

Natasha used two layers of mouth-blown flash glass which she etched, hand-painted and silver-stained. She carefully prepared each of 14 panels using liquid resist and then drew detail and painted with turpentine so as to create a watercolour effect when placed in acid. She combined traditional materials with modern techniques. Acid etched red and blue layers created all the shading and figure work with the addition of silver stain, bistre brown and tracing black. It was a complex and tricky process. The spectrum of colours from these primary colours is exemplified by the Goethe colour wheel. Sandblasting and a Dremmel drill for the finer details completed the range of techniques employed.

Symbols and texts



The design is based on the underlying geometry of the church and combines aspects of the earthly, airy and divine realms.

Wilfred Owen initially studied botany at the University of Reading. At the earthly level are snowdrops: beautiful and delicate flowers that face the earth and its 'heavy clay'. The poppy and the blue cornflower symbolise remembrance in England and France. English bluebells stand for constancy, humility and gratitude in wartime. Daisies symbolise the hope, innocence and purity of the child Owen describes in his poem.

Thistles honour Owen's time at Craiglockhart Hospital near Edinburgh. It was here he met Siegfried Sassoon. The Dunsden landscape is depicted and we see the children of Owen's poem by the grave of their friend. The lower inscription is taken from Owen's poem 'Deep under turfy grass and heavy clay they lay her bruised body and the child'.



The intermediate or airy realm represents life's journey in the form of the spirit of this village and the Owen trail which runs through it.



In the divine realm, the German poet Goethe's colour wheel represents diversity and inclusivity and the turning of the wheel of the year and the endless cycle of life and death. A trifold geometric pattern hidden in a snowdrop stands for harmony and balance. A faint image of the mother and child, Hilda and Agnes Allen, symbolises hope. These words from Revelation 21:4 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death' complete the window.

Find out more

Details of the Owen Trail are at owenindunsden.org and on leaflets in the church porch. You will also find us on Facebook.

In the churchyard you may visit the graves of Susan and Thomas Owen, Owen's parents and that of his sister, Mary Millard. Mary Allen and her daughter Hilda whose death inspired Owen's poem 'Deep under Turfy Grass' are also commemorated by a new inscription located near these graves.

The village of Dunsden has a friendship link with the Commune of Ors in the Nord department of France. The house where Owen spent his last night has become a memorial to him. Ors holds an annual commemoration of Owen's life which culminates in a ceremony at his grave which is in the village cemetery.

The Wilfred Owen Association www.wilfredowen.org.uk has extensive resources about Owen. The biographies by Dominic Hibberd and Guy Cuthbertson are fascinating reading.

Thanks to all who have provided content for this leaflet.
Leaflet words and design: www.designforprint.org



Who was Wilfred Owen?



Wilfred Edward Salter Owen MC is celebrated as one of the greatest poets of the First World War. He was born near Oswestry on 18 March 1893 and came to live in Dunsden in September 1911. For some 17 months he lodged with and worked for the Vicar, the Revd Herbert Wigan.

In Dunsden, Owen hoped to explore his religious vocation as well as to prepare for university entry. His duties in the parish were many. They included taking part in services, visiting the village school, putting on slide shows in the mission hall, and visiting the sick in their often overcrowded houses.

It was also in Dunsden that he first encountered loss. Mary Allen, a young mother, together with her four year old daughter Hilda, died in a horse and cart accident near the village green. This tragedy inspired the poem 'Deep Under Turfy Grass' - words from which are incorporated into the window. It is written in a mannered and archaic style but has been described as perhaps his most significant early poem.

The poem rails at religious orthodoxy before finding an answer to the tragedy of death in the final verse: 'And there stood one Child with them, whose pale brows | Wore beauty like our mother Eve's; whom seeing, | I could not choose but undo all my vows, | And cry that it were well that human Being | And Birth and Death should be, just for the freeing | Of one such face from Chaos' murky womb, | For Hell's reprieve is worth not this one bloom'.

Sadly, the vicar's evangelical methods caused Wilfred to question his religious calling. Over time, he developed a deep love for the ordinary, poor people of the parish. They had their own quiet faith - borne out of grinding poverty. We don't know the precise nature of the 'terrible bust-up' that caused Wilfred to leave Dunsden in February 1913, but in one of many letters to his mother he wrote of 'murdering his false creed'. He may have also been struggling with his emerging homosexuality.

Under the guidance of Siegfried Sassoon, Owen achieved poetic greatness when he took as his subject 'War, and the pity of War - the poetry is in the pity'. His best-known works, including 'Dulce et Decorum est', 'Insensibility', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', 'Futility', and 'Strange Meeting' cry out with a voice that echoes to this day. Wilfred Owen met his end aged just 25, when he was killed in action near the village of Ors in northern France on 4 November 1918. It was just a week before the war's end.

How did the window come about?



The Dunsden Owen Association formed in 2013 in order to deepen understanding of Owen's time in the village. Our first initiative was an exhibition which commemorated the centenary of the First World War.

We subsequently established a guided trail, telling the intriguing story of Wilfred's time here. After a lecture series marked the centenary of the end of the First World War, the Association decided Owen's huge poetic achievement should be permanently celebrated with a new stained glass window. The brief required it to be a striking piece of contemporary art. By contacting the Worshipful Company of Glaziers we discovered that a potential designer could be found by taking part in their annual Stevens Competition, which we did in 2022.

After years of hard work, including a crowd-funding campaign to which dozens of local people generously contributed, the church community finally voted for Natasha Redina's design which had already won the design award in the Stevens Competition.

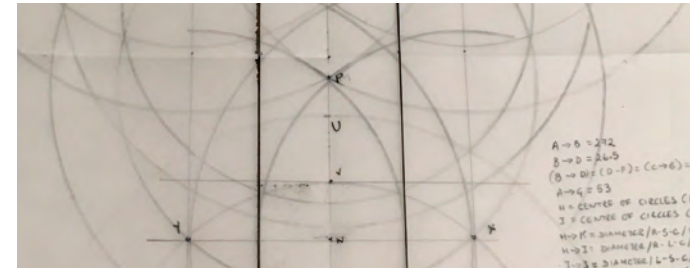
After she carried out the commission to make the window, Natasha's stunning work was carefully installed by glaziers Dan Humphries and India Savill on 11 October, 2023. Remarkably this date was the 111th anniversary to the day of the tragic death of Mary Allen and her daughter Hilda - which had so moved Owen to write 'Deep Under Turfy Grass'. The Bishop of Oxford officially blessed the window at a ceremony on 4 November, 2023 - the 105th anniversary of Owen's death.

Visiting All Saints, Dunsden

Your will find a warm welcome at our church. It is usually open to visitors after the 11am Sunday morning service and is often open on Wednesday afternoons. It can also be visited on other occasions by special arrangement with the Churchwardens. Find out more at www.achurchnearyou.com/church/5299/



About the designer and her work

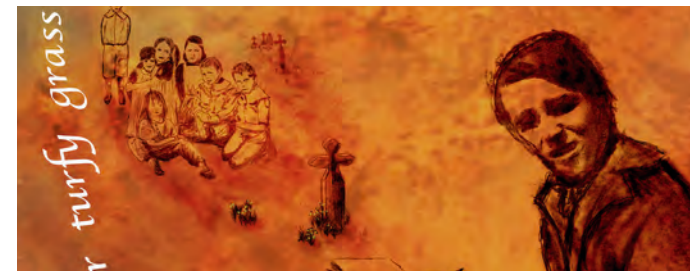


Beauty and harmony, both in nature and in the sacred arts, have always fascinated Natasha Redina.

Natasha first studied World Religions in London at SOAS and Heythrop College. Her research included study of traditional worship practices in architecture, pilgrimage, votive offerings, healing and storytelling. She holds a Master's in Transpersonal Psychotherapy and studied at the Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts, including a course in Sacred Geometry and another in Stained Glass. She went on to study with Maria Zulueta at Morley College North, gaining distinctions in UAL and BTEC Diplomas in Glass.

Natasha Redina's inspirations include the Islamic art of Andalusia, the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt and the visionary brilliance of William Blake. She admires the stained glass of Harry Clarke, Marc Chagall and Thomas Denny as well as medieval glass painting.

The window asks how we can endure suffering, injustice and death. According to the Stoics, solace is found by changing our viewpoint from that of the individual, to the universal or divine perspective.



This window invites you to begin at its foot, where we encounter young Wilfred. Our gaze ascends through the pink and blue hues of the sky, to a moon-filled night, and on to the infinite stars and unknowable Cosmos. This ascending movement is guided by the curving text which leads the eye up and round and down again, so as to complete the circle of life and death and life.

Natasha's design plays with perspective; semi-transparent, it invites active participation from both the observer and external world; shimmering and changing in response to movement and light variations. It is multi-layered, so images appear and disappear according to the light conditions. Its aim is to create a space of quiet contemplation and healing for those who have lost loved ones 'too soon'.