

THE
CHRIST CHURCH
Embroidery



AD 2000
UNITED REFORMED & METHODIST
PRINCE EDWARD'S ROAD, LEWES,
EAST SUSSEX



The Good Shepherd Panel

THE
CHRIST CHURCH

Embroidery



The Lent Lily

This book is dedicated to the Glory of God
The Creator

Cover Illustration:

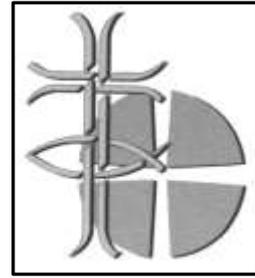
An embroidered detail of Christ Church Lewes (United
Reformed & Methodist) taken from the centre panel.

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Introduction

The story of our church embroidery began in spring 1996 when one of our church members, Verena Smith, was talking to Iris Smith (no relation) at a Friendship Lunch. They discussed an embroidery hanging in a church in Crowborough and how much we needed something similar at Christ Church.

When Verena showed the almost empty west wall to Iris, a talented needlewoman, her creative ideas began to form a plan; three large panels of applique and embroidery, as being practical and not too heavy. After some discussions with Peter Cane, about the preferred subject matter, Iris discovered that I am also a church member and we agreed to work together to bring her ideas to life. We had met a few years before at embroidery classes so we knew about each other's experience and special interests.

Iris produced an A2 size painting on paper showing the main elements of the design on the three panels and also displayed a large piece of her work in the church. We gave a presentation of the design at a Friendship Lunch when members were encouraged to ask questions. The Elders asked for a full size painting of the centre panel which was laid out on the floor of the nave. When viewed from the apse it was possible to get an impression of how the completed work might look.

Just over a year later, after discussions and presentations to church members, we began work in the autumn of 1997. We met on Monday afternoons in the upstairs hall of this church to discuss design details and put together the pieces of sewing which we had been working on at home.

Our styles are very different; Iris produced the broad, bold elements of the design while I delight in lots of detail. Without the design experience and enthusiasm which Iris brought to the project the work might not have been completed and full credit must go to her for resolving some problems we came across as work progressed.

The overall idea was a fanciful semi bird's-eye view from the Downs north of Lewes with a shepherd at the centre inspired by our apse window of 'The Good Shepherd'. We have tried to emphasise the caring role of this and other churches, social and health services. The wonderful Sussex landscape we see all around us has provided many ideas incorporated in the 100,000 square centimetres of this embroidery. Artistic licence has allowed us to move geographical features and buildings to suit our design.

Several of our church members have contributed pieces of embroidery which has greatly helped to build up the design. Their names are recorded in stitches and grateful thanks go to them and others who have given help at various stages of the project.

God's wonderful creation of the natural world should be cherished and carefully used by human beings. We are privileged to be able to enjoy the beauty of our town and the lovely county of Sussex.

Once the sewing was finished and the writing of this booklet was under way, the question of what to call the completed work had to be decided. During the last two years the project has been referred to as a fabric picture, which it is, or as a tapestry, which it definitely is not. Could it be an appliqué which refers to any ornamentation sewn or fixed on a material? Yes, but could it be confused with ‘application’ (to Lewes District Council for planning permission for church rebuilding?). Everyone knows what an embroidery is and all the pieces of fabric in the design have decorative hand or machine stitching on them.

Marietta Van Dyck

An extract from ‘English Downs’

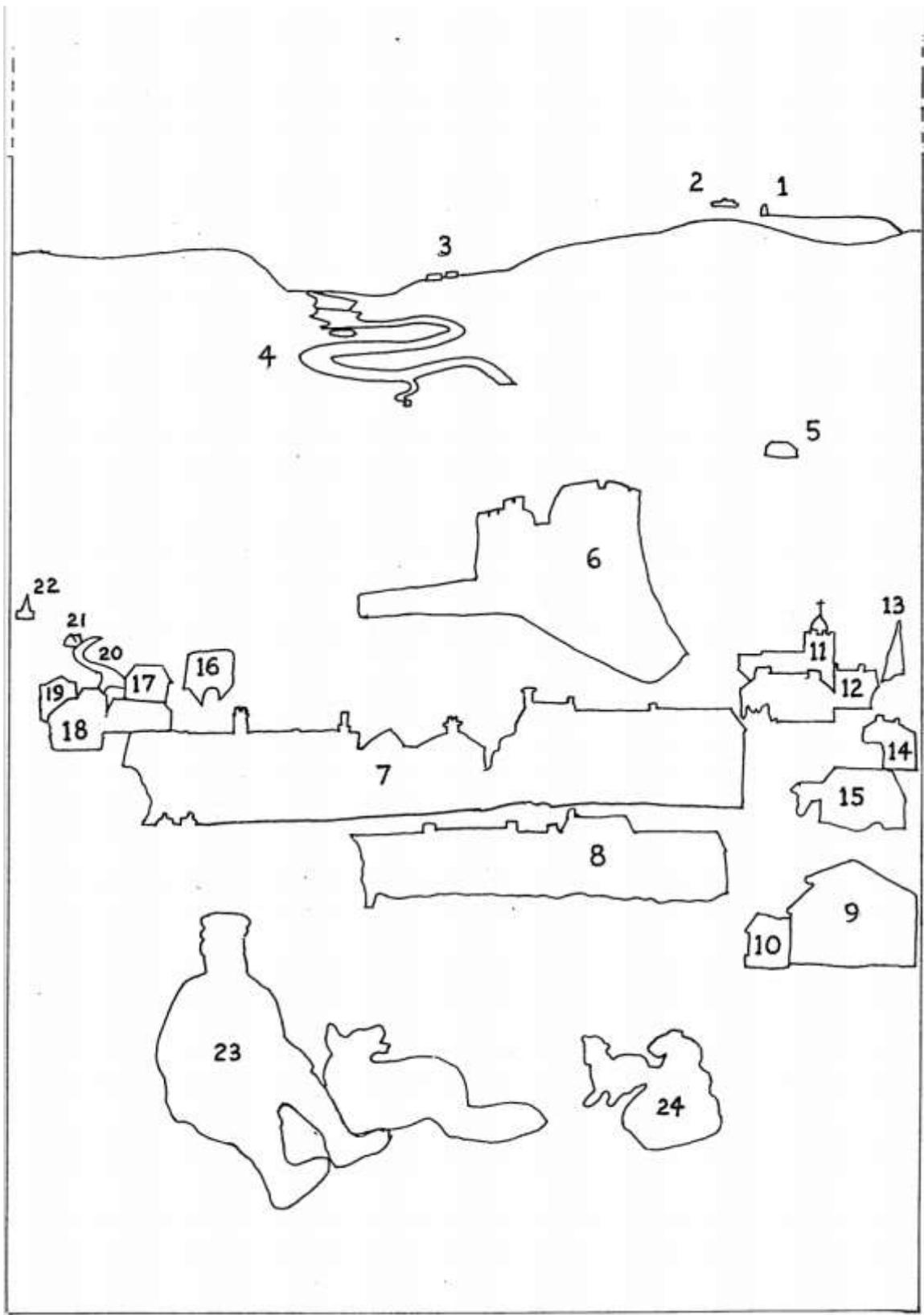
This air breathed milky sweet
With nodding columbine,
Dangled upon the aged-gnarled thorn
The clematis twine;

Meek harebell hung her head
Over the ‘green turfed’ chalk
And lambs with their dams foregathered
Where the shepherds talk.

Walter de la Mare 1873 to 1956

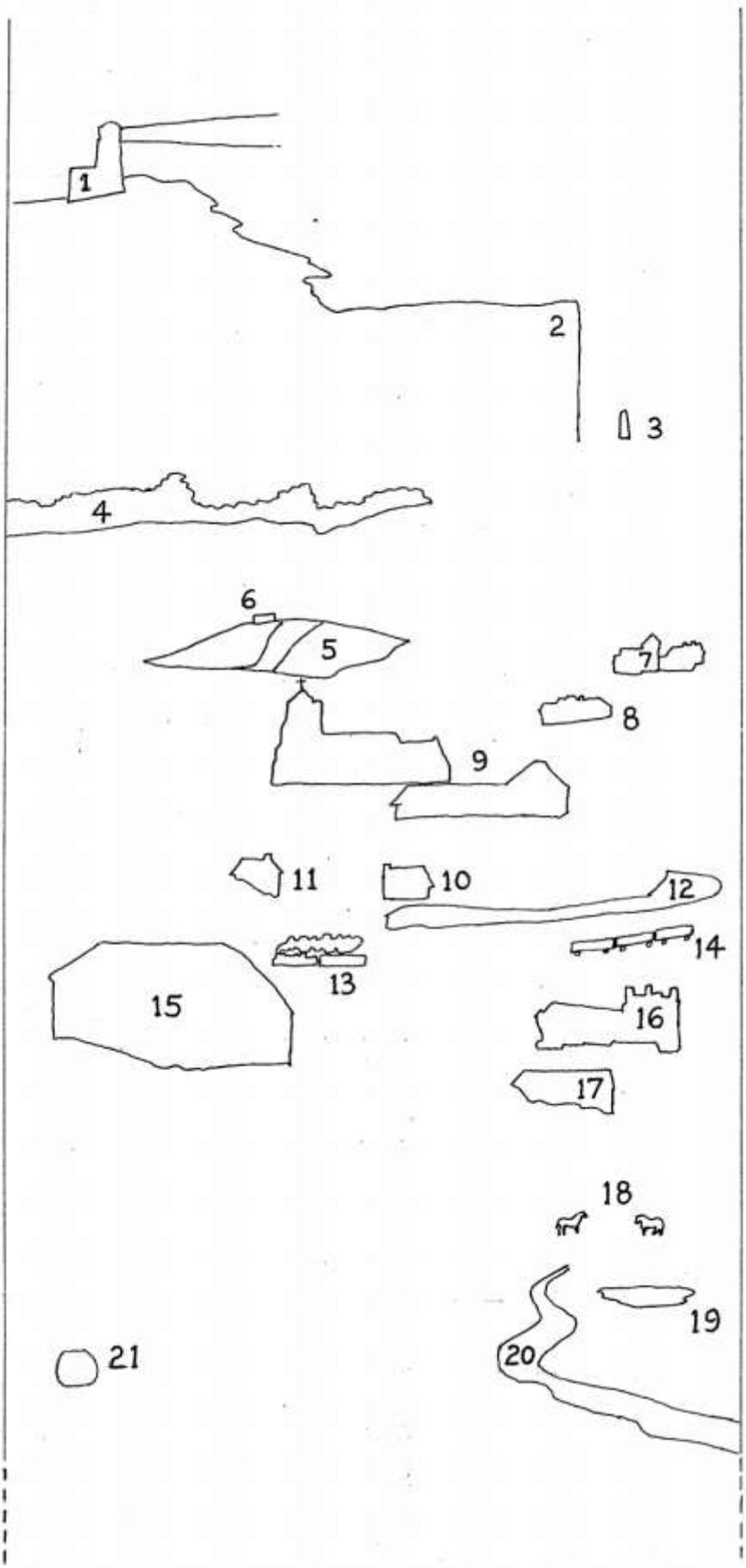
PANEL ONE (centre) : 3.05m x 1.60m

1. Newhaven breakwater and lighthouse
2. Cross channel ferry
3. Coast Guard cottages
4. Cuckmere River (the Meanders)
5. Lower Rise Barn
6. Lewes Castle
7. Houses in New Road
8. Houses in Paddock Road
9. **CHRIST CHURCH**
(United Reformed & Methodist)
10. The ghost of the Tabernacle (demolished in 1955)
11. St. John the Baptist Church, Southover
12. Cottages in Pipe Passage
13. Spire of St. Michael in Lewes Church
14. Part of the Round House
15. Buildings in Westgate Street
16. The Barbican
17. Stricklands Warehouse
18. Buildings in Cliffe
19. St. Thomas à Becket Church
20. The River Ouse
21. Wharf House
22. Martyrs Memorial
23. A shepherd with his dog called Ross
24. Southdown sheep



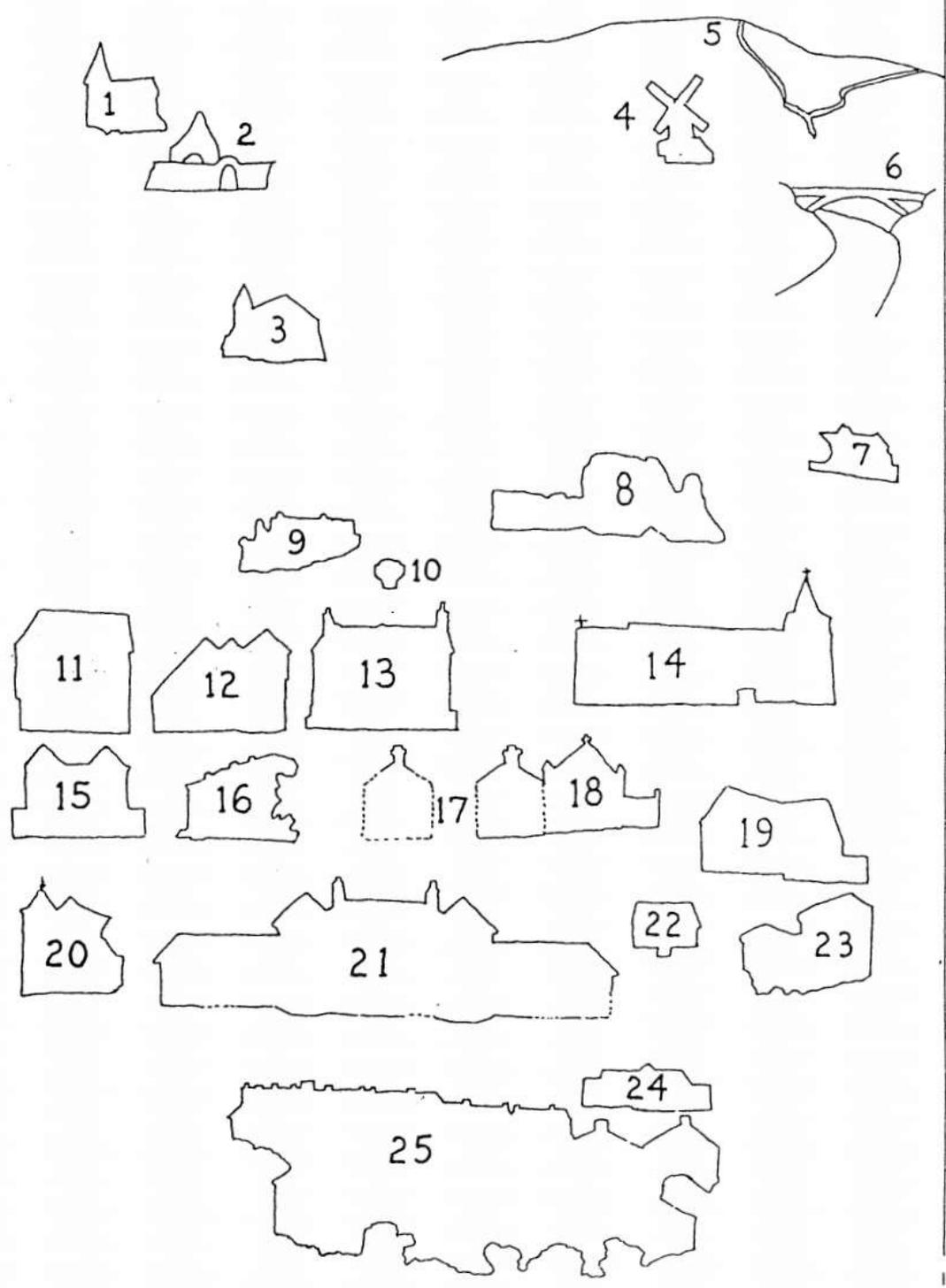
PANEL TWO (left) : 2.40m x 0.97m

1. Belle Tout lighthouse
2. Beachy Head
3. New lighthouse
4. Friston forest
5. Chalk pit
6. Golf club house
7. Beddingham Church and farmhouse
8. Cottages at Beddingham crossing
9. Hamsey Church and Hamsey Barn
10. Cottage at South Malling
11. Old Malling Farm
12. River Ouse
13. Old steam train — Southern Railway
14. Modern train — Connex South Central
15. Southease Barn
16. St. John sub Castro Church
17. The Pells School, Talbot Terrace
18. Racehorses grazing
19. A downland dew-pond
20. Downland track
21. Straw rolls



PANEL THREE (right) : 2.40m x 0.97m

1. Piddinghoe Church
2. Piddinghoe brick kiln
3. Southease Church
4. Old windmill
5. Kingston Ridge
6. Juggs Road bridge over A27
7. Stanley Turner sports pavilion
8. The ruins of the Priory of St. Pancras
9. Priory herb garden
10. De Montfort Memorial
11. Bull House and Westgate Chapel
12. 15th Century Bookshop
13. Hill Lodge
14. St. Anne's Church
15. Lewes Old Grammar School
16. Shelleys Hotel
17. St. Peter's Place cottages
18. St. Pancras Church
19. Spital Road Day Centre
20. Eastgate Baptist Church
21. Victoria Hospital
22. School sports pavilion
23. H.M. Prison
24. St. Mary's Social Centre
25. Houses in Leicester Road, Valance Road & Prince Edward's Road.



FLORA AND FAUNA:

Left panel (Read from left to right)

BLACKBERRY (*Rubus fruticosus*)
DANDELION (*Taraxacum officinale*)
FIELD MUSHROOM (*Agaricus campestris*)
MAGPIE (*Pica pica*)
HEDGE BEDSTRAW (*Galium mollugo*)
PHEASANTS EYE (*Adonis annua*)
BLACK MEDICK (*Medicago lupulina*)
MARBLED WHITE (*Melanargia galathea*)
ROUND-HEADED RAMPION (*Phyteuma orbiculare*)
COMMON SORREL (*Rumex acetosa*)
RABBIT (2) (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)
GARDEN SNAIL (*Helix aspera*)
COWSLIP (3) (*Primula veris*)
GREATER STITCHWORT (*Stellaria holostea*)
HERB PARIS (*Paris quadrifolia*)
GREAT KNAPWEED (*Centaurea scabiosa*)
YELLOW NECKED MOUSE (*Apodemus flavicollis*)
WILD TEASEL (*Dipsacus fullonum*)

Centre panel (Read from left to right)

FIELD POPPY (*Papaver rhoeas*)

OX-EYE DAISY (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)

BURNET SAXIFRAGE (*Pimpinella saxifraga*)

SIX SPOT BURNET MOTH (*Zygaena filipendulae*)

LADY'S BEDSTRAW (*Galium verum*)

CHICORY (*Cichorium intybus*)

ROUGH HAWKBIT (*Leontodon hispidus*)

MEADOW OAT GRASS (*Helictotrichon pratense*)

BIRDS FOOT TREFOIL (*Lotus corniculatus*)

HOARY PLANTAIN (*Plantago media*)

WHITE CLOVER (*Trifolium repens*)

CLUSTERED BELLFLOWER (*Campanula glomerata*)

PYRAMIDAL ORCHID (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*)

HOLLY BLUE BUTTERFLY (*Celastrina argiolus*)

SMALL SCABIOUS (*Scabiosa columbaria*)

STEMLESS THISTLE (*Cirsium acaulon*)

THYME (*Thymus vulgaris*)

DOG ROSE (*Rosa canina*)

WHITE CLOVER (*Trifolium repens*)

MARJORAM (*Origanum vulgare*)

Right panel (Read from left to right)

HONEYSUCKLE (*Lonicera periclymenum*)
BROAD-BORDERED BEE HAWK-MOTH (*Hemaris fuciformis*)
GREAT BINDWEED (*Calystegia sylvatica*)
BITTER SWEET (*Solanum dulcamara*)
PERFORATE ST. JOHN'S WORT (*Hypericum perforatum*)
GERMANDER SPEEDWELL (*Veronica chamaedrys*)
DAISY (*Bellis perennis*)
FOX GLOVE (*Digitalis purpurea*)
LESSER CELANDINE (*Ranunculus ficaria*)
COW PARSLEY (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)
LORDS AND LADIES (*Arum maculatum*)
GLISTENING INK CAP FUNGUS (*Coprimus micaeus*)
RED CAMPION (*Silene dioica*)
WOOD SORREL (*Oxalis acetosella*)
MEADOW BUTTERCUP (*Ranunculus acris*)
WOOD FALSE-BROME GRASS (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*)
EARLY DOG VIOLET (*Viola reichenbachiana*)
RANSOMS (*Allium ursinum*)
COMMON FIGWORT (*Scrophularia nodosa*)
BROADLEAVED WILLOWHERB (*Epilobium montanum*)
FERN CROZIERS
BLUEBELL (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*)
WOOD MILLET GRASS (*Milium effusum*)
WOOD ANEMONE (*Anemone nemorosa*)
WOOD MELICK GRASS (*Melica uniflora*)

BRIMSTONE BUTTERFLY (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)
IVY (*Hedera helix*)
GUELDER ROSE (*Viburnum opulus*)
PURPLE HAIRSTREAK BUTTERFLY (*Quercusea
quercus*)
PEDUNCULATE OAK (*Quercus robur*)

**“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they
neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all
his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”**

Matthew 6: 28-29



Solomon's Seal

MATERIALS USED ON THE THREE PANELS

Cotton, wool, silk, chiffon, old tights, linen, tweed, hessian, Crimplene, Vyella, leather, lace, Vilene, felt, beads, metallic thread, embroidery thread, crochet threads, bias binding, Setacolor paint, crayons, ball point pen, felt tip pen, Fray Stop glue, Fray Check liquid and sequins.

TECHNIQUES AND METHODS OF WORKING

The support fabric is a heavy natural Irish linen and behind that a dark green chintz as a protective lining. Behind each panel, between the linen and the lining, are four slats of ramin wood held tightly between narrow pockets to prevent the edges of the fabric curling inwards. A fold-over open ended pocket was sewn at the top of each panel to take a length of aluminium tubing which rests on wall brackets.

The design on each panel was started from the top. Embroidery and other decorative effects were worked on strips of coloured fabric which, when completed, were attached to the linen support by Iris by hand and with her sewing machine. I did not really appreciate, until I tried it myself, that this process was often heavy and difficult and a certain amount of puckering was almost impossible to avoid. In one or two places the puckering was turned to advantage as extra texture and an unexpected bonus. Wherever possible we found it was best to use pieces of fabric large or small on the straight grain of the fabric as this lessened puckering.

Exceptions could be made where the stripes on printed fabric were being used to illustrate ploughed furrows in a field. White, grey and black Vilene interfacing was used at any angle; this also applied to felt.

Paint, dye and crayon were sometimes added to larger areas of plain material. Dozens of different types of lace were dyed with Setacolor fabric paints and used to depict trees, bushes and hedges. Some of the trees were also crocheted. Highlights were painted on after the lace was sewn down, which really brought the trees to life.

Great care was taken with the tension of the embroidery but even so it was found that the overall width of the fabric reduced as more stitches and appliqué were added.

In order to give a feeling of depth, certain flowers and leaves were painted on to the fabric. Sequins were used as stars at the top left and top right of the two side panels. The setting sun was made of gold ric-rac. Most gold coloured threads do not show up well from a distance and will eventually go dull. Layers of navy blue chiffon created the transition between night and dawn, sunset and night again. In retrospect we would not have used chiffon on such a large scale hanging. It is a fine and delicate material which is easily damaged by constant handling.

A feeling of distance was achieved with the straw rolls on the left panel by making the front ones a darker colour with coarser stitches and the far off ones lighter and smoother in texture. Fringed strips of fabric were used as grass on the foreground field edges.

The gnarled Hawthorn tree on the edge of the field is a piece of Vilene interfacing and net covered in machine stitch 'scribble' which then had holes cut in it with very sharp scissors.

The foreground on the left panel is, perhaps, a piece of set-aside land, quickly reverting to nature. An interesting contrast between the colour, tone and texture of adjacent pieces had to be achieved in order that they will be seen from the front of the church.

The fields and hills are generally soft blue-greens in the distance and richer yellow-greens in the foreground. In the main, the larger pieces of fabric were dyed by Iris. Her sharp eye spotted a very interesting piece of fabric patterned with varying curves of alternate light and dark stripes. Its bright pink colour was easily dyed green and proved perfect, on panel 3, as fields of newly mown hay, before baling.

Carbon paper was used to transfer the fine details of buildings and plants on to the fabric as a guide for the embroidery.

Each week, during our Monday afternoon sessions, we hung the work over a large display board to check how the drag of the fabric was responding to the increasing weight as more pieces were added. Photographs were taken at regular intervals.

We learned quickly from our work on the centre panel which we tackled first, and soon devised quicker and more effective ways of producing the individual elements of the design, in particular the buildings. For example, it was necessary to use thin iron-on Vilene as a stabiliser on the back of the cotton fabric walls of the buildings. Windows were made by gluing and stitching a piece of black Vilene on to the wall and then making the window bars with embroidery thread. My own inclination was to add more and more detail but I was restrained by Iris who reminded me that it would not show up from a distance. With the exception of shiny embroidery threads used for the flowers we were careful to use matt fabrics.

We received regular donations of fabric of all kinds from people interested in the project and welcome visits from many following the progress of the work.

Church member, David Lang, who has a keen interest in the wild flowers of Sussex, supplied us with a list of suggestions which formed the core of the embroidery along the bottom of each panel and encouraged us to do some more research. This resulted in a total of fifty-six different plants being depicted plus some animals, a bird and various insects.

While searching for design ideas we would often let our mind's eye wander around Lewes and the surrounding countryside looking for interesting, important and historical buildings to create in embroidery.

Church members maintained enthusiastic backing for our work even when progress seemed slow.

On a personal note we both found that, as the needlework project progressed, our interest and enjoyment in the work increased. We have learned much about co-operation, sharing and support.

M.V.D.



Star of Bethlehem

Conducted private viewings can be arranged. In the first instance, please send an email to:

christchurchsecretary@btconnect.com

A DEDICATION:

A selection from popular hymns of the last two centuries.

Jesus is Lord of all the earth, he is the King of creation.
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, all thy works
shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea.

God in his love for us lent us this planet, gave it a
purpose in time and in space:
small as a spark from the fire of creation, cradle of life
and the home of our race.

Colours of day dawn into the mind,
The day has begun, the night is behind.
He fills the sun with morning light
and bids the moon direct the night.

He makes the grass the hills adorn, and clothes the smiling
fields with corn.

There's not a plant or flower below but makes thy glories
known.

He makes the sea that shines afar with waves that dance
unceasingly.

The love of God is broad like beach and meadow, wide as
the wind, and an eternal home.

When through the woods and forest glades I wander, and
hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;

When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

I praise the Lord for the beauty of the earth, for the
beauty of the skies, for the day and for the night.

Hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon, and stars of light.

For the fruits of all creation for the ploughing, sowing and reaping, and the harvests we are sharing, thanks be to God.

Praise and thanksgiving Father we offer
For all things living you have made good
Harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard
Hay from the mown fields blossom and wood.

Go down in the city, into the street, and let's give the message to the people we meet:
Go through the park on into the town.

Let streets and homes with praises ring.
With joy, with justice, love and praise.

The ocean is glistening with sunset's golden rays
and the duteous day now closes, each flower and tree
reposes. Shade creeps o'er wild and wood.

Lift your eyes to the quiet hills with a prayer as you turn
to sleep; by day, by night, through the dark and light your
heavenly shepherd will guard his sheep.

And, finally, a prayer of St. Columba:

Be thou a bright flame before me, be thou a guiding star
above me, be thou a smooth path below me, be thou a
kindly shepherd behind me, today, tonight and forever.

Epilogue

The following pieces of poetry, although well known, still ring true today:

SUSSEX

God gives all men all earth to love
But, since man's heart is small,
Ordains for each one spot shall prove
Belovèd over all.
Each to his choice, and I rejoice
The lot has fallen to me
In a fair ground — in a fair ground —
Yea, Sussex by the sea!

Rudyard Kipling 1865-1936

GREEN SUSSEX

You came, and looked and loved the view
Long-known and loved by me,
Green Sussex fading into blue
With one gray glimpse of sea.

Alfred Lord Tennyson 1809-1892

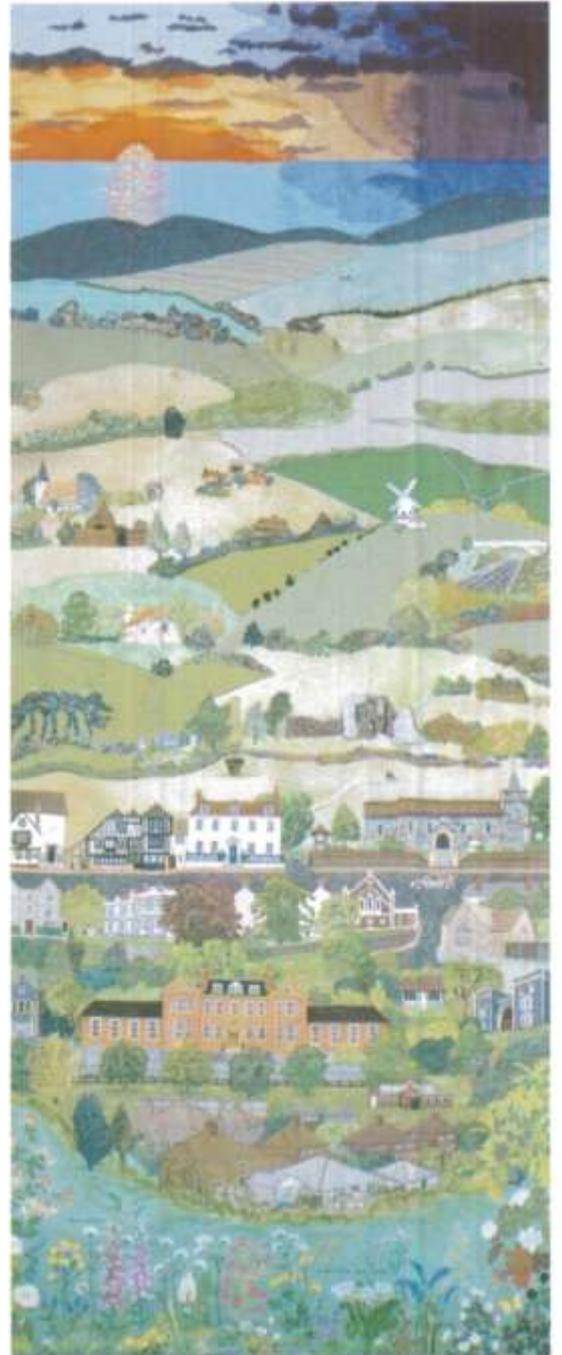
**For more information about Christ Church,
please visit**

christ-church-lewes.org





Dawn



Dusk

The Christ Church Embroidery

