



The south window of the Great Hall includes representations of subjects taught at the University.

THE GREAT HALL WINDOW

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Clare Mullett

At first sight the magnificent window of The Great Hall in the Aston Webb building of the University of Birmingham appears ecclesiastical. It seems to represent saints and religious events. Closer inspection reveals that it proudly depicts the secular images of the academic disciplines taught here, the counties it serves and the family crests of some of Edwardian Birmingham's leading families.

The window was designed by T R Spence in 1907 and was a late addition to the Great Hall. Twenty-two of its spectacular panels, or lights, represent areas of study at the University, including the Arts and the Sciences. We also see subjects represented which have a peculiarly regional flavour, including Electro-plating, Bridge-building, Forging and Mining. These echo the mosaic murals on the exterior of the building by Robert Anning Bell, and reflect the industrial heritage of the Midlands.

Rooting the University firmly in the area, the top section of the window includes six Midlands county crests and vertically, along the middle of the window, are the crests of the families who

were integral in the formation of the University as we know it, including the family coats of arms for Chamberlain, Holcroft, Holder and Calthorpe.

In the centre of the window we find the arms of the City of Birmingham just above the University's own crest, incorporating the Mermaid and the double-headed Lion. This window proudly celebrates the University's place in the city and the city's place at the heart of the University. ●

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Further Information

University of Birmingham Research and Cultural Collections, A0572
Research and Cultural Collections can be accessed via:
www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/rcc/index.aspx