Plowden Medal Winner 2021
Stephen Clare MBE

Stephen Clare MBE receiving his medal at the RWHA President’s Reception at St James’s Palace.

(Left to right, RWHA President, Pamela Harper, Plowden Medal Winner 2021, Stephen Clare MBE and Plowden Medal Chairman, Nick Farrow)

CITATION FOR STEPHEN CLARE MBE

For his outstanding contribution to stained glass conservation and his advocacy for, and support of, student and early career stained glass conservators.

Stephen Clare is one of the leading authorities in the field of stained glass conservation. In 2020, Stephen was awarded an MBE in recognition of his services to stained glass
conservation. His insight and enthusiasm for his subject are evident in his publication, 'Stained Glass- Art, Craft, and Conservation' (Robert Hale & Company 2013).

Having initially trained under the prominent designer Carl Edwards at the Fulham Glasshouse, Stephen then worked with Alfred Fisher at Chapel Studio and collaborated in establishing one of the first independent UK conservation studios. Since founding Holy Well Glass in Wells in 1995, Stephen has led many major conservation schemes on some of the most important buildings in the country including the cathedrals at Exeter, Gloucester, Wells, Winchester and Worcester, as well as other significant buildings such as St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, and King's College Chapel, Cambridge. In 2018 Holy Well Glass was awarded the Royal Warrant from Her Majesty the Queen, by Royal Appointment for stained glass conservation, the only company in the field to hold that honour.

In addition, Stephen has worked to promote and support best practice within the wider field of conservation as a consultant for numerous notable historic buildings, assisting in the development of their conservation strategies, often through large scale condition surveys. Stephen is an exemplary collaborative practitioner, seeking the advice of other highly experienced professionals to develop multi-facetted approaches for successful conservation outcomes. For the past 12 years, Stephen has acted as national adviser for stained glass to the National Trust.

Stephen has devoted much of his time to developing the profession of stained glass conservation. He was for many years the Chairman of the Glaziers Trust, the charitable arm of the Worshipful Company of Glaziers, and he is a Council member, and chair of the conservation working group for the BSMGP (British Society of Master Glass Painters). Stephen is also an external assessor for AABC (Architects Accredited in Buildings Conservation), a member of the accreditation committee for ICON and a member of the stained glass committee for the Church Buildings Council.

It is in the area of education and training that Stephen has made a significant contribution, imparting his considerable knowledge and expertise through hosting student placements at the Holy Well Glass workshop over decades, as well as developing bespoke in-house training. Stephen’s numerous students have attained professional accreditation as part of his team, gone on to senior roles in other conservation studios such as York Glaziers Trust, or have established themselves in business. Alongside Stephen’s outstanding conservation treatment, his commitment to the dissemination of good practice and the professional training of highly skilled conservators is Stephen's long-term legacy to stained glass conservation.