



The kneelers in All Saints Evesham

by Mary Brotherton

**The kneelers
in
All Saints' Church,
Evesham**

A brief history and explanation of the designs

— Mary Brotherton —

A short history of the kneelers in All Saints' Church.

As 1977, the silver jubilee year of Queen Elizabeth II, was nearing, the word went round the congregation of All Saints' Church, Evesham: Let's make some **KNEELERS** to commemorate this important date. A group of people, led by John and Joyce Turner, bought kits from Jacksons of Hebdon Bridge. Some people paid for kits while others worked them with wool on canvas over the professionally-produced printed designs.

Over a number of years John and Joyce organized the collecting of money, the ordering, and the making-up of many designs from the specialised designs of Jacksons. After some time, and with so many other demands on people's lives, no more Jackson kneelers were made and several years passed by.

Mary Brotherton really enjoyed doing the cross-stitch work, and noticed a different company selling kneeler kits at a more reasonable cost. A notice was put in the Church Magazine and a new group of interested people agreed to buy kits from Honeycomb Crafts of Hanham (near Bristol). The cost was £14-£45 (plus postage) for each kneeler, with ten designs to choose from.

By 1992 this new group had grown to over twenty people. Mostly everyone paid for their own kits, though sometimes someone paid for a kit, in memory of a loved one, to be made by a volunteer. The original Jackson kneelers had commemorative labels to write on, but over the years they had worn away. Mary restored the original Queen's Silver Jubilee kneelers and put some of the labels inside.

By 1993 we were wondering if we had our own gifted designers among the congregation, so we organised a competition. About this time Mary learned of a reasonable source of canvas and waste wool from a carpet factory near Banbury. In 2005 she tried to contact the factory for more canvas, only to find they had gone. Fortunately the people from the factory were very generous and let the group have huge bags of waste wool from the carpets, which are still stored for future use.

The kneeler competition of February 1993 was well supported, and Paula Thomas (a Junior Church member) designed the winning one: a picture of a Christingle. Three kneelers were worked with this design and were placed in the north aisle.

At this time several people designed and made-up individual kneelers. A group had been meeting monthly to work on the kneelers, and to discuss future plans for the many Rexene kneelers they wanted to replace. Fortunately Sue Hopkins discovered a real talent for original design and created new charts, allowing the group to continue meeting, and to work hard on furnishing all the pews with new kneelers.

In the autumn of 1994 a group from All Saints' Church went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, led by the Right Reverend Derek Bond. The group attended a service in the Cathedral Church of St. George the Martyr, Jerusalem, where they saw many hand-worked kneelers that had been donated by other groups on pilgrimage.

On returning to Evesham it was decided to make a special kneeler, and to ask Bishop Derek to present it to St. George's Cathedral when he next visited Jerusalem. The group discussed what design would best illustrate our Evesham parish. All agreed that the Bell Tower, the river, asparagus and locally-grown fruit were important. Sue did the design, Margaret Reader worked the wool cross-stitch, and Mary Brotherton lined

the foam cushion, covered it with the worked design, and sewed a Hessian square on the underside. A letter of thanks and appreciation was received in May 1997. Hopefully whenever anyone chances to see our kneeler from Evesham, they will know our prayers and affection go across the miles to them.

It is now 2006, and after successfully achieving our aim of filling the aisles of All Saints with uniquely-designed and hand-worked kneelers, we realized we had missed commemorating the Golden Jubilee of our Queen's reign. This oversight is now being remedied.

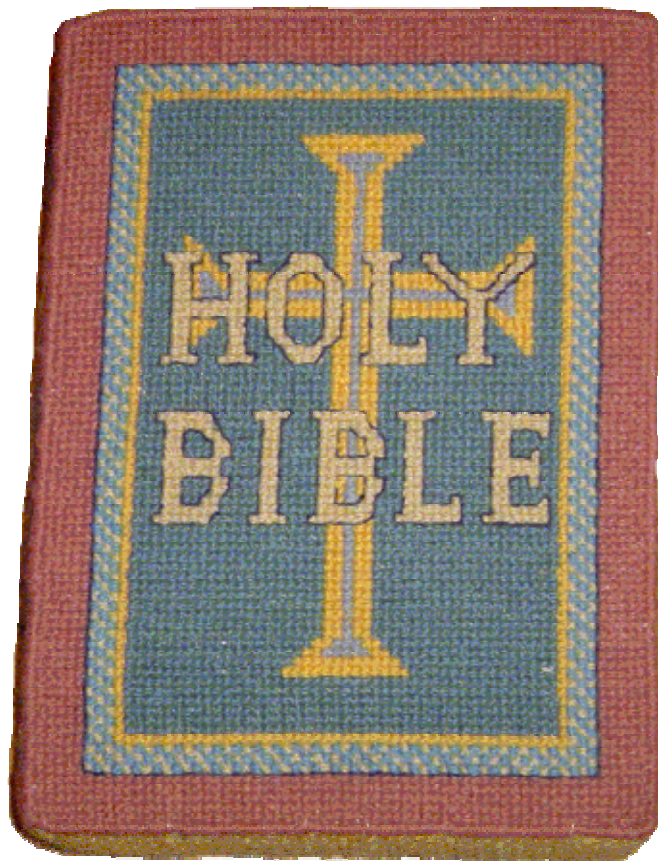
The current booklet does not show every design, but instead is intended as a celebration of the work and dedication of all those involved in creating and refurbishing the kneelers in All Saints' Church.

Many thanks to John Turner and Sue Hopkins for reviewing an earlier draft. Thanks also to my son Stanley Brotherton for taking photos and for typing services.

Mary Brotherton

Evesham

June, 2007.



Above: Designed by Barry Engledow (d.2006) and worked by his wife Sue, the daughter of Rene and Gordon Freeman (the long-serving vergers of All Saints').

Members of the Kneelers Guild

A big thank-you to everyone who has helped with the kneelers over the years:

Mary Brotherton	Marjorie Testar
Margaret Reader	Lois Bearder
Muriel Jones	Doris Lambert
John & Joyce Turner	Kath Williams
Phyll Reay	Susan Walker
Rene Freeman	Betty Wood
Nancy Tomkins	Pauline Harris
Sue Hopkins	Jean Whitehouse
M.E. Seabrook	Valerie Bond
Joyce Taplin	Roy & Dorothy Harris
Monica Elabor	Thelma Martin
Yvonne Arthur	Fran Delege
Olive New	Gladys Davis
Lesley Preston	Diana & George Dawson
Norma Tigwell	Babs Hughes
Daphne Colwell	Lynn Osborne
Muriel Perkins	Betty Keane
Valerie Newberry	Rosemary Message
Peggy Lorton	Valda Russell



The coat of arms of the Borough of Evesham.

The first charter of the town (granted in 1604) was made by King James I (VI of Scotland) at the request of his eldest son, Prince Henry. Various elements from the arms of Prince Henry were combined to create the borough coat of arms¹:

Azure, a prince's crown over a garb of the earldom of Chester all Or, bound with the same, and Sable, between two ostrich feathers of Wales Argent, within a border of the third bezanty for the duchy of Cornwall.²

The ostrich feathers come from Prince Henry being Prince of Wales. The border of black and gold bezants (gold coins first struck at the city of Byzantium) refers to the Prince also being Duke of Cornwall, while the wheat sheaves refer to the Prince's title as Earl of Chester.

¹ George May (1834), p.177 footnote (a); E.J. Rudge, p.132; *The Victoria History of the County of Worcester*, p.380.

² *The Victoria History of the County of Worcester*, p.380 (citing Nash, *History Of Worcestershire* i.411); May, *History of Evesham* 259-60.



Clockwise from top left: A cross design; crown and laurels commemorating the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II (a Jackson kit); a fish containing a key (referring to one of the legendary stories about St. Egwin); and a Jerusalem cross commemorating the Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1994.

Hagiographies of St. Egwin include the story of the saint's penitential journey to Rome, his legs shackled and the key thrown into the River Avon. He was obliged to make this journey because, as Bishop of Worcester, he was zealous in enforcing ecclesiastical discipline and evangelizing the heathen (the diocese had been created in 680, with Egwin becoming bishop in 692 or a little later). His zeal caused resentment and complaints, so Egwin undertook the pilgrimage to seek vindication from the Pope.

After arriving in Rome, Egwin went to pray before the tomb of the Apostles, meantime sending one of his servants to fish in the Tiber for their supper. The servant duly caught a fish and, when he cut it open, he found a key which he brought to his master. The key fitted Egwin's leg shackles.

This small miracle fully vindicated Egwin, who returned home with the Pope's blessing and support in his work as Bishop.



Clockwise from top left: Three fishes in trinity; a design commemorating the centenary of the Mothers' Union; a Star of Bethlehem; and a fleur-de-lys (a symbol of the Virgin Mary; the three leaves also signify the Trinity). All are Jackson designs.



From left to right: A butterfly (which can symbolise resurrection, transformation and new life); two fish and five loaves (from the feeding of the five thousand, *John* 6:1-15).

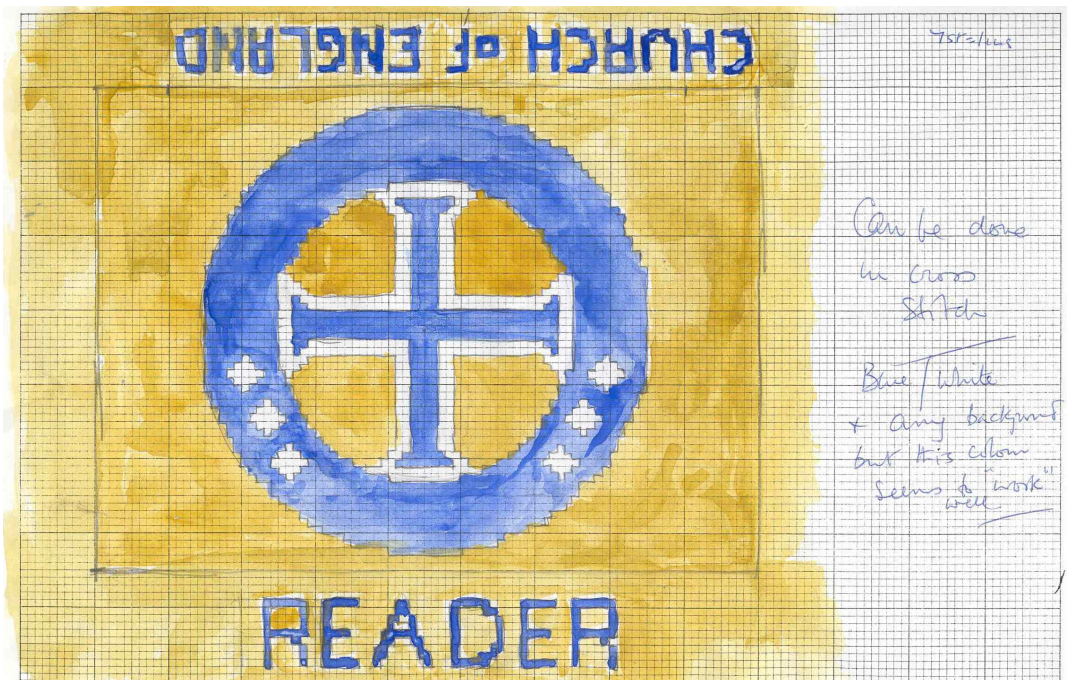


From left to right: The three crosses on Golgotha; a rose (a symbol of the Virgin Mary).



Clockwise from top left: The coat of arms of Abbot Lichfield (last Abbot of Evesham who also built the Bell Tower); badge of Church of England Readers; coat of arms of Abbot Lichfield; and the crest of Swan Lane School (formerly in Chapel Street).

Original drawing for the design of the Church of England reader:



Original drawing for the Swan Lane First School design:





Clockwise from top left: Coat of arms of Wychavon District Council; coat of arms of the Diocese of Worcester; and the coat of arms of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester (killed at the Battle of Evesham in 1265).

The Wychavon DC coat of arms is made up of a number of elements. The green shield refers to the rich agricultural land of the area. The silver drops represent the rain which, watering the land, turn crops into gold. The Saxon Crown in the centre represents the Hwicce, the Saxon tribe who provide the District with the first element of its name. The wavy band across the shield symbolises the Avon, which name is used as the second element in the name of the District. The croziers represent the two abbeys of Evesham and Pershore.

The coat of arms of the Diocese of Worcester is “argent ten torteaux four three two one” This shield is found in a fourteenth-century seal of the Hospital of St. Wulstan at Worcester. Wulstan was a native of Warwickshire, was educated at the abbeys of Evesham and Peterborough, and became a Benedictine at the cathedral priory at Worcester before becoming the nineteenth Bishop of Worcester in 1062. He is listed among those saints in whose honour Worcester cathedral was dedicated. The shield perhaps commemorates some forgotten deed of this local saint.

The coat of arms of Simon de Montfort show a lion rampant double queued.

The Wychavon DC and Simon de Montfort kneeler designs were created and worked by John Turner.



A composite image of Evesham.

The Bell Tower (the most significant remnant of Evesham Abbey, once one of the most powerful abbeys in England) overlooks the blue strip of the River Avon. In the top left is the coat of arms of Evesham Abbey, while in the top right is the coat of arms of the Diocese of Worcester. A plum, strawberry and three buds of asparagus symbolise the fertility of the Vale of Evesham, while the brown and green background denotes the fertile earth.

The kneeler was designed by Sue Hopkins, worked by Margaret Reader, then made into a foam kneeler by Mary Brotherton.

After the Holy Land Pilgrimage in 1994, a kneeler bearing this design was sent to the Cathedral Church of St. George the Martyr in Jerusalem. The picture below shows the blessing of the kneeler before it was sent:





Clockwise from top left: the Agnus Dei (the Lamb of God, note *John* 1:29) with a leg hooked around the pole of a flag signifying Christ as triumphant sacrifice; a star signifying epiphany; the Manus Dei (Hand of God) emerging from a cloud and encircled by a cruciform halo; and a Chi-Rho bracketed by an alpha and omega.

The Manus Dei is the right hand (*Psalms* 139:10 “...your right hand will hold me fast”) with the palm open to express God’s grace,

All designs are from Honeycomb Crafts. The Agnus Dei was worked by Gladys Davis, and the star design by Susan Freeman.



From left to right: Fish containing IXΘΥΣ; and sheaves of corn (‘Palm Sunday’).

The initial letters of the words in the sentence ‘Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour’ when spelt out in Greek form the word ‘IXΘΥΣ’ (or ‘ICTHUS’) which is the Greek word for ‘fish’

These designs are from Honeycomb Crafts. The IXΘΥΣ fish kneeler was worked by Babs Hughes.



Clockwise from top left: Chi-Rho bracketed by an Alpha and an Omega (symbols of Christ); five loaves and two fishes; grapes and corn producing wine and bread; and the seven-fold flame of Pentecost (*Acts* 2:1-4).

The seven flames signify the seven sanctifying gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, spiritual strength, knowledge, godliness and the fear of God (from *Isaiah* 11:2).

All designs are from Honeycomb Crafts. The bread and fish design ('Harvest') was worked by Diana and George Davison. The 'Grapes and Wheat' design was worked by Mary Brotherton.



From left to right: The three crosses on Golgotha; a rose (a symbol of the Virgin Mary).



Clockwise from top left: Commemorating ninth centenary of Saint Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester (1065 to 1965); other designs are Celtic knots inspired by the Holy Trinity. The Saint Wulfstan design was created by John Turner, who also worked the other kneelers.



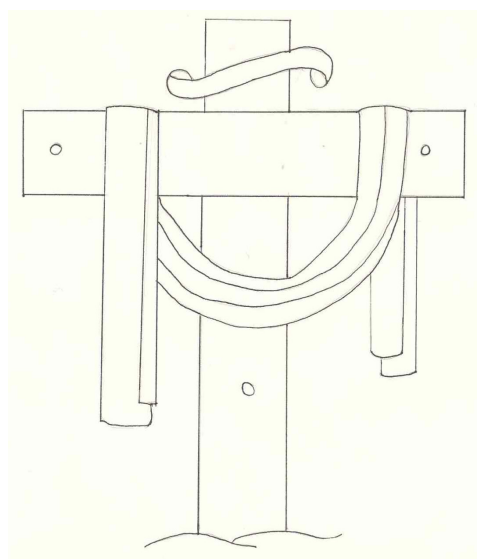
Clockwise from top left: Cross alisce patée; cross design; a candle symbolising Christ as the Light of the World; and a Christingle (Paula Thomas' winning design for the 1993 kneeler competition).



Designs celebrating Holy Week and Easter.

Clockwise from top left: The marks of the Passion (pierced hands and feet, a crown of thorns and a heart) around the sacred heart; Judas' purse with thirty pieces of silver; and the empty cross of the risen Christ (a shroud draped over the empty cross bearing the titulus or placard 'INRI', Latin initials standing for 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews').

Below is the original drawing by Janet Webb of the design of empty cross:





Clockwise from top left: IHS in a Star of David; a lily (associated with the purity and virginity of the Virgin Mary); a cross anchor with two fishes; and a chalice bracketed by capitalised alpha and omega.

The cross anchor combines two Christian symbols: the cross represents faith while the anchor signifies hope:

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (*Hebrews*, 6:17-19)

The 'Α' and 'Ω' are, respectively, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These are mentioned in *Revelation* 22:13: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last".

The Star of David, cross anchor and chalice were designed by Sue Hopkins. The lily design was worked by Lois Bearder.



Christmas designs.



Clockwise from top left: Wedding bells ringing in celebration; the shamrock (used by St. Patrick in his mission to Ireland to present the mystery of the Trinity); a mixed pattern depicting the anchor cross; and a fleur-de-lys.

The mixed pattern is a Jacksons design called 'Salisbury'. The fleur-de-lys was worked by Mary Seabrook.



Designs celebrating the Third Evesham Brownies. All designs produced by Sue Hopkins based on drawings made by members of the Brownies.

Some of the original drawings used to create the designs:





A series of designs relating to Green Hill School.

Clockwise from top left: the school badge and motto ('Nihil sine fidelitate' translates as 'Nothing without faith'); the study of scripture; sport; mathematics and geometry; and science.

Green Hill School, a private day school which previously took in boarders, looked after the children of army personnel. Each Sunday during term time the boarders and teachers would attend All Saints' Church.



Clockwise from top left: Cross pattern; logo of Women's World Day of Prayer; and the green man roof boss from the roof of the south aisle.

The term 'Green Man' (coined in the 1930s) is used to describe a wide range of decorative foliate faces which are a common and ancient feature of English churches. The Green Man has been linked with pre-Christian pagan fertility worship, and has been directly identified with the Roman "woodland god" Sylvanus. While the Green Man was almost certainly adopted from the pagan world, considering the prominence and frequency of the image dating from periods when non-conformity and heresy were severely punished, it is deeply unlikely that the Green Man appears in churches as a sign of respect to pagan deities.

The cross pattern, using a design from Jacksons ('Oxford'), was made by Lesley Preston to commemorate a wedding anniversary. Green man designed and worked by John Turner.



Clockwise from top left: A series of Jackson designs celebrating the four seasons: 'Spring Scene'; 'Summer Scene'; 'Winter Scene'; and 'Autumn Scene'.



Clockwise from top left: Wedding doves; badge of the Girl Guides.



A series of designs celebrating the 50th anniversary of the marriage of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip.



Designs celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

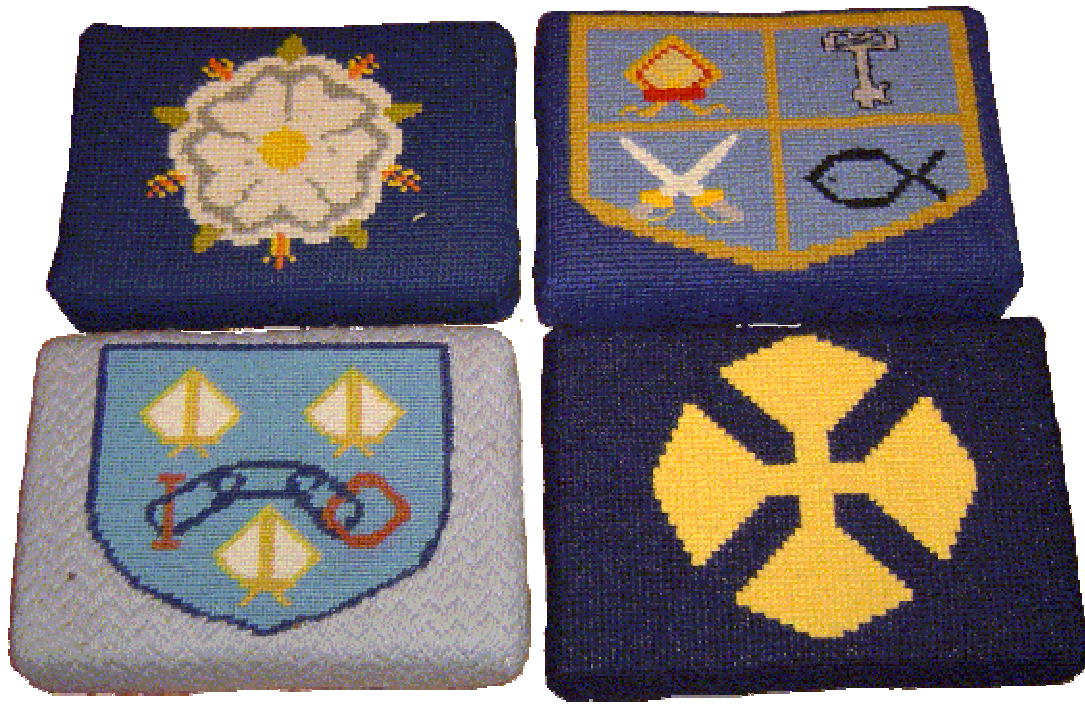


Millennium designs celebrating 2000 years of Christianity.



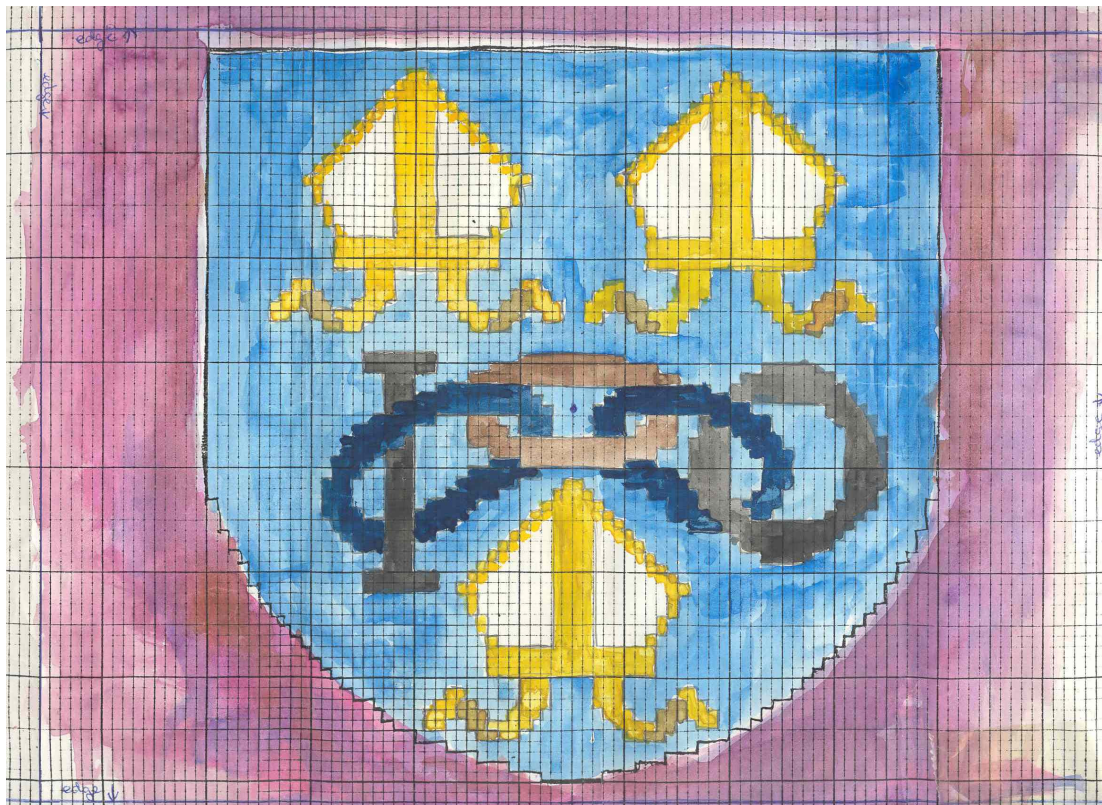
Clockwise from top left: The arms of the Prince of Wales bracketed by the letters 'C' and 'D' (celebrating the marriage of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer); white crosses and a red poppy marking Remembrance Day (and the work of the British Legion); bishops mitre and cathedral tower celebrating 1300 years of the Diocese of Worcester; and a manger and cross.

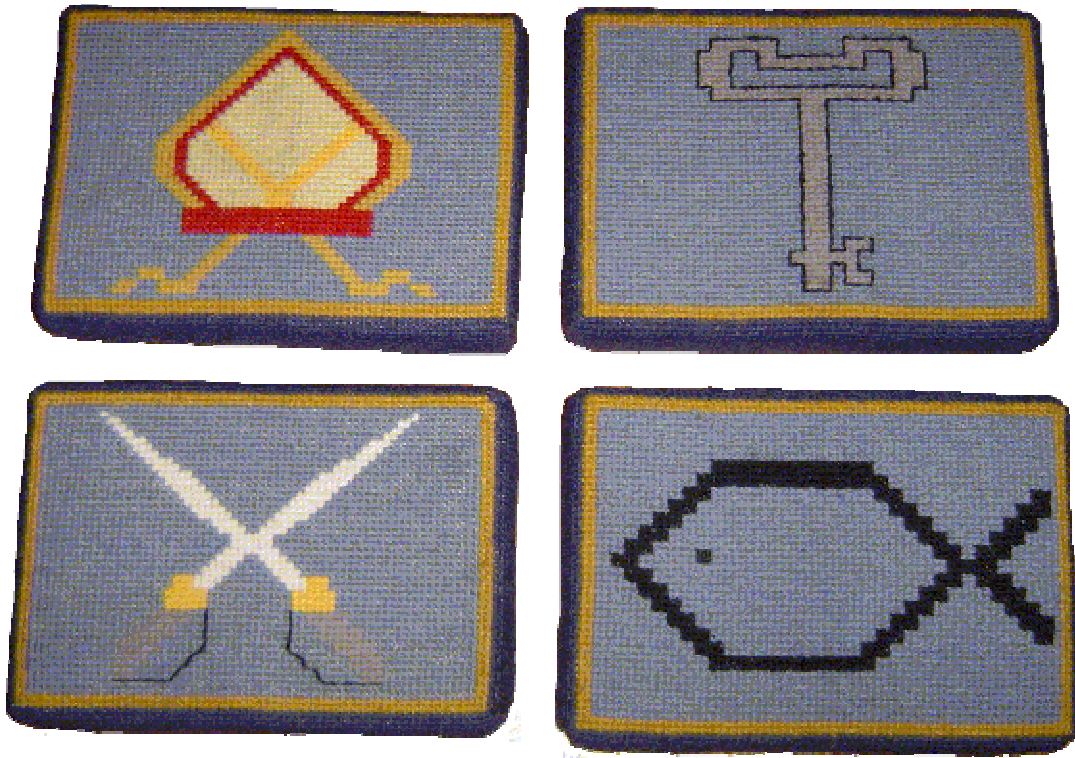
The Charles & Diana commemorative design is from Jacksons. The 'Remembrance' design, which is from Jacksons, was given by Joyce Jackson.



Clockwise from top left: A Tudor rose; the badge of St. Egwin's School; a cross aliscé; and the coat of arms of Evesham Abbey (three mitres and the shackles of St. Egwin).

The original drawing of the design for the Evesham Abbey coat of arms:





Symbols from the badge of St. Egwin's School.

Clockwise from top left: A mitre; a key; a fish (shaped as symbol of Christ); and crossed swords.

The various elements of the school badge recall St. Egwin and the town:

- The fish symbol is the conventional Christian symbol;
- The key refers to the story of St. Egwin's penitential journey to Rome;
- The mitre recalls the fact that St. Egwin was the third Bishop of Worcester, later becoming the founding Abbot of Evesham; while
- The crossed swords are a reference to the Battle of Evesham.

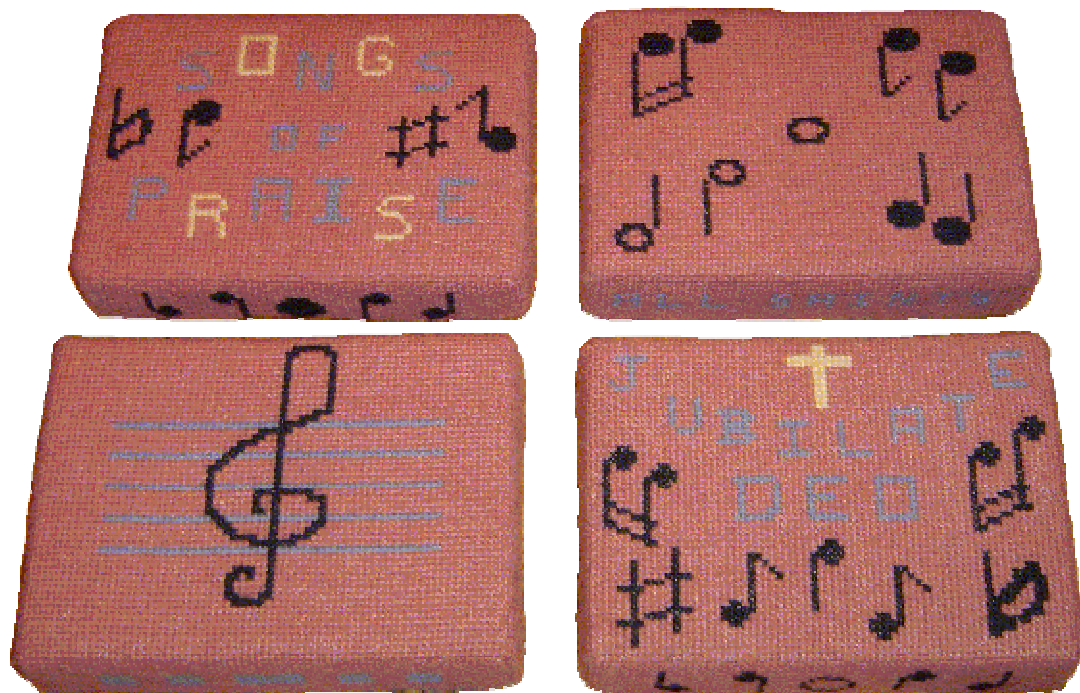
Throughout the middle ages there was continual strife between abbots and their local bishops, with the abbey continually trying to assert their independence. The fact that St. Egwin had been Bishop of Worcester before becoming Abbot of Evesham was a perennial source of embarrassment and frustration to later Abbots of Evesham, not least because the Diocese of Worcester used it as evidence to demonstrate that the abbey owed obedience to the bishop.

All designs by Sue Hopkins based on the badge of St. Egwin's School.

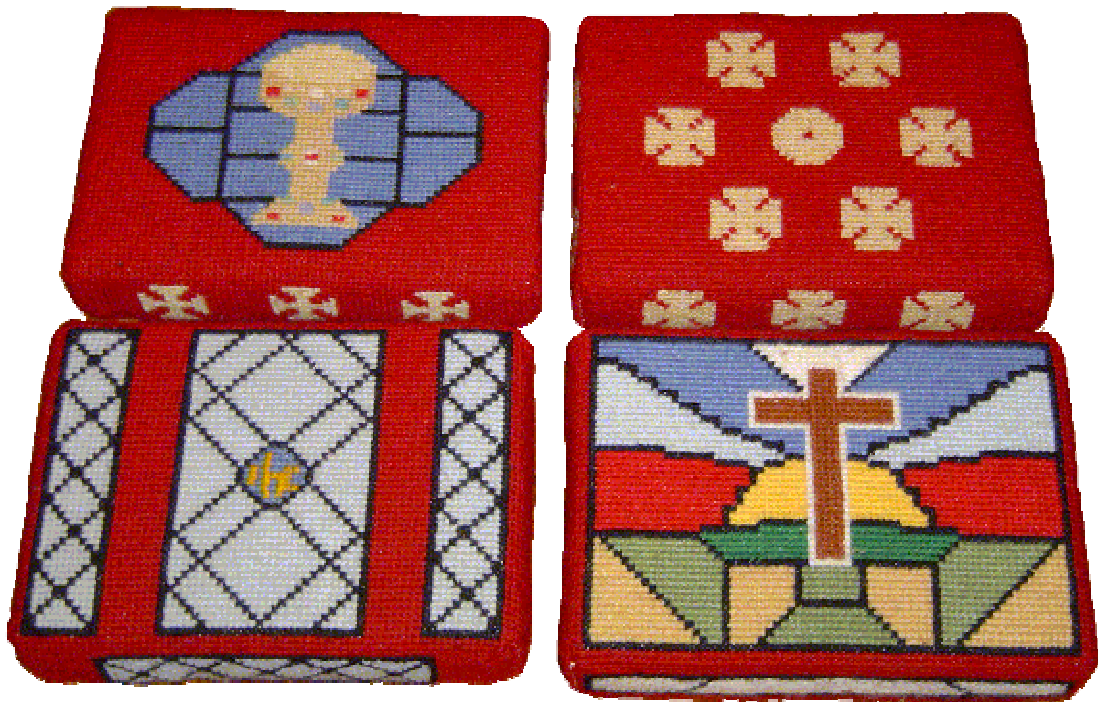


Designs celebrating the importance of bell ringing in the expression of Christian worship.

Clockwise from top left: Bell with ringing wheel and rope; Evesham's Bell Tower (the lines signify the sound of ringing bells); an engraving from one of the bells; and sallies (bell ropes).



A series of designs by Sue Hopkins celebrating church music.



Clockwise from top left: Chalice, crosses pattern, cross, and IHS. A series of designs largely in the style of stained glass windows.

The chalice and crosses designs by Sue Hopkins.



A series of Bargello designs (sometimes known as Florentine Embroidery) worked by John Turner.



Display put up in August 2006 in All Saints' Church giving a short history of the kneelers.

