The artists desire was to hang it in such a way above the Sanctuary that it appeared almost to float in mid air above the altar which, parishioners testify, it did appear to do just that.

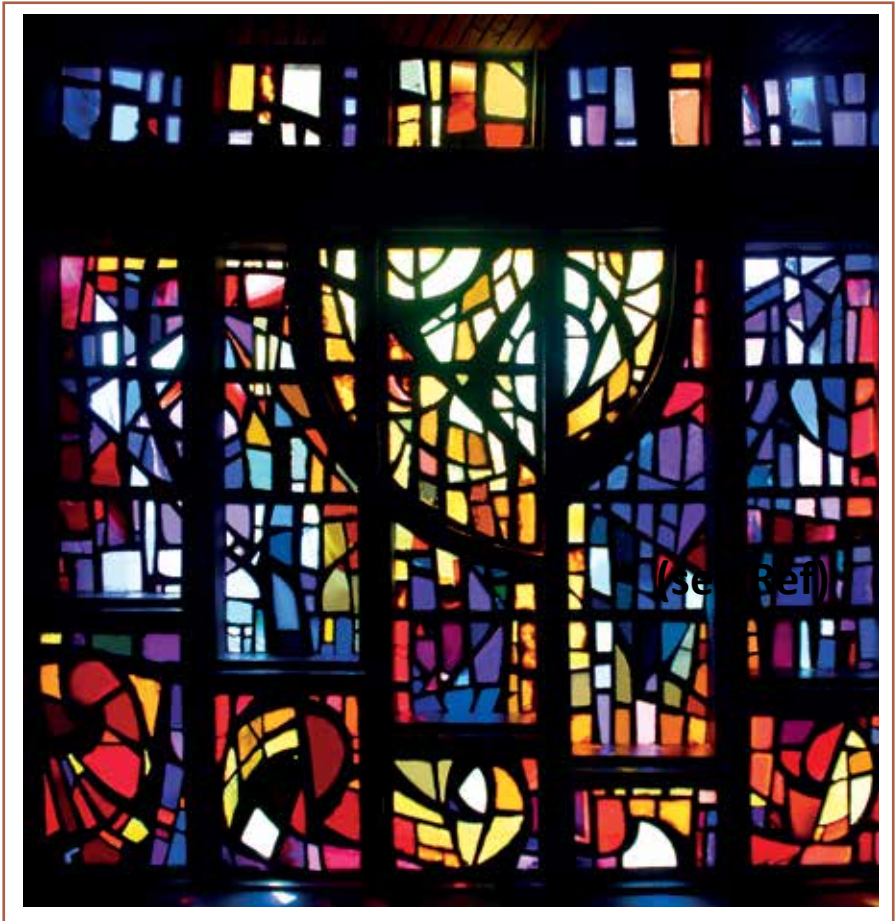
To create something anew, something which had been many times before sculpted and painted had been a difficult but extremely exciting project. 'But what a responsibility,' One commission, I suspect, never forgotten.

Now marrying the lovely and talented musician, Anna, and beginning a family together, Fred began to mentor and inspire many, many young people. At this time he became a lecturer for many years in Further Education at Edinburgh University, pouring his creative abilities and insights into encouraging new artists to develop their own unique artistic talents.

Whilst supporting those 'on their journey' , Fred also had time to work with those whose lives needed some input. One of these programmes was the flagship 'Think Again' programme where with Apex he was involved helping young offenders to take their first steps into further education.

Throughout his own artistic journey, he has delved into many areas of art, honing skills in various fields, including such diverse areas as silverwork and architectural mural commissions in ceramic , wood and glass. He has also been commissioned to renovate beautiful stained glass windows, seeing them dismantled and reinstalled in a new church and has more recently just completed an awesome triptych. Over many years too, Fred has nurtured aspiration in his own art classes for adults and also regularly runs summer schools in France.

Certainly Fred Carson is not short of inspiration and energy, used not solely to create powerful artistic pieces but also to nurture creativity in the hearts and minds of people. For this we deeply thank him in his tireless quest.



The Resurrection Window *(see Ref 2)*

Crear McCartney created the Resurrection window in St Gabriel's just prior to the opening of the church in 1966. The style is somewhat unusual in that it is a Dalle de Verre, window, the term in French meaning 'slab glass'. Whereas cathedral glass, normally used to produce stained glass, is relatively thin with only a skim of colour on the surfaces, Dalle de Verre, uses thick glass which is coloured throughout.

Also rather than lead comes (channels) to hold the glass in place, Dalle de Verre uses a supporting concrete structure and resin, or similar, to hold the glass. Medieval stained glass can be seen to sparkle and this is due to the impurities in the glass causing the light to be reflected and refracted as it strikes the impurities. This was a serendipitous side effect resulting from the medieval glassmakers not being able to remove the impurities during the manufacturing process. Crear has successfully sought to mimic this effect by deliberately ‘chipping’ the glass to cause the light to be variously reflected and refracted. We are truly blessed to have such a beautiful window, created by such a gifted man in our little church of St Gabriel.

Crear McCartney *(See Ref 3)*

Crear McCartney, who died in February 2016 aged 85, was one of Scotland’s finest stained glass artists who, during his long career, produced 112 largely religious works at sites from Aberdeen to Ayr, from Kirkwall to Cornwall and beyond. With a rich and original imagination, a deep love of nature, and a prodigious knowledge of history, languages, literature, music and the Bible, Crear McCartney found in stained glass a perfect medium. His sense of colour and his colour-memory were superb. He chose each piece of glass himself, and liked the way streaky or uneven glass put movement into the window.

His vast window in St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, created to celebrate its 850th anniversary, was dedicated in the presence of the Queen. Professor John Hume, chairman of The Scottish Stained Glass Trust, has described Mr McCartney’s contribution to 20th century stained glass art in Scotland as distinguished and distinctive. Educated at Symington Primary and Biggar High School, Crear was taught to draw by a Polish expatriate billeted in his home during the second world war. He sang in Biggar Kirk choir and, with his father, attended Polish services nearby where he learned to love Polish and Czech music.

In 1955, he was invited by Dom Ninian Sloan, OSB to run the stained glass studio at Pluscarden Priory near Elgin. For the first of five years, he lived in a cell and ate with the silent Benedictine monks while the Bible was read aloud. The window in St Katherine’s Aisle in St Michael’s Church, Linlithgow, with six lancets in two stages and a rose window above, is widely considered to be his greatest work.

Supplementary Information

During the research undertaken into the Stations of the Cross and the Resurrection Window, other information regarding St Gabriel's church came to light. This has been included in this Supplementary Information section so that it is not lost.

The design of St Gabriel's church was a very significant departure from the norm, driven by the even more significant changes occurring in the Catholic Church at that time due to Vatican II. As might be expected the design had both its supporters and its detractors and this is reflected to some degree in the newspaper reports of the time. St Gabriel's Church has been designated as a Category B listed building by Historic Environment Scotland. The details of the listing, which highlights the architectural significance of the building, is also included in this section.

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St Gabriel's Church



Photo courtesy of James Grinley see: Ref' 7

A description of St Gabriel's Church building, both exterior and interior, is provided by the Historic Scotland listing contained later in this booklet (see page 34). In addition the publication 'Being there. The Fierce and Beautiful World' and in particular the section entitled 'Churches on the Periphery' by James Grimley contains a description of the church architecture as well as some beautiful photographs of the church (See Ref 8). This section contains extracts from the local and national press (See Ref 6) around the time of the Church's dedication, by Archbishop Gordon Gray, on 3rd April 1966.

The Haddingtonshire Courier April 1st 1966

Under the heading 'New Prestonpans Church will accommodate 400' the paper reported: With the near completion of the new St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church at Prestonpans it is interesting to note that the unusual design of the new church has now come to be a respected piece of architecture. When plans were first drawn up in December of 1964 by Alison & Hutchison & Partners the strange design came in for a great deal of criticism from the congregation and the people of Prestonpans. Through time the majority of these people are now getting accustomed to the building.

This is one of the first parish churches in Scotland specially designed for the new liturgy – the priest faces the congregation over the altar. Work began on the construction in April 1964. One of the principal features of the design is the incorporation of works by two young Scottish artists. Mr Frederick Carson was responsible for the Stations of the Cross and the suspended crucifix high above the altar. The Stations of the Cross are made in fired clay with inserts of fused glass and these cover most of one wall of the nave, forming a complete mural six feet high and fifty five feet long.



Aerial View illustration of St Gabriel's Church, Prestonpans clearly showing it to have 'a strong, morphic form representing a fish'. See: Ref 8

The suspended crucifix is constructed in hardwood with the figure of Christ and the figures of the four apostles sandblasted on the face. The side-chapel window has been constructed by Crear McCartney and is 16 feet long and 13 feet high. The inch thick panels of French Glass are set in concrete framing and the vividly coloured abstract design is based on the theme of the Resurrection.

The cost of the building is £40,000 and has taken just less than two years

to build. Walls are white on both the exterior and interior and polished hardwood has been widely used in the ceilings and pews. The church is designed to hold 400 and is built in such a way that the lighting in the building is completely concealed.

As a footnote the minister of the Church, Father Edward, said this week that he did not like the building at first sight but on seeing the completed job he was very impressed with his new Church.

Scottish Daily Mail April 4th 1966

Under the heading 'Into the 20th Century' Archbishop Gordon Gray was quoted as saying: "A church must be built in accordance with the era in which it is erected", and that "the unusual shape of the church was very much in keeping with the new liturgy." He further went on to say that "I am terribly pleased with it. It is a very wonderful structure". *(Reporter: Ian Metcalfe)*

Edinburgh Evening News and Dispatch April 1966

The paper reported under the heading: 'Church in the round....Now there's room for everyone' that the church cost £40,000 to build and had seating for 400+ whereas the Church Hall had a seating capacity of 280. Rev. Father Edward Kennedy, the priest-in-charge, said "It (the hall) is now much too small for our purposes. We get a lot of visitors to the area in the summer months, and sometimes, at the height of the season, people have had to stand on the steps outside the building during mass. I have seen as many as 7 busloads of visitors coming to the church." A spokesman for Alison and Hutchison (the architects responsible for the building) was quoted as saying "The interior (of the church) was designed to give greatest significance to the altar with natural light increasing in intensity towards the sanctuary" It was also reported that the work of 2 young Scottish artists is included. Frederick Carson's Stations of the Cross, executed in fused glass and ceramic, form a complete mural on one wall of the nave, and the side chapel window- "Resurrection" – is the work of Cear McCartney. *(Reporter: 'Kirker')*

Religious Artefacts in St Gabriel's Church

(Fred Carson)



Holy water font



Holy water font



Cross handles on Baptistry doors



The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle is a striking and audacious design which triumphantly calls peoples attention to the 'dwelling place' of the consecrated host.... Christ's body. To date no information has been found on who designed the tabernacle or indeed its symbolism. Perhaps some one out there may have some information? If so, please get in touch.

The Baptismal Font

The baptismal font was removed from the church during a break-in and vandalised beyond repair. No photographs appear to exist to show what the font looked like and neither has any information been uncovered regarding the design or manufacture of the piece. Perhaps someone out there may have some information? If so, please get in touch.

Historic Scotland Listed Building

(See Ref 9) The legal part of the listing is the address/name of site only. All other information in the record is not statutory.

ST GABRIEL'S CHURCH INCLUDING BOUNDARY WALLS, RAILINGS AND CROSS, WEST LOAN, PRESTONPANS LB52187 - Status: Designated-

Summary Information:

- Category: B
- Date Added: 26/03/2014 Supplementary Information Updated: 22/06/2016

Location

- Local Authority: East Lothian
- Planning Authority: East Lothian Burgh: Prestonpans National Grid Reference NGR: NT 38858 74049 Coordinates: 338858, 674049

Description

George Kennedy and Michael Landon of Alison and Hutchison and Partners, 1965. Single-storey, radially planned Catholic church with vertically banded rendered walls in Modernist style rising in height to the east and sited in open ground to the centre of a large square corner site with a tall timber cross marking the entrance of the site. Expanding finned walls forming vertical window details to the east end and framing the altar. There is a large secondary section wrapping around the principal concentric circular plan to the south ending in the large glazed Lady Chapel window facing east. The entrance is to the east side and flanked by double sided glazed baptistry with taller concave curved wall at the end. Shallow concrete ponds (empty 2013) under the decorative windows were designed to reflect sunlight through the stained glass and there is a low base course glazed window wrapping around the main space to light the interior. There is a sloping flat roof with 3 bands of rooflights.

Large cross made from timber I-beam sections set just inside the main entrance gate of low brick walls and gatepiers with concrete capping (replacement railings). The interior was seen in 2013. The main congregation space has solid curved walls and no windows with the only natural light provided at floor

level by a horizontal glazed band at skirting height. The boarded timber ceiling rises in height in 3 stages to the altar where the space is lit by 3 bands of rooflights and vertical side lights created by the external fin sections. There is black terrazzo flooring throughout with raised curved altar plinth in patterned light grey polished marble. There are large Scandinavian style Stations of the Cross built into curvature of wall by artist Fred Carson in brown ceramic with coloured glazed details. There is a 5-bay stained 'dalles de verre style glass window to Lady Chapel depicting the Resurrection which was designed in 1965 by the stained glass artist Crear McCartney. There is a stone altar table with indented cross and sculptural laminated timber tabernacle enclosing metal sphere. Bespoke timber pews and vertical timber boarded doors. Open timber screen doors with paired red ceramic crosses leading to timber lined and glazed former baptistery with central rock plinth on radially carved stone base for former font bowl (now lost, 2013).

Statement of Special Interest

Place of worship in use as such. St Gabriel s Roman Catholic Church is an important example of Post-war ecclesiastical architecture retaining its original character and form as an unusual modernist concentric circular design which forms a striking contrast to its surroundings in the centre of a residential area. The rendered, angled rising walls are punctuated by vertical glazed strip window sections to form a highly sculptural building which is still in its original plan. The interior of the church has a light and delicate sculptural quality with the interior design cleverly using the expanding concentric circle plan to create windows and rooflights to direct shafts of light on the altar and crucifix throughout the day. The church retains its original form and detailing throughout with only minor alterations to some windows.

The church was built in 1966, the first church in Prestonpans for the parish that had been founded in 1932 to include Prestonpans, Wallyford and Port Seton. At the time when it was built the diocese was forward thinking in commissioning unusual modern designs and modern congregational spaces, a result of the implementation of liturgical reform and the renewed theology of Vatican II from this period.

As Glendinning notes in *Rebuilding Scotland* (p131) 'the movement to single interior spaces for modern church architecture allowed the architect to focus on and use the finishes of floors, ceilings and walls as important part of the overall design. This ethos is well demonstrated at St Gabriel s with the use of vertical side windows and bands of horizontal rooflights to light the altar

and crucifix in different ways through the day. The way the ceiling height rises towards the altar also acts as a focus for the congregation to the heart of the church. There is a brightly coloured contemporary 'dalles de verre' style window depicting the resurrection. This style of glass was established in France in the 20th century by Gabriel Loire (1904-1996) of Chartres and became popular in post war churches in Scotland. The window at St Gabriel's was designed by renowned Scottish stained glass artist, Crear McCartney (1931-2016) who carried out work to around 100 churches in Scotland. He studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1950 -1955 under Walter Pritchard. Examples of Crear's work include Pluscarden Abbey, following his graduation in 1955, and St Magnus Cathedral in Orkney in 1987. Other important examples of a circular planned Post-war churches in Scotland are Brucefield Parish Church, Whitburn 1966 and St Andrew's Roman Catholic Church, Livingston 1969, which is also by the firm Alison and Hutchison and Partners (see separate listings). Minor changes made to listed building record (non-statutory information) in 2016.

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Further information from member of the public (June 2016)

- END OF BUIDING LISTING -

For the latest version of the listing please visit:

<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB52187>

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Ref 5) The Glasgow Herald kindly allowed information to be reproduced from Crear's obituary first published in the Glasgow Herald on 10th May 2016.

Ref 6) Thanks and acknowledgements go to the East Lothian Courier, The Edinburgh Evening News and the Scottish Daily Mail (and/or their predecessor publications) for permission to reproduce/quote from their newspaper articles published around the time of the church's opening.

Ref 7) The photograph on the front cover together with the photograph in the section on St Gabriel's Church are by the kind permission of James Grimley.

Ref 8) James Grimley's chapter 'Churches on the Periphery' part of the publication 'BEING THERE, THE FIERCE AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD' was used as reference material when researching the booklet.

Ref 9) Thanks also to Historic Environment Scotland for permission to reproduce their Category B Listing of St Gabriel's Church Prestonpans, reference LB52187.

Ref 10) Scripture texts are taken from the Jerusalem Bible.

