

New Southwell Minster window dedicated to world famous apple

Southwell Minster celebrated the bicentenary of Britain's favourite cooking apple, by dedicating a stained glass window to the Bramley apple, which has its origins in the town. The new window was designed by award-winning designer Helen Whittaker of York's Barley Studios, who specialises in designing stained glass windows and architectural sculpture in glass and copper. With the guidance of David Sheriff, the Minster architect, the Bramley bicentenary window which measures 1.2m wide x 2.5m high, was installed on 16 March on the west wall of the North Transept.

The window was officially blessed and inaugurated into the Minster on 21 March in a special service of Thanksgiving for the fruits of the Earth and most especially the Bramley apple by the Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, the Rt Revd George Cassidy. The Dean of Southwell, the Very Revd John Guille said: "The Bramley Apple is a significant part of Southwell's history and it is wholly appropriate that there will be a permanent reminder in the Minster. The Design includes artistic reference to the Tree of Life and we hope this will offer new inspiration to both the Minster's regular congregation and our many visitors."

The first Bramley apple tree grew from pips planted by a young girl, Mary Ann Brailsford, in a Southwell garden in 1809. But it was not until after the Brailsford family had left Church Cottage that it produced the first fruit and the outstanding potential of the Bramley apple was recognised.

Matthew Bramley bought the cottage in 1846 and it was while he lived there that Henry Merryweather, a nurseryman, came across the apples and grew the Bramley trees commercially. Henry Merryweather's legacy has continued and his great-grandchildren Celia Steven and Roger Merryweather, the High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire, have been heavily involved in the dedication of the Bramley apple stained glass window and all the bicentenary celebrations in Southwell.

The original Bramley apple tree continues to bear fruit to this day and those few pips planted 200 years ago are responsible for what is today a £50 million industry; with some 80,000 tonnes sold each year.

It is Bramley's unique ability to retain its texture and distinctive tangy flavour after cooking that makes it so beloved by professional chefs, home cooks and manufacturers of apple products.

The bicentenary is being marked by a series of celebrations through the year, full details on all the events being carried out through 2009 are available at: www.bramleyapples.co.uk.

