



FREEMINERS' WINDOW

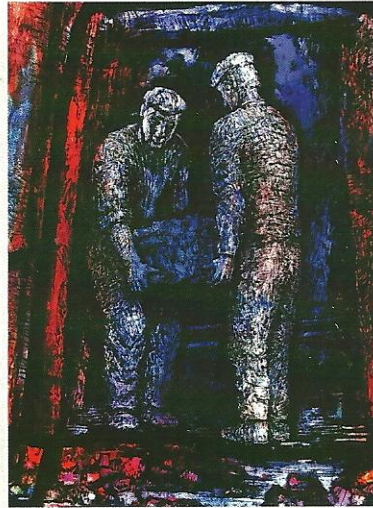
ST. MICHAELS CHURCH
ABENHALL

St Michaels church, Abenhall, has ancient connections with the Freeminers of the Forest of Dean and this window celebrates their place in the life of the Forest. Inspiration has been found in Deuteronomy



Chapter 8, verses 7-8 which expresses thankfulness to God for the wonderful and extraordinary place we have been given, full of riches in, on and under the earth.

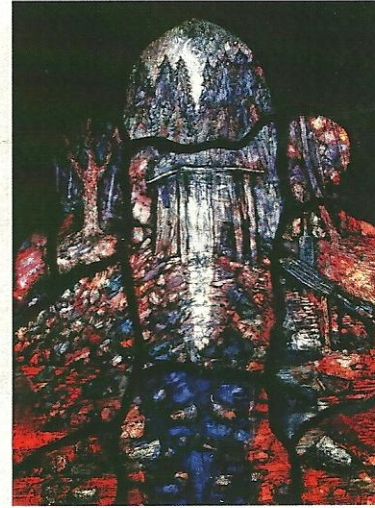
“For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills. A land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive



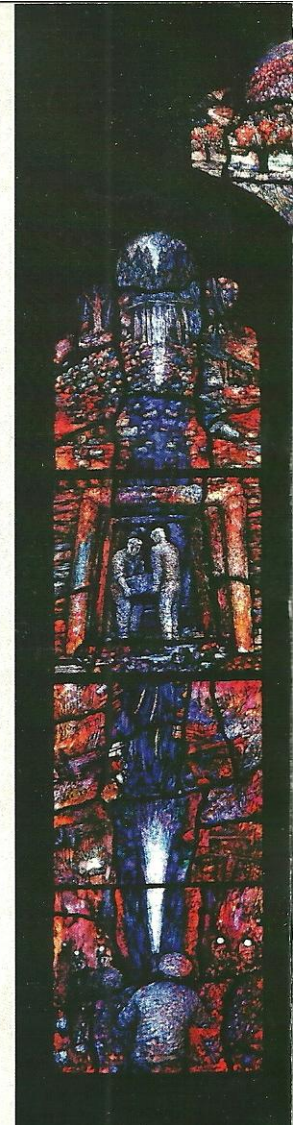
oil and honey. A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

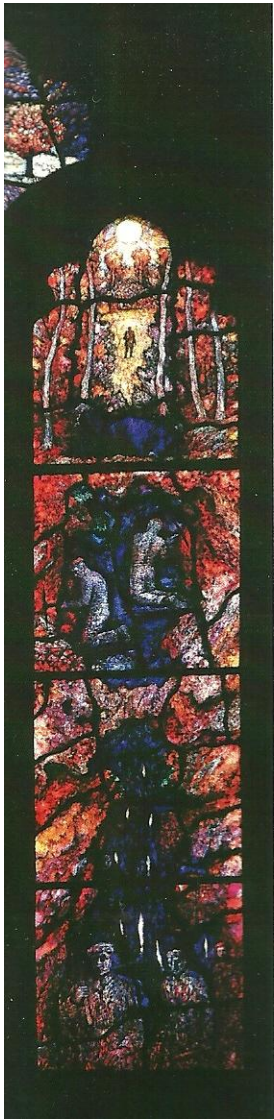
When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.”

The design encompasses life experienced above and below

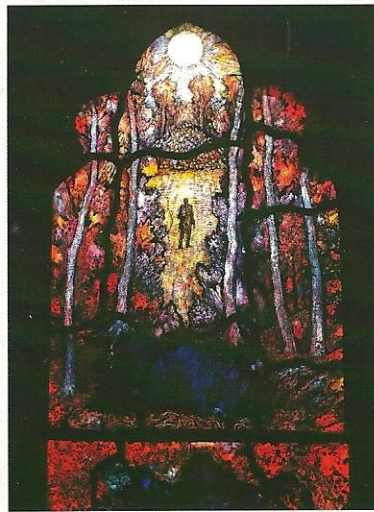


ground. Initially the viewer is aware of dark shafts that descend the window (their slate blue an intensification perhaps of colours hidden in the blackness of coal).





These shafts are framed by iron red/red ochre. Light pierces the darkness, especially in the lower panels of the window. There is much narrative detail embedded in the design, some immediately



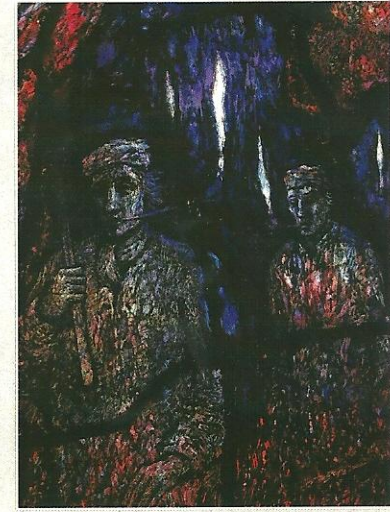
apparent, some to be discovered with time. The top right hand light shows an early morning glade with young deciduous trees surrounding the entrance to an iron mine.

Behind this a figure stands by a mound of quarried stone. In the section below, two kneeling miners work in an iron mine, the fantastical shapes and colours of which are further described in the third section



down. Here one is aware of flickers of candlelight, and at the bottom a group of miners emerges, illuminated by "nellies" (candles pushed into balls of clay, held on a forked stick).

These figures could belong to any period from Medieval to Victorian. Those at the bottom of the left hand light suggest 20th/21stC miners, their lamps stepping back into the distance. In the upper section of the left



hand light the moon rises over fir trees. A corrugated structure sits on the coal spoil at the head of a mine shaft. In the section below, two miners framed by timbering lift blocks

of coal. Below this is a panel of fragments, artefacts and words; tools, rails, gale names.

In the tracery section above the two lights is a landscape of wooded knoll, deep valleys, orchards, crop fields: a Forest of Dean embodiment of *"a land of depths that spring out of valleys and hills. A land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates."*

The Freemaners' window first arose as an idea after Sunday service at Abenhall, during a conversation between two Freemaners back in 1985; but the idea did not move forward until 2006, when the vicar of St Michaels, Rev Robert Sturman suggested using the west facing, plain glass window in the bell tower.

The process of looking for a suitable maker began and Thomas Denny, a

well respected ecclesiastical stained glass artist, was chosen.

Design, approvals and formal permissions, fundraising and making, all took time to complete, with the artist having other window commissions to complete in between. The window was completed and installed 14th April 2011; dedication by Rt Revd John Went Bishop of Tewkesbury on June 5th 2011.

The window consists of fairly large pieces of hand-made flashed glass (mainly German, with some English and French) worked on in various ways (acid etching, plating, silver staining, painting) to arrive at subtlety and richness. The colour is unified but full of subtle variation. Leadlines are concealed in dark passages or echo movement and drawing in the glass.

The Freemaners' Association are pleased to present a window that is a happy addition to the existing harmony of St Michaels, connecting past and present, rather as the Freemaners represent an ancient but renewing tradition. It is hoped the window will reward repeated viewings: it has been created to be beautiful and meaningful.



ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN FREEMINERS' ASSOCIATION

The Royal Forest of Dean Freemaners' Association is the Guild of Freemaners, united in the common interest of supporting the tradition of Freemaning; upholding the customs, franchises and statutes 'graunted tyme out of minde and after in tyme' by which Freemaning is empowered.*

** From 'The Miners Lawes and priviledges' (1612 translation).*



Device of
the Miners



Device of
the Colliers

The Freemaners' Association wish to thank everyone who has helped with the realisation of this window, in particular Tom Denny for the design, creation and description, and the following generous donors that have made this window possible:



Hale and Co.



Clearwell Caves



Forestry Commission



Forest of Dean
District Council

Also:
Monument Colliery
Cannop Drift Mine and individual
contributions from many Freemaners.



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