

GRAFFHAM CHURCH KNEELERS

In the early 1980's it was decided to create a set of new kneelers for St. Giles' Church. The numbers who arrived at The Rectory, in response to the invitation to tea and a discussion meeting, surprised and delighted the then Rector, David Grant, and Elizabeth Miles, one of the founder members.

The group started work in October, 1984 and was extraordinarily fortunate to enjoy the talent and enthusiasm of Miranda Covington, highly skilled and trained by the Royal School of Needlework. Miranda produced four basic designs and chose a limited range of colours as well as selecting the size of canvas to be used. The materials were purchased from specialist shops in Haslemere and Chichester and instruction books were available covering the wide range of stitches to be worked. The group was encouraged first to experiment on small samples, trying out different stitches and various combinations of coloured wools.

The chosen design was drawn out on the canvas and a choice of colours made, very often with the help of Miranda's unerring eye. To complete the sewing, the date and initials – either of the kneeler maker, or sometimes the kneeler was dedicated to another – were added on the end panels.

In the weeks and sometimes months taken to work the stitching, the occasional kneeler took on a life of its own. All canvasses were pinned out to shape on a board, carefully wetted and allowed to dry naturally.

The canvas was wrapped round a foam kneeler-shape block, and a piece of lining material put in place underneath. An oblong of black plastic was neatly stitched in position to form the base.

In January 1985 the Guides became involved in the project, hence the trefoil pattern on some kneelers in the Church,

The group met weekly at The Rectory and enjoyed a convivial and productive afternoon or kneeler makers simply called in for more materials and advice.

With a change of incumbent in August 1986, the meetings continued at The Old Rectory under the leadership of Paula Burke until a final total of 110 kneelers was reached.

Between January 1985 and June 1987, two concerts were held in the Church, a coffee morning was organised and two lunches were arranged - all well supported and producing more than enough funds to finance the project.

The kneelers were dedicated at Church services in June 1986, June 1987 and May 1988, and a book now kept in the Church was beautifully hand-written by Paula listing the details of all the kneelers.

The group was featured in the Midhurst and Petworth Observer in May 1986 and the PCC has been invited to participate in an exhibition of kneelers in May 2003. The event is planned as part of the Needlework Festival to be held in Lewes in support of the work of St. John Ambulance Sussex.

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