

# Two Private Chapels, Two Painted Ceilings: Gwydir Uchaf and Staunton Harold

by

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*The two free-standing private family chapels considered here are located in North Wales and Leicestershire. They date from the 17th century and remain intact and essentially unaltered internally and externally. The furniture and arrangements of both are designed for 17th-century Anglican worship. The chapels were built by prominent local landowners with High Church leanings. A striking feature of both chapels is their unusual painted ceilings which are the focus of this paper. The ceilings are painted on wooden boards and appear naïve in style and execution. The nave ceiling of Staunton*

*Harold was signed and dated in 1655 and the ceilings of the aisles and chancel were painted in the 1660s: surviving accounts name the painter. There is much less known about the origin of Gwydir Uchaf's painting, with no record of the date or craftsmen, although the chapel itself is dated 1673. The painting style more closely resembles the chancel ceiling at Staunton.*

*The ceilings are described and compared. They represent a very small group of surviving painted ceilings of 17th-century churches and chapels in Britain. It is suggested that further research considering all of these works may reveal more about their origin and*

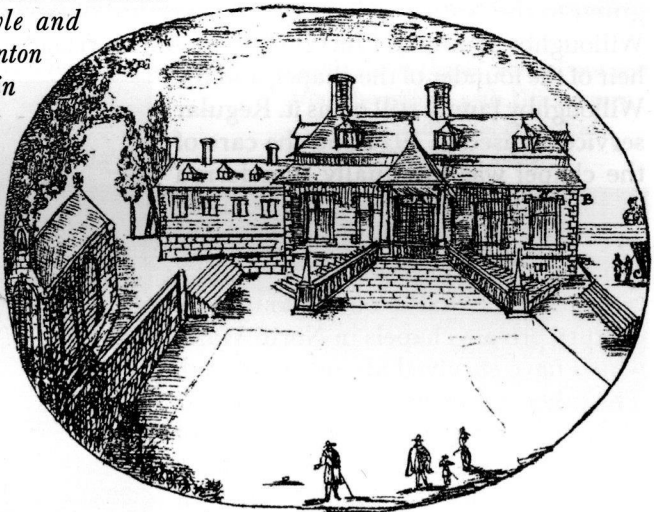


Fig. 1

Gwydir Uchaf, summer residence of the Wynns of Gwydir, house and chapel in the late 17th century.

*Engraving by Thomas Dinely in T. Dinely and C. Baker, An account of the Progress of his Grace Henry the first Duke of Beaufort through Wales 1684 (London 1888), 137.*

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*symbolism and how they fit into a wider British and continental context.*

## INTRODUCTION

Visitors to the two former private family chapels at Gwydir Uchaf (Caerns.) and Staunton Harold (Leics.) are often intrigued by their unusual painted ceilings. The chapels were built in the 17th century and their contemporary ceilings are painted on wooden boards. A feature of both chapels is that they were untouched by the 19th-century enthusiasm for rebuilding or refurbishment in response to changes in liturgical practices, and so they retain their original arrangements for 17th-century worship. Both chapels are dedicated to the Holy Trinity and were founded by men with High Church leanings. They were wealthy landowners establishing a place of worship for their families and estate workers, and both took a personal interest in their building and furnishing. In neither case has the chapel ever been part of the diocesan structure: the families appointed and paid their own chaplains.

The chapels are now cared for by national bodies. The Shirley family estate in Leicestershire was broken up and sold in 1954 and Staunton Harold chapel was gifted to the National Trust. The ownership of Gwydir and its estates passed to the Willoughby family of Lincolnshire on the marriage in 1678 of the only daughter and heir of the founder of the chapel, and the Willoughby family still owns it. Regular services ceased in 1920 and the care of the chapel was eventually transferred in 1952 to the Ministry of Works. It is now cared for by Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments.

Gwydir Uchaf is one of four 17th-century private chapels in North Wales which have survived almost unaltered. The others are Rug Chapel (1637) near Corwen, which is also in the care of Cadw; the Jesus Chapel (founded 1619, consecrated 1623) at Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd; and Gwydir Chapel (1633-34) attached to Llanrwst Church.<sup>1</sup> They are all very different, but it is Gwydir Uchaf, with its painted wooden ceiling, which is the main consideration here.

### GWYDIR UCHAF CHAPEL (1673)

The chapel was built a mile or so from Gwydir Castle, the large house which had been the principal seat of the Wynn

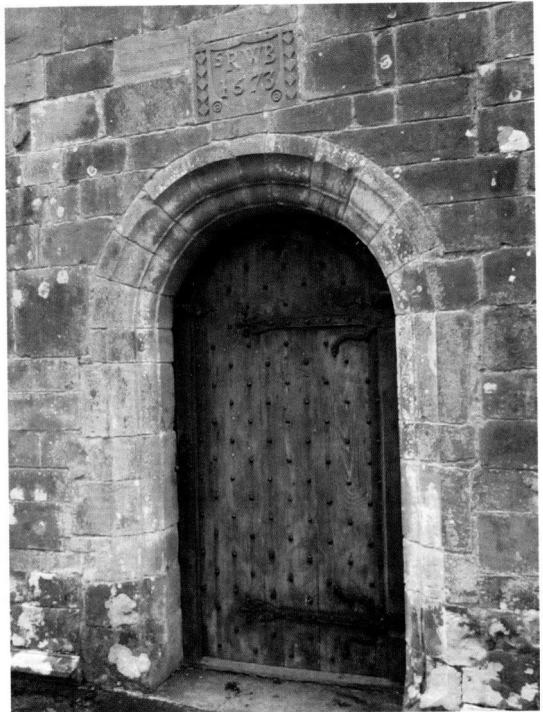


Fig. 2

Gwydir Uchaf chapel, entrance doorway in north wall with 1673 date-stone bearing the initials of the founder, Sir Richard Wynn Baronet.

*Photograph, author*



Fig. 3

Gwydir Uchaf chapel, exterior: a plain rectangle with no division between nave and chancel.

*Photograph, author*

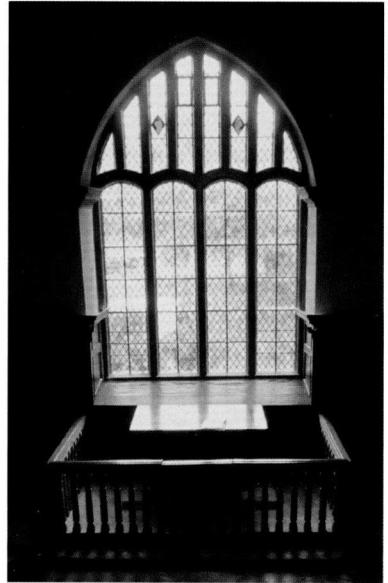


Fig. 4

Gwydir Uchaf chapel, view of east end from the gallery, with 17th-century oak communion table and rails.

*Photograph, author*



Fig. 5

Gwydir Uchaf chapel, west end gallery, with initials of the founder, Sir Richard Wynn Baronet, and the 1673 date of the foundation.

*Photograph, author*

family since around 1500. The new chapel was built next to the family's summer residence, Gwydir Uchaf ('Upper Gwydir'), a smaller house dating back to 1604 (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> The latter is on higher ground than Gwydir Castle, with views across the Conway valley and survives now as offices of the Forestry Commission.

As far as the present writer knows there was no chapel in the old family house. However, at the nearby parish church of Llanrwst, Sir Richard Wynn, the second baronet (1588-1649) had added a chapel in 1633-34 known as Gwydir Chapel, which is rich in family monuments. It was this Sir Richard's nephew, the fourth baronet, also Sir Richard (1625-74), who added the chapel at Gwydir Uchaf. With the similarity of the names of these two chapels, and with founders of the same name, there was often confusion between them on the part of early observers and commentators.

Gwydir Uchaf Chapel was built in 1673 and bears this date both inside and outside (Figs. 2, 5). Investigations associated with conservation work on the painted ceiling during summer 2006 led to suggestions that 1673 may have been the year of a rebuilding or remodelling of a chapel dating back to earlier in the 17th century.<sup>3</sup> But a 1673 letter in the Wynn papers to Sir Richard from John Lloyd, who later became bishop of St David's, contradicts this: '...let me know how forward you are with the chapel, which I long to see finished...'<sup>4</sup> Further documentation shows that the chapel furnishings were not completed until after Sir Richard's death, because in 1676 his mother, who survived him, listed an item intended for Gwydir – 'A great bowl with a cover double gilt, which I bestowe upon the chappell of Gwydder'.<sup>5</sup>

The chapel exterior is in the Gothic style and the plan is a plain rectangle, with no distinction internally or externally between chancel and nave (Fig. 3). The frames and mullions of the windows are of wood, with traces of the original covering of plaster in imitation of stone. All the glass is clear and most appears to be original. There is a large Gothic east window of four lights, and at the west end a smaller plainer square-headed two-light window. The south wall has two windows and the north wall one window, all with three plain lights. There is a cross at the eastern apex and at the west end is a bellcote with a bell dated 1752. The entrance is from the north through a round-headed doorway with its original studded door. Above this on the outside is a stone inscribed 'SRWB 1673', the letters standing for 'Sir Richard Wynn, Baronet' (Fig. 2).

The arrangement of pews is in the collegiate style facing a wide central aisle. The latter was occupied until recently by 17th-century wooden chairs facing the east and shown in 20th-century photographs. There is an oak communion table beneath the large east window, surrounded on



Fig. 6

Gwydir Uchaf chapel, one of six cut-out angels attached to the base of the roof trusses.

*Photograph, author*

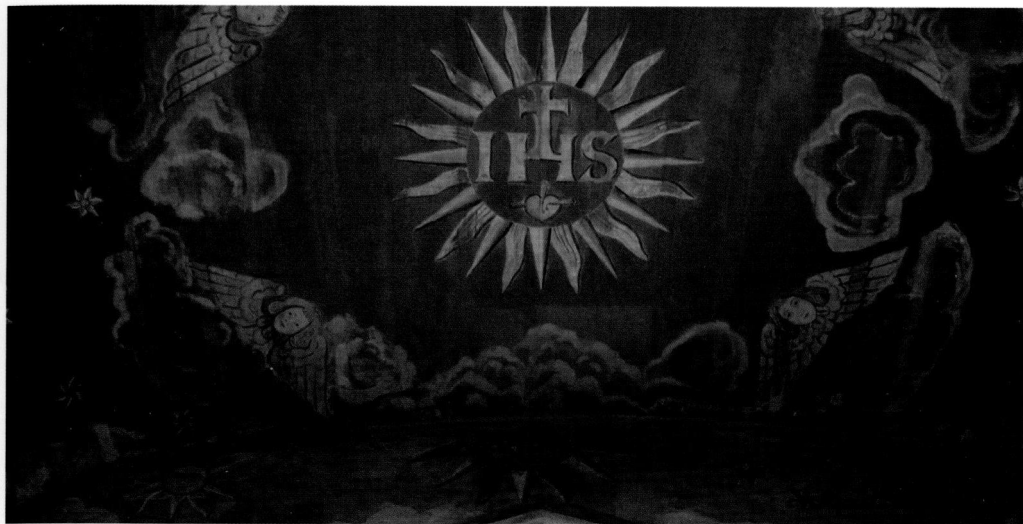


Fig. 7

Gwydir Uchaf chapel, east bay of nave ceiling with sacred Christian emblem 'IHS', and apex of east wall.

*Photograph, author*



Fig. 8

Gwydir Uchaf chapel, west bay of nave ceiling with sacred Christian emblem 'INRI', a Biblical text and trumpeting angels.

*Photograph, author*

three sides by oak communion rails in the 17th-century style (Fig. 4).

In contrast with the plain, unadorned exterior the interior is rich in decoration and colour, notably the carved and painted beam supporting the west end gallery (Fig. 5), the cut-out angels at the roof trusses, the carved wooden figures attached to the panelled walls and pulpit, and especially the painted ceiling. There are six flat cut-out wooden angels, coloured and gilded, and fixed at the base of each of the trusses (Fig. 6). They carry inscriptions in Latin: in the east relating to the name of Jesus, in the middle is the Great Doxology, and the westernmost pair carries the opening words of a Vespers hymn. The ceiling paintings are in glue tempera on boards of poplar wood running east-west, with cotton tape sealing the joints. The work is in bright colours on a blue background, and covers the whole ceiling. The narrative portrayed moves from the Creation at the apex of the east wall through to the Day of Judgement at the west end above the gallery. The Creation depicts the heavens and night and day. These flank a half-halo containing the Hebrew name for God, i.e. 'Jahweh' or 'Jehovah'.

The nave roof is divided into three bays, the flat central part of each represents one of the Persons of the Trinity within a halo or glory, and each is surrounded by four cherubs. Flanking them on the side panels are angels on clouds. In the centre of the east bay is the sacred Christian emblem 'IHS', the first three letters of the Greek name for Jesus (Fig. 7). The middle bay shows the seated figure of God the Father. The west bay portrays the Holy Spirit in the form of a flying dove. A pattern of golden stars is scattered across the blue background of the first two bays, whereas the west bay has 'tongues of fire' representing the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Finally, the ceiling above the west end gallery has a representation of the Day of Judgement. There are two trumpeting angels and the text, 'Watch for you know not ye day or howre' (from Matthew 24.42), on a long banner radiating from a half-halo (Fig. 8). The latter is against the west wall and has the sacred emblem, 'INRI' (the initial letters for 'Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews' in Latin). The angels are pink-fleshed with gold wings and red and white dresses. Again, there is a background of a blue sky with clouds and stars.

The naïve appearance of the painting has suggested a vernacular or folk art origin; the quality of the ceiling painting contrasts markedly with the well executed framed panel of the royal coat of arms of King Charles II, hanging on the south wall above the pulpit. It has also been stated that the inspiration for the design came from the Italian Baroque, and it has been proposed that Sir Richard may have had the ceiling design suggested by his High Anglican or Roman Catholic friends and then executed by local craftsmen.<sup>6</sup> Conservators in 2006 re-assessed the quality of the original painting, revising previous conclusions that it was a crude effort by local painters: 'Some of the modelling of faces and other decorative work that hasn't been compromised by earlier restorations is of wonderful quality'.<sup>7</sup> In the current state of knowledge, and in the absence of signatures or the survival of contemporary records, it is impossible to identify the craftsmen who created the work (in contrast to Staunton Harold, see below).

### STAUNTON HAROLD CHAPEL (1653-1662)

There has been a chapel at Staunton Harold since at least the 12th century. When the church at Breedon-on-the-Hill, in which parish Staunton Harold is situated, was given to the Augustinian priory at Nostell (Yorks.) in the early 12th century, the chapel at Staunton was already in existence and was also given, along with lands and tithes. Later in the century and during the 13th century there were further deeds to confirm the grant, and in 1202 one made specific provision for a priest to live in Staunton.<sup>8</sup>

The medieval chapel may have become increasingly neglected after the Reformation and the dissolution of Breedon Priory. This may partly explain why a small chapel was created and furnished within Staunton Harold Hall in the early 17th century. This still exists, with a plaster frieze of angels, and a series of oil paintings on canvas of saints and angels set into the walls.

The present free-standing chapel at Staunton Harold was founded in 1653 by Sir Robert Shirley, the fourth baronet (1629-56), and is especially unusual in having been built during the period of the Commonwealth. The nave was already roofed by 1655, as the dated signatures on the painted ceiling indicate (Fig. 9). But Sir Robert did not live to see his chapel finished. He was a fervent Anglican in an age of Presbyterianism, and an ardent Royalist during Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth: a risky combination. He was imprisoned several times for his involvement in plots to restore the monarchy, and died in the Tower of London in 1656.<sup>9</sup> According to his obituary the cause of death was smallpox (as it had been for his older brother), but there were rumours of poisoning.<sup>10</sup> Sir



Fig. 9

Staunton Harold chapel, ceiling with the date, 1655, and the signature of 'Samuell', one of the two Kyrk brothers who painted the nave ceiling within two years of its foundation.

*Photograph 1954, courtesy of the National Trust*

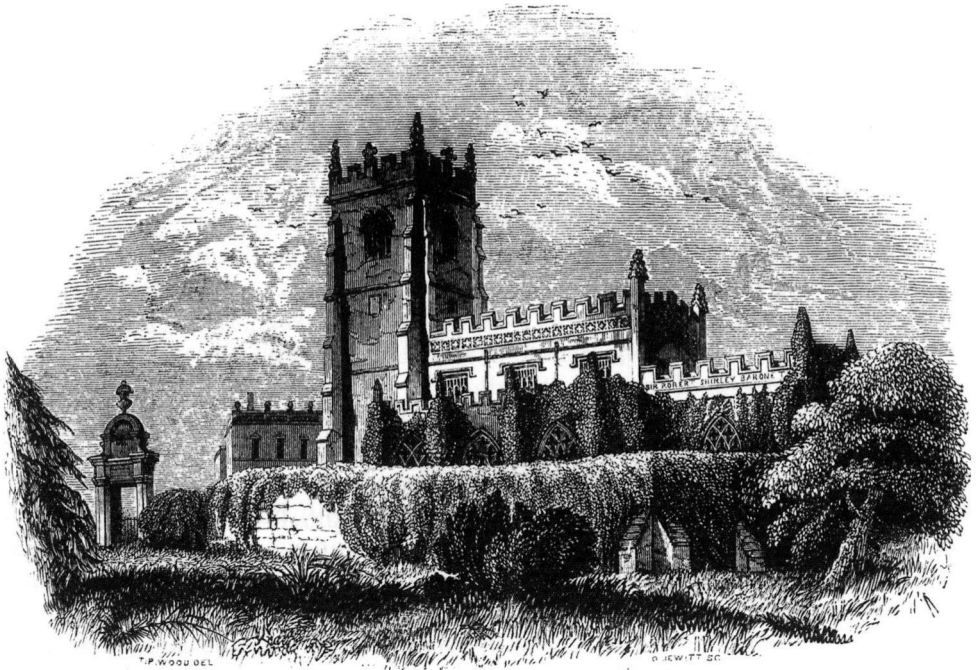


Fig. 10

Staunton Harold chapel, external view from the south-east.  
 Engraving from *E. P. Shirley, Stemmata Shirleiana, 2nd edn (London 1873), 150.*

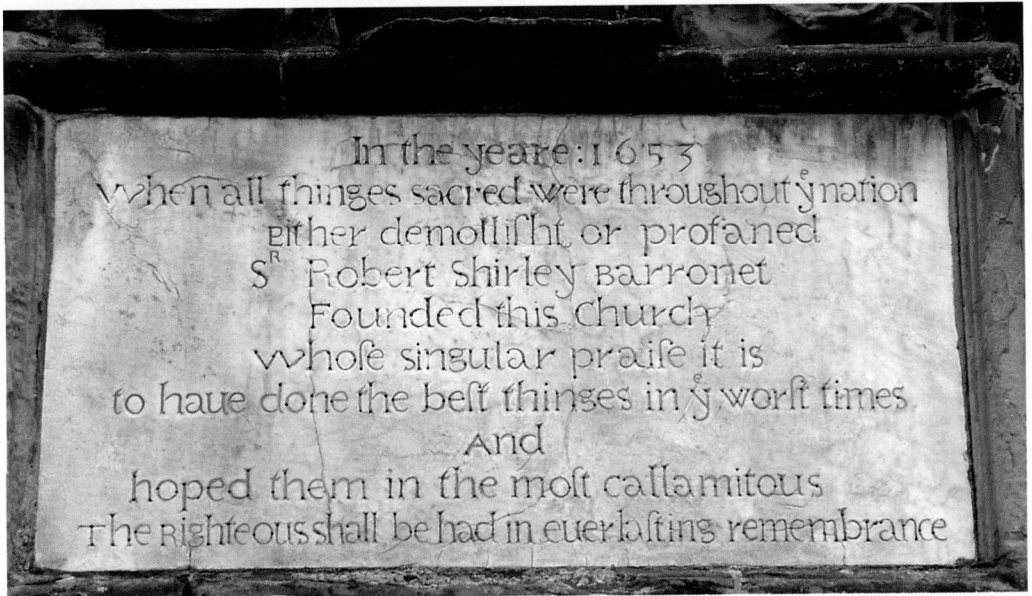


Fig. 11

Staunton Harold chapel, inscription over the west door honouring Sir Robert Shirley who founded the chapel in 1653, whose praise was 'to have done the best things in the worst times'.

*Photograph, author*



Robert left instructions and provision in his will for the completion of the chapel, and these were implemented soon after the Restoration of the monarchy by the guardians of his young son and heir.<sup>11</sup> Accounts for this work survive in the Shirley archive and have been published.<sup>12</sup>

The chapel at Staunton Harold is 15th-century Gothic in style and is a much larger and more elaborate structure than Gwydir Uchaf (Fig. 10). It has a tall nave with a clerestory, a lower chancel, north and south aisles to the nave and a western tower. Over the west doorway there is a stone plaque commemorating Sir Robert Shirley the founder, who did the oft-quoted 'best thing in the worst times' (Figs 11,12).<sup>13</sup>

Much of the original clear 17th-century glass survives but the east window and several aisle windows have been replaced by 19th- and 20th-century stained glass. The latter and the wrought iron chancel screen of around 1711 by Robert Bakewell of Derby are the only changes to the chapel since the 17th century (Fig. 13). The organ occupying the west end gallery is older than the chapel and may have been brought from the

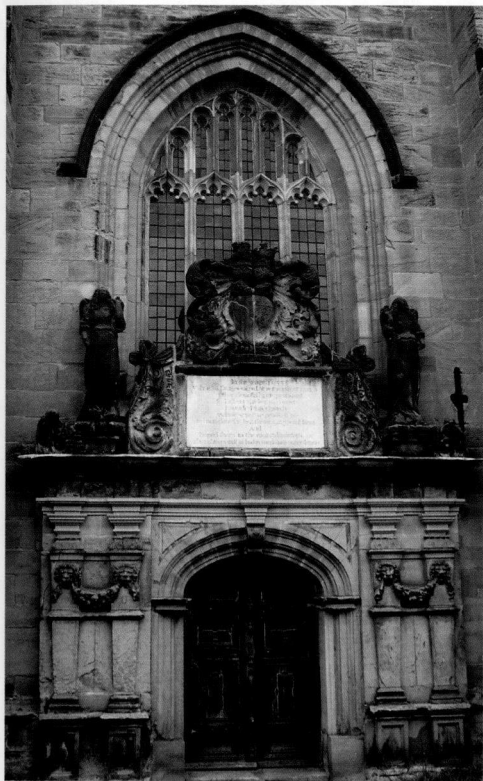


Fig. 12  
Staunton Harold chapel, west door.  
*Photograph, author*

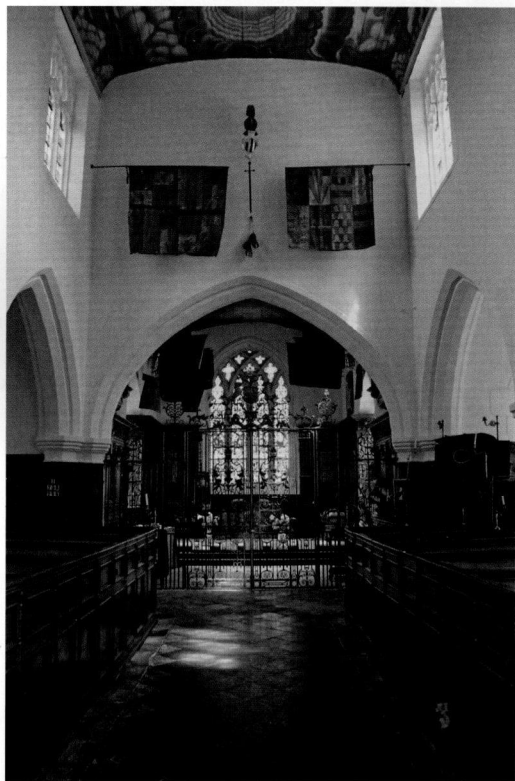


Fig. 13  
Staunton Harold chapel, nave looking east;  
wrought iron chancel screen by Robert Bakewell  
of Derby c. 1711, mid-19th-century stained glass  
by Holland of Warwick in the east window and  
some of the early 17th-century Shirley funerary  
achievements hanging over the chancel arch.  
*Photograph, author*



Fig. 14

Staunton Harold chapel, nave looking west, with gallery occupied by early 17th-century organ, and beneath it the original wooden chancel screen, moved here c. 1711. The westernmost part of the painted ceiling can be seen, with light coming from behind clouds, symbolising creation out of chaos.

*Photograph, author*



Fig. 15

Staunton Harold chapel, nave ceiling painted by the Kyrk brothers and dated 1655.

*Photograph, author*

chapel within the Hall (Fig. 14). The oak box pews face east, with the front ones formerly reserved for the Shirley family. Women sat to the north of the central aisle and men to the south, in the 17th-century tradition, and this custom continues for the most part in the 21st century. Hat pegs for the men survive under the book rests on the south-side pews, a reminder of this.

The Gothic architecture, internal arrangements and rich furnishings of the chapel are widely regarded as conforming to the liturgical ideals of Laudian Anglicanism. Yates goes so far as to claim that it 'is the most perfect surviving example',<sup>14</sup> and Osman explores this more fully in his detailed description of the chapel which he was able to examine during its restoration in the 1950s.<sup>15</sup>

The flattish barrel ceilings are constructed of prepared oak boards<sup>16</sup> and, unlike Gwydir, there is no evidence of taping of the joints. The planks of the nave and chancel run east-west, whereas those of the aisles run north-south. The ceilings were executed

in two stages – the nave alone had been completed, with its roof and ceiling, in the lifetime of Sir Robert, whereas the aisles and chancel, like the interior woodwork and furnishings, were probably not finished until after the Restoration. The ceilings were painted in oils by different craftsmen, confirmed by the dated signatures on the nave ceiling and by accounts from 1662 for the painting of the chancel and aisles.<sup>17</sup> The names of Zachary and Samuel Kyrk and the date 1655 are painted along the northern edge of the nave ceiling: Figure 9 shows Samuel's signature and the date. The Kyrks are unknown elsewhere and are assumed to have been local men. A 'William Kirke' of Branston (Leics.) was apprenticed in 1675 to Edward Roberts, a painter-stainer of London,<sup>18</sup> and may have been a younger relative.

The Kyrk brothers' nave ceiling is painted in muted yellow and sepia with white and greys. The paintings are designed to be viewed from the west as one enters the chapel. The design is divided into three, as at Gwydir, the theme appearing to represent the Creation, from chaos in the west, to order in the east. At the west end there are clouds with light coming from behind them. In the centre is a crescent moon and what may be a representation of water and wind (Fig. 15). On the eastern section are three large clouded circles probably representing the Trinity, and on the easternmost one is the sacred name of God in Hebrew, as on the eastern wall at Gwydir. There are also two curiosities: a third of the way along the southern edge is the head of a hound, and half way along the northern edge is what appears to be the back of the tonsured head of a monk.

The style of painting of the chancel and aisles differs from the nave. The 1662 accounts include payments to 'Mr Lovett for Clouding the Iles in church £26' and £25

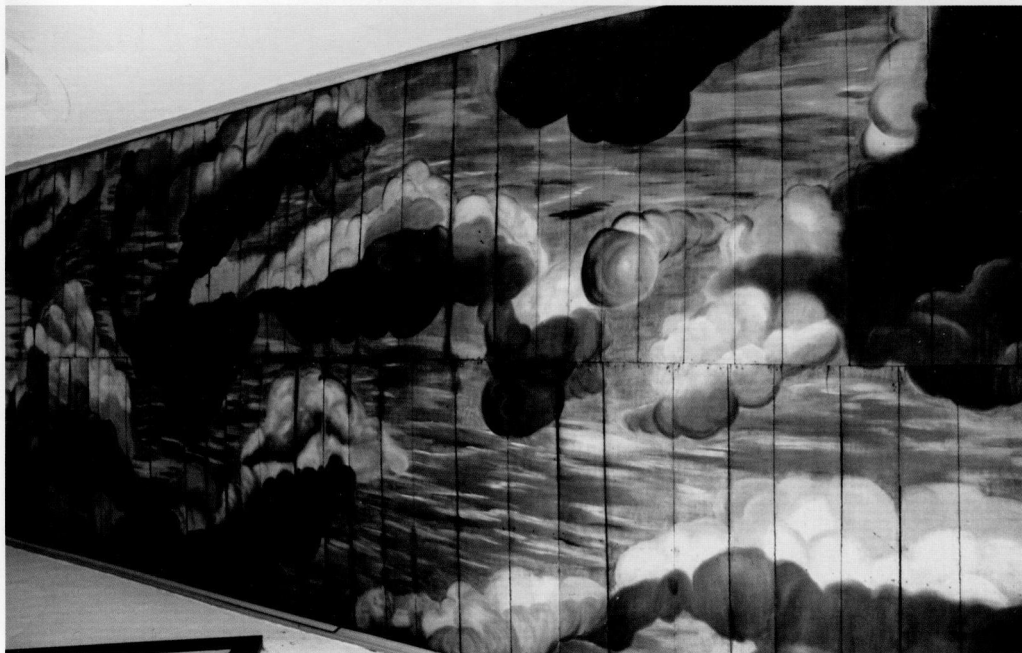


Fig. 16

Staunton Harold chapel, north aisle ceiling painted by Mr Lovett. In 1662 he was paid £26 for 'Clouding' the north and south aisles.

*Photograph, author*

for 'Clouding the Chancell'.<sup>19</sup> The name of Lovett was not unusual in the area at the time, but it has not been possible to identify a craftsman of this name.

Mr Lovett's 'clouding' of the aisles is in shades of grey and olive green, and clouds alone are depicted without a narrative (Fig. 16). In contrast his chancel ceiling is full of colour and symbolism and more closely resembles Gwydir. At the east end above the altar is a large yellow glory or halo with the name of God in Greek letters, 'THEOS'. Around the glory are the heads of eighteen cherubs with streamers radiating with the words 'Sanctus' and 'Allelujah' alternating. It is worth noting that the glory motif is also used on the original purple velvet altar frontal and pulpit hanging, both still in place, as well as on the contemporary communion plate (on permanent display at the Victoria and Albert Museum). There are three larger heads of cherubs, one in the north-east corner, one near the north-west corner and the third to the south of centre.

The chancel is hung with three sets of achievements of members of the Shirley family dating from heraldic funerals in 1622, 1633 and 1646. They originally hung in the church at Breedon-on-the-Hill, where the Shirley family were buried from the time of the Reformation until the founding of Sir Robert's chapel. Although they are interesting and impressive, they obscure a clear and complete view of the chancel ceiling (Fig. 17).

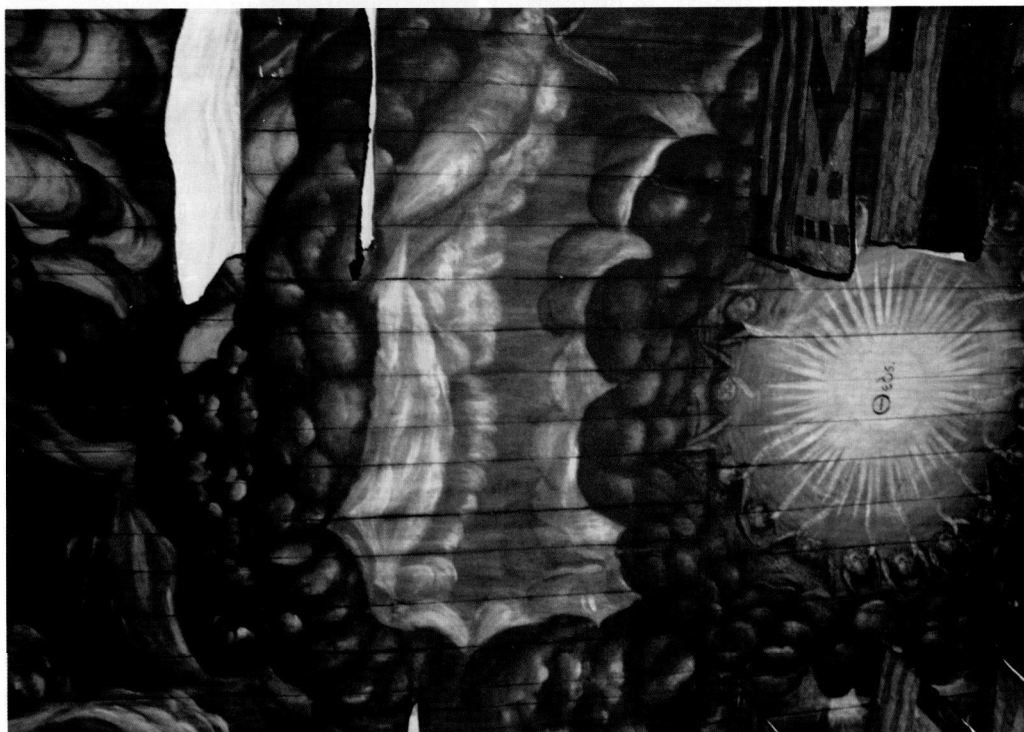


Fig. 17

Staunton Harold chapel, part of chancel ceiling from the south, painted by Mr Lovett who was paid £25 in 1662 for his work in the chancel. The view of the ceiling is now partly obscured by some of the early 17th-century banners of the Shirley family funerary achievements, which hung in the parish church at Breedon-on-the-Hill until the completion of this chapel.

*Photograph, author*

## DISCUSSION

The High Church leanings of Shirley and Wynn must have played a part in the initial choice of painted ceilings for their new chapels, rather than the plainer interiors typical of their time. Their choices were also likely to have been influenced by their contacts and the circles within which they moved. They were both staunch Anglicans.

Sir Richard Wynn and his direct ancestors certainly travelled abroad and Sir Richard himself may have been influenced by what he saw in Europe. There is a 1674 letter in the Wynn correspondence to him from Sir Edward Petre, the English baronet and Jesuit, who later became chaplain and confessor to James II. Wynn had asked Father Petre to find a depiction of the Crucifixion in stained glass for his new chapel.<sup>20</sup> Nowhere is there any suggestion, however, that Wynn himself was Catholic.

Sir Robert Shirley's father was Catholic, but not overtly. His mother, Dorothy Devereux, was Church of England, and was the sister of the third earl of Essex. Sir Robert is said by the family to have been heavily influenced by his mother to the cause both of the Church as well as the sovereign.<sup>21</sup> That may be so, but he was only seven years old when she died and his guardian was his uncle, the earl of Essex, a Parliamentarian and Puritan. But he seems not to have come under his influence as much as had his elder brother, Sir Charles Shirley, the third baronet. Charles had held back from serious involvement in the Royalist cause, probably due to Essex.<sup>22</sup> Essex and the third baronet both died in 1646 when Sir Robert was only sixteen years old. After succeeding to the baronetcy he threw in his lot with the Royalists and never seems to have been in any doubt about his devotion to Anglicanism.

During the 17th century, with the increasing development of Puritanism and Presbyterianism, many medieval Anglican churches had become plain, stripped of their decoration which was then hidden, lost or destroyed. From the descriptions and illustrations here it can be seen that the decoration chosen for the Gwydir and Staunton ceilings did not go back to the pre-Reformation idiom; notably absent are biblical scenes or figurative pictures of God himself (apart from God the Father at Gwydir, part of the depiction of the Trinity). In this connection Ricketts has proposed that one option for Protestant patrons of country house chapels was to use symbols in their decoration to demonstrate the functions of the chapel. They would thereby avoid any controversial biblical imagery which could lay them open to accusations of idolatry.<sup>23</sup> She cited the practice of clouding as a form of symbolic decoration and quoted Staunton Harold as the best surviving example in a private chapel, claiming that the concept belongs to earlier in the century.<sup>24</sup> It is tempting to suggest that in 1662 at Staunton Harold, Lovett was attempting to match his aisle ceilings with the clouds theme of the 1655 nave ceiling by the Kyrk brothers. But in the chancel he had a free rein and his composition and colour more closely resemble Gwydir, which came a decade later.

An examination of the two ceilings under consideration reveals three common themes which are also present in the other examples touched upon below (Appendix). First are various aspects of the Creation, especially the sky with its clouds, stars, sun and moon. Second, the Trinity features strongly and includes symbolic names for God. Third is a celebration of praise and worship to God offered by angels and cherubs, the

latter carrying streamers of biblical texts.

Although we have documentation providing the precise dates for the painted ceilings at Staunton Harold as well as the names of the craftsmen, next to nothing is known about them. Even less is known, however, about the origin of the work at Gwydir Uchaf. There is scope for further investigation of 17th-century painted ceilings in Britain, especially the ecclesiastical examples, which may throw further light both on the origins of the style and the meanings of those at Staunton Harold and Gwydir Uchaf, and place them in a wider British and European context.

## APPENDIX

### **Other Painted 17th-Century Church and Chapel Ceilings**

The Cadw guide to Gwydir tells us that the ceiling 'belongs to a vigorous tradition of 17th-century painted ceilings, of which there are numerous examples in Scandinavia, several in Scotland, such as Grandtully, and important English examples,' mentioning Staunton Harold, Bromfield 1672 (Shrops.) and Queenborough 1695 (Kent).<sup>25</sup>

At St Mary the Virgin in Bromfield the ceiling was painted by Thomas Francis who was paid seven pounds. It consists of billowing clouds and cherubs with festoons of texts. In the middle a large triangle on a gold circle represents the Trinity.

At Holy Trinity Church at Queenborough the late 17th-century painting is on a wagon roof, which is covered in clouds and sky, with an angel sounding the last trumpet on the Day of Judgement.

The form of the painted ceiling of St Mary at Grandtully is described as a 'flattened wagon-tilt vault', and the medium is tempera as at Gwydir Uchaf.<sup>26</sup> It has a complex design incorporating heraldry, with the royal arms and monograms, and arms commemorating the family of the laird who was responsible for the ceiling. With so much heraldry it contrasts markedly with Gwydir and Staunton, but there are also biblical scenes and texts and the four Evangelists are depicted. According to Graham, 'the scheme is evidently derived from the Italian coffered ceiling of this period'.<sup>27</sup>

A wooden plank painted in a 17th-century style was found in Derby Cathedral in 1948.<sup>28</sup> The origin of the plank is unknown and whether it is part of a bigger work is unclear. It depicts a starry blue sky with a sun, moon, clouds and rainbow. The plank was restored in 1997 and is on display in the Cathedral, where the guidebook draws attention to the similarity of the clouds to those on the Staunton Harold ceiling. But the gold stars on a blue sky are also reminiscent of Gwydir and Rug.

## NOTES

1. W.N. Yates, *Rug Chapel, Llangar Church, Gwydir Uchaf Chapel* (Cardiff 1993), 9.
2. *Ibid.*, 41.
3. Cadw, personal communication, 2007.
4. Yates, *Rug etc.*, 41.
5. *Ibid.*, 41-42.
6. *Ibid.*, 47.
7. Cadw, *Heritage in Wales* 35 (Cardiff 2006), 3.
8. J. Nichols, *History and Antiquities of Leicestershire* Vol. 3, Part 2 (London 1804), 719.

9. For a full account of Sir Robert Shirley's political activities see A.C. Lacey, 'Sir Robert Shirley and the English Revolution in Leicestershire', *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions* 58 (1982-83) 25-35.
10. E.P. Shirley, *Stemmata Shirleiana*, (2nd edn, London 1873), 154.
11. Shirley, *Stemmata*, 156.
12. J. Simmons and H.M. Colvin, 'Staunton Harold Chapel', *Archaeological Journal* 112 (1955), 173-76.
13. The inscription is said by Louis Osman (n.15) to have been written by Dr Gilbert Sheldon. He was chaplain to Sir Robert Shirley, preached at his funeral, and afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury.
14. N. Yates, *Buildings, Faith and Worship: The Liturgical Arrangements of Anglican Churches 1600-1900* (Oxford 1991), 68.
15. L. Osman, 'Staunton Harold, Leicestershire and Foremark, Derbyshire: Two Laudian Gothic Churches Now Under Restoration', *TAMS* 4 (1956), 66-78.
16. *Ibid.*, 72.
17. Simmons and Colvin, 'Staunton Harold Chapel', 175.
18. Osman, 'Staunton Harold', 72.
19. Simmons and Colvin, 'Staunton Harold Chapel', 175.
20. Yates, *Rug etc.*, 41.
21. Shirley, *Stemmata*, 143-44.
22. *Ibid.*, 141.
23. A. Ricketts, *The English Country House Chapel: Building a Protestant Tradition* (Reading 2007), 147.
24. *Ibid.*, 147.
25. Yates, *Rug etc.*, 47.
26. A. Graham, 'The Painted Ceiling in the Church of St Mary, Grandtully', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 77 (1942-43), 147-54.
27. *Ibid.*, 148.
28. J. Landsberger, *Derby Cathedral Official Guide* (Derby 2002), 21.

For a full account of Sir Robert Shirley's political activities see the account of his life in *The Shirley Papers* ed. J. H. Venn (London 1905) pp. 1-142. Shirley was a prominent figure in the early Stuart period and his actions were often controversial. He was a member of the House of Commons and served as a Member of Parliament for various constituencies. His political career was marked by his support for the Stuart cause during the English Civil War and his subsequent exile to France and the Netherlands. He returned to England in 1660 and was rewarded with the office of Sheriff of the County of York. Shirley's political activities were a central part of his life and his actions had a significant impact on the Stuart Restoration.

L. J. O'Connell, *Stanton Harold, Leicestershire and Forman, Derbyshire: Two Landian Origins* (New Under Restoration, YAMS 4 (1956), 68-78).

Other Painted 17th Century Church and Chapel Ceilings

The Cadw guide to Gwydir tells us that the 17th-century painted ceilings, of which there are several in Scotland, such as Grandully, Stanton Harold, Bromfield 1672, Shrewsbury and Church Stretton 1673, are a flattened wagon-till vault, and the medium is tempera as at Gwydir Uchaf. It has a complex design incorporating heraldry, with the royal arms and monograms, and arms commemorating the family of the laird who was responsible for the ceiling. With so much heraldry it contrasts markedly with Gwydir and Stanton, but there are also biblical scenes and texts and the four Evangelists are depicted. According to Graham, 'the scheme is evidently derived from the Italian coffered ceiling of this period'.<sup>20</sup> A wooden plank painted in a 17th-century style was found in Derby Cathedral in 1948.<sup>21</sup> The origin of the plank is unknown and whether it is part of a bigger work is unclear. It depicts a starry blue sky with a sun, moon, clouds and rainbow. The plank was restored in 1997 and is on display in the Cathedral, where the guidebook draws attention to the similarity of the clouds to those on the Stanton Harold ceiling. But the gold stars on a blue sky are also reminiscent of Gwydir and Rug.

In the middle of the large triangular space on the ceiling of the church at Grandully, a flattened wagon-till vault, the ceiling is decorated with a complex design incorporating heraldry, with the royal arms and monograms, and arms commemorating the family of the laird who was responsible for the ceiling. With so much heraldry it contrasts markedly with Gwydir and Stanton, but there are also biblical scenes and texts and the four Evangelists are depicted. According to Graham, 'the scheme is evidently derived from the Italian coffered ceiling of this period'.<sup>20</sup>

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NOTES

1. W.N. Yates, *Rug Chapel, Llangar Church, Gwydir Uchaf Chapel* (Cardiff 1998), 9.
2. *Ibid.*, 41.
3. Cadw, personal communication, 2007.
4. Yates, *Rug etc.*, 41.
5. *Ibid.*, 41-42.
6. *Ibid.*, 41.
7. Cadw, *Heritage in Wales* 35 (Cardiff 2006), 3.
8. J. Nichols, *History and Antiquities of Leicestershire* Vol. 3, Part 2 (London 1804), 718.