

THE STORY BEHIND THE
VILLAGE
MILLENNIUM TAPESTRY

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Towards the end of 1998 Staverton Parish Council began considering ideas for an event or initiative that would be a constructive and appropriate community project with which to commemorate the fast approaching millennium. The suggestion that was finally adopted was the creation of a Village Tapestry depicting Staverton's way of life, past and present, made up of a series of unique designs that would not only portray the local history but what the village was like at the end of the 20th century.

Meetings were held in the School, with representatives from village groups, to launch the initiative and volunteers were sought to help produce the Tapestry and to form a small Design Team. This Design Team met regularly in early 1999 and after several weeks had agreed the overall format of the Tapestry and had selected the individual designs that would depict a journey through the village. Initial financial support for the project came from a number of local sources with Nestlé UK and Cereal Partners UK at Staverton Factory giving generous donations, the Parish Council pledging a contribution and the balance being sought from grants by other organisations such as the National Lottery Grants for All and the Rural Initiatives Fund.

Work to convert the designs into working patterns and to calculate the materials required started in earnest in February with the purchase of a computer programme and the support of a local tapestry shop owner who offered technical advice and the supply of everything needed to produce the piece of work. Angie Hulin, a young mum with a son at the village school, took on the role of computer operator and worked tirelessly throughout March and April to produce the working patterns and coloured charts for all the individual designs.

Her unenviable task also included the production of colour codes, calculating the precise amounts of materials required and liaising with the supplier to obtain everything needed within a tight timescale. It was a mammoth task and Angie worked day and night on her computer to get everything perfected and in place so that the volunteers could start working on their allotted designs by early May.

However, her considerable commitment to the project didn't end there as Angie, together with Gwen Davis and Helen Cass, also took charge of assembling each kit, a slow and painstaking task which involved measuring out each set of tapestry wools from the hundreds of skeans that were needed in over 1 80 different colours.

Angie and her Team had completed the preparation work by the first week in May and the individual kits were given out to the army of volunteers who immediately commenced work on stitching their designs. A meeting was held in the School, for all the people involved, to explain and agree the method of working and to resolve any queries or concerns that the volunteers may have about the part they would play in the production of the tapestry.

Progress was checked at regular intervals over the next few months and each volunteer was offered support, advice and assistance, if needed, via a special Helpline set up by the Design Team.

The work progressed at a steady pace throughout the Summer and Autumn and by December most of the individual panels for the Tapestry had been completed and handed in. Early January 2000 brought frenzied activity to get the remaining sections finished off and the considerable task of sewing all the designs together commenced. Angie and Gwen took on this long and labourious task and spent many a long day carefully assembling the Tapestry which was finally completed by the end of April.

The final act of this superb community effort was the stretching and framing of the completed work and this was done by a specialist firm to have it ready for the grand unveiling by the end of June. The magnificent masterpiece, skillfully produced by dozens of committed volunteers, was presented to and hung in the village Primary School where it will remain on permanent display as a tribute to a tremendous community achievement that commemorates the skills, efforts, dedication and team work of the many people who were involved in its creation and which will be viewed with admiration, pride and pleasure by present and future generations of Staverton residents.



THE TAPESTRY DESIGNS AND THE PEOPLE THAT MADE IT

The format of the Tapestry is based on a journey through Staverton and is designed to portray past and present buildings and structures, village features, its characters, organisations, social activities, community amenities, local business and the Parish environment and wildlife.

Most of the features in the designs have an historic significance and the Tapestry not only depicts the village as it was at the start of the 21st century, but relates the past history of a small community whose roots go back over a thousand years.

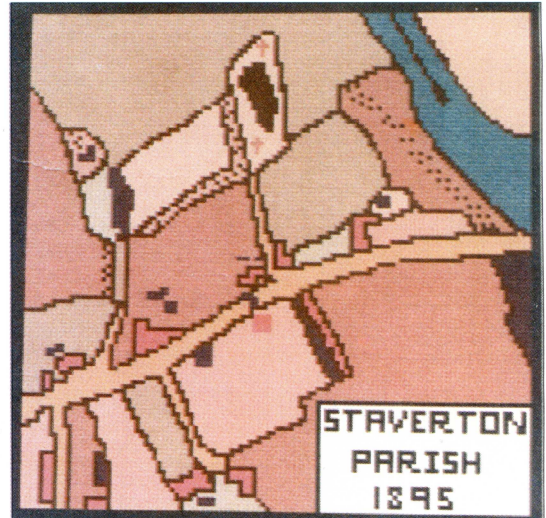
The volunteers who helped create the Tapestry came from all sections of the community and included present and past residents, Parents with children at the village School, W.I. and 60+ members, people who no longer live in the Parish but have long standing connections with Staverton and representatives of most village organisations backed up by the many who gave support, advice and offered encouragement.

The following pages of this information booklet feature an illustration of each design, explains its significance and gives a brief background to its present and past role in contributing to the village's way of life.

This colourful, informative and superbly crafted Tapestry is Staverton's unique contribution to the new millennium and is dedicated to the skill, commitment and team effort of the many volunteers in and around the village whose involvement in the project, and the role they have played in creating a magnificent work of art, has justly given them great pleasure and pride in being an important part of a tremendous community achievement.

Staverton's foundations can be traced back to the 9th century when a small Anglo—Saxon farmstead was established on the banks of the River Avon. This first settlement grew slowly over the next few centuries and by 1086, the year of the Domesday Book, Staverton had grown into a small hamlet with a corn mill on the river. The name Staverton comes from the Old English 'stavre' for post, stick or stave and 'tun' or 'tone' which simply meant a Farm. An interpretation of these names gives Staverton the description '*a farm enclosed by a wooden fence or pallisade*', a common defensive measure in 9th century Anglo-Saxon England.

One of the first known Parish maps was hand drawn and coloured for Dr. Samuel Keddle, the principal village landowner in 1845, and recorded his lands and properties in 19th century Staverton. The village then did not extend any further than the present day Square but incorporated several small outposts at Wyke and Marsh. Interesting features on the map include the location of the village Turnpike House and Toll Gate, near the Church gates, the village field names and the size of the Parish which, in 1845, extended to Islington in the south and took in most of the Down and Hilperton Marsh.

**Design stitched by Jacky Connell.****Square No. 2 - Staverton's Farming Traditions**

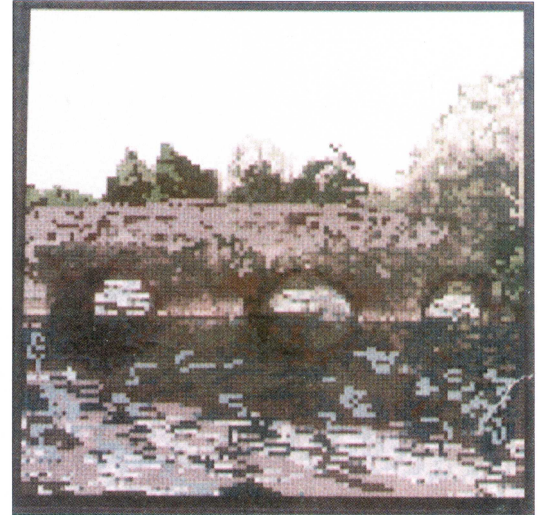
Herds of cows were a common sight around the village up to recent times and confirmed Staverton's farming role in this rich dairying area of the West Country. Farming was the villager's main source of subsistence from earliest times right up to the early 19th century and crop growing and milk production were the main agricultural activities. Cows and milk also have an important connection with the village which housed one of Nestlé's UK Condensaries from the turn of the century up to 1973, the factory producing millions of tins of Condensed, Evaporated, Skimmed Milk and Sterilised Cream products over the years. When tinned milk production ceased at the factory in 1973, the Company converted to the production of yogurts and cream based desserts and some local farmers were still able to supply milk for this new range of products. One of the largest dairy herds in the village was owned by the Blake family of Staverton Farm whose Friesian cows were providing quality milk for the Nestlé Factory, and local consumption, right up to recent times when the decline of the British milk industry forced them to abandon their traditional farming trade and convert their land and buildings to equestrian pursuits and the cows that used to graze Staverton's fields have now been replaced by horses.

Square No. 3 – Staverton's River Bridge

Design Stitched by Grace Stickley

The River Avon at Staverton was originally crossed by a shallow ford and this remained in use right up to the late 18th century as indicated by a spelling of the village name 'Staffordton' recorded in 1671. A flimsy wooden bridge was erected alongside the ford in the 14th century and this was later replaced with the first stone bridge, a narrow packhorse bridge with low parapets. The bridge was widened in the late 18th century and the parapets raised to their present height. The north side of the bridge still retains its 14th century arches and underribbing, typical of bridge building architecture around that period, and the original low level of its parapets can still be detected in the stonework. The south side of the bridge is totally different in style with its 18th century flattened arches and this evidence confirms the widening of the bridge during that time.

The bridge has suffered badly in recent times from increased traffic volumes and the size and length of modern heavy goods vehicles, and has sustained considerable damage to its structure. Traffic light controls, installed in 1999, are designed to reduce the impact of the present heavy flows of vehicles over the bridge so as to eliminate the frequent collisions of large lorries against its fragile stonework.



Square No. 4 – The Nestlé Factory

Design stitched by Marian Matthews



The Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co. took over the old Staverton Cloth Mill site in 1897 and converted it into a Milk Condensary. Nestlé merged with Anglo-Swiss in 1905 to form the Nestlé and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co. and Nestlé, now the biggest food company in the world, has retained an important presence in the village ever since. From the turn of the century until 1973 the factory produced tinned milk products using supplies of fresh milk brought in from local farms. The main mill building, originally six storey's high, was reduced to its present height in 1935 and now houses the factory's main office and administration departments. When tinned milk production ceased in 1973 the manufacturing plant was converted to the production of yogurts and desserts under the Chambourcy label and in 1989 this was transferred to a brand new, state of the art, Hi— tech manufacturing facility, costing £25M, at the rear of the site. A custom built Culinary Products Plant was constructed in 1967 and produced Crosse & Blackwell Baked Beans, Pasta Products and Soup right up to 1995. The latest development on the site is a Breakfast Cereals Factory which started production in 1998 and is now producing Shreddies and Corn Flakes under the Cereal Partners/Nestlé label.

Design stitched by Gillian Lucas

The present village Church was re-built in 1826 and replaced an earlier, and much smaller, '*Chapel of Ease*' whose foundations went back to the 13th or 14th centuries. Built of ashlar with a Welsh slate roof, St. Paul's has provided a pleasant place of worship for generations of village families and its secluded churchyard, overlooking the river Avon valley and Bradford Woods, has become a serene and peaceful last resting place for many departed Staverton residents. Notable past Vicars have included the famous Poet/Rector George Crabbe who preached in the Church between 1814 and 1832 and the Rev. Theodore Cavell, relative of the courageous nurse of World War 1 fame, Edith Cavell, who was shot by the Germans.

Served by Curates from St. James's Church in Trowbridge for many centuries, Staverton became a Benefice in its own right in 1839 and the Village enjoyed its own resident Vicars right up to 1971 when St. Paul's was incorporated into the Hilperton, Whaddon and Hilperton Marsh Benefice.

Interesting features in the present Church are the attractive stained glass east window, installed by the Hargreaves family, owners of the village Cloth Mill between 1870 and 1891, and a priceless Elizabethan Chalice hallmarked 1577.



Design stitched by Marjorie Beard



Square No. 6 – Staverton Women's Institute

The Women's Institute is a national organisation with branches in many towns and villages, whose aims are the development of community welfare and the practice of rural crafts found in Britain and other Commonwealth countries. Founded in Ontario, Canada in 1897, the W.I. quickly branched out world-wide and became established in the UK in 1915. The National Union of townswomen's Guilds, founded in 1929, is the urban equivalent of the rural W.I. groups.

Staverton's W.I. branch was founded in 1959 and enlists members from Hilperton Marsh, Wyke Road and The Down as well as from the village. Its present 32 members meet once a month, on Thursday evenings, in the village School where their activities include talks on a whole range of interesting topics, Craft competitions, produce shows, raffles and with the occasional coach trip thrown in.

Current President of Staverton Women's Institute is Jean White and the branches blue and white logo, featured on the Tapestry, was made by Eileen Curtis and contrasts from the County emblem of a stylised tree in green and white. Staverton W.I. was at the forefront of support for the Tapestry project and many of the individual squares have been produced by W.I. ladies from around the Parish area.

Square No. 7 – Nestling’s Pre–School

Design stitched by Helen Cass

Nestling’s Pre-School was started up in 1998 in response to a community need for young children to receive a preliminary education before moving up to Primary School when they attained the age of five. Managed by a group of young Mums and Dads in the Parish, the Staverton Pre-School, which caters for the three to five year olds, were offered the use of a vacant classroom in the village School and were able to benefit from the wide range of facilities that were available. Now staffed by three qualified Pre-School Teachers and helpers, Nestling’s has 33 children on the books and conducts sessions from 9 am to 12 noon and some afternoons during the week. Nestling’s also run a Parent and Toddler Group in the School on Wednesday afternoons from 1.30 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. and welcomes local Mums and Dads to come along and meet others and let their younger children make new friends and get used to a school environment.

The village Pre-School needs to actively raise funds to help pay it’s way and relies on the support of local people to assist with the various fund raising events they organise during the year. Within the next year Nestlings will need to find new accommodation and discussions have been taking place to try and secure the old School’s Pratten classroom as their new home.



Square No. 8 — The Old Bear Public House

Design stitched by Angie Hulin



Up to the 18th century Staverton villagers had to obtain their alcoholic beverages from a number of ‘ale sellers’ in the Parish who brewed beer in their cottages and sold it to the locals. The Old Bear arrived on the scene in the late 18th century and was probably a continuation of a ‘cottage brewing industry’ that was already on the site. Staverton’s only village pub, originally a rank of four weaver’s cottages, got it’s name ‘The Old Bear’ from the village’s connection with the Beauchamp Family, Lords of the Manor in the 16th century, who displayed a bear on their coat of arms.

The Old Bear was taken over by the Bird Family in the 1970’s and was extensively altered in 1989 with the addition of the front bay windows and entrance porch and the conversion of the old skittle alley into a restaurant named ‘Samuel’s’ after Laurie Bird’s grandfather.

The Old Bear’s claim to fame came in 1948 when it’s darts team, captained by Bill Fielding, reached the finals of the Sunday People National Darts Tournament held in London. Already the Wiltshire and West of England Champions, the Staverton team, after putting up a tremendous game in the finals, were eventually beaten 2 – 1 by the Red Lion Pub team from Boreham Wood.

Design stitched by Lillian Heeks

No. 9 – Staverton's Town Crier

One of the better known and most colourful characters in the village is Town Crier Trevor Heeks who has become renowned across Britain for his verbal skills in proclaiming the good tidings at civic functions and social gatherings.

Trevor was appointed official Trowbridge Town Crier in 1986 after which he became quite a celebrity at Council ceremonies and civic occasions throughout the region. His fame has also spread world-wide with his attendances at Town Crier competitions around the globe and he won the World Championship in 1989, became European Champion in 1992 and also won the British Open Championship in 1999.

Trevor's usual colourful costume was based on Trowbridge Wool Merchant Roger Brown's coachman and his latest attire is an authentic reproduction of the 1880's uniform worn by Brown's footman. Besides his civic duties Trevor also offers his services for weddings and other special occasions and always makes himself available to support village fetes, celebrations and other Staverton events. He is also known locally for his acting talents and usually plays a major part in the annual village pantomimes when his 'crier's' voice is used to good effect to wake up quiet audiences.



Design stitched by Brenda Payne

No. 10 – Sheep and the Cloth Trade



The sheep in this design signifies Staverton's long connection with the woollen cloth industry which, between the 15th and 19th centuries, provided a livelihood for most villagers. Staverton Mill became heavily involved in the fulling of cloths from the late 14th century and the growth and prosperity of the local cloth trade attracted many cottage weavers and cloth workers into the village. By the early 19th century there were more than 100 cloth working families living in the Parish and the Staverton Cloth Factory was said to be employing 1500 local people in the 1830's. The gradual decline of the West of England cloth trade in the latter half of the 19th century led to the closure of the Mill in 1891 and cottage weaving in the village had virtually ceased by the end of the century.

During the late 14th century when the English cloth trade was at its peak the Manor lands around Staverton contained large flocks of sheep and a lot of the village's arable land was turned over to sheep grazing much to the detriment of local farmers who relied on the land for their livelihoods.

The 19th century 'boom' in the local cloth business increased Staverton's population to over 700 but by the end of the century, due to the closure of the Mill, this had fallen to below 200.

Square No. 11 – Staverton's Signal Box

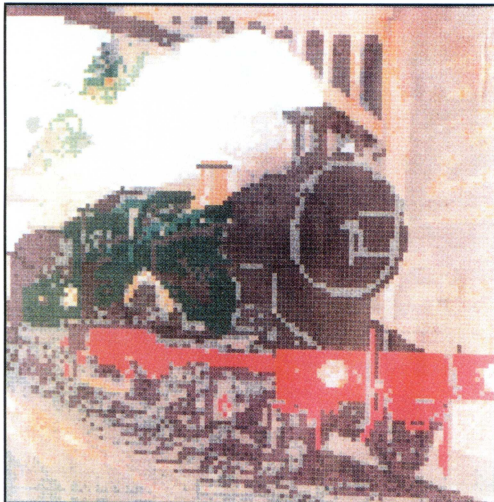
When the Great Western Railway came to Staverton in 1848 it's lines split into several branches just south of the railway bridge and formed the junction known locally as the 'Staverton Triangle'. It was not until 1857 that the branch line to Bradford-on-Avon was finally connected and from that time three separate signal boxes were placed on each arm of the junction to control rail traffic movements from the north, south and east. These were eventually replaced, in 1933, by a single signal box on the north arm of the junction and this remained in use as a manually operated box right up to 1990 when modern signalling technology replaced the signalman with an automatic control system.

The last signals were 'pulled' in March 1990 after which the box became redundant and was later demolished. It was on this junction that the Royal train used to stop overnight and when it was in the vicinity the railway embankment and approaches would be swarming with police and security men who ensured that villagers did not get too close. This was also the spot where Prince Charles would sometimes meet up with Diana Spencer in the early days of their courtship, his intended being smuggled down School Lane and through the chicken farm at dead of night in great secrecy.

Design stitched by Roger White



Square No. 12 – The Railway



Design stitched by Lesley Warne

Half a century after the canal came to Staverton villagers witnessed the arrival of the latest innovation in transportation systems when the first railway was laid through the Parish in 1848. Masterminded by famous Victorian Engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the G.W.R. had spread out from London and was rapidly progressing south and west to transport goods and passengers to ports and resorts on the coast. Staverton's section of the railway connected Chippenham with Trowbridge, Westbury and stations south eventually reaching Weymouth on the south coast. It was nine years later that the branch line to Bradford-on-Avon was finally completed linking the rail route to Bath, Bristol and on into Wales and the south west.

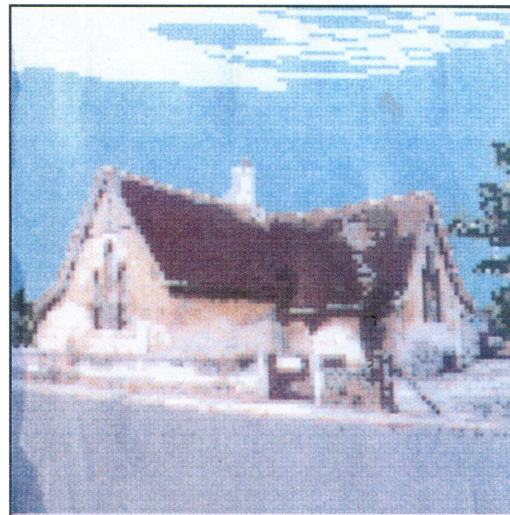
The first train through Staverton in September 1848, with Brunel and many VIP's on board, was pulled by the engine *Firefly* and driven by the G.W.R's Locomotive Superintendent Daniel Gooch. Initially the G.W.R. provided five trains a day each way with two on Sundays and by 1862 this had been increased to seven a day. A motorail service was introduced in 1903 and two years later the village's own railway station 'Staverton Halt' was opened. Passenger use declined after W.W.2 and Staverton's little village station was finally closed down in 1966.

Design stitched by Jean White

Square No. 13 – The old Victorian School

By the 1870's the old school building on the canal had become totally inadequate and School Managers made plans to replace it with a brand new building further down the village. Grants were obtained from the National Schools Society, a piece of land acquired from Dr. Samuel Keddle, the principal village landowner in the 19th century, and builders engaged to construct the new school. Work on the purpose built two roomed schoolhouse commenced in May 1880 and Mrs. Perkins Clark, of Wyke House, was invited to lay the foundation stone. The new school opened on October 18th 1880 and, at last, the infants could be separated from the older pupils and taught in the smaller of the two rooms. Elizabeth Leaver had become the new Headmistress in 1878 and was now being assisted by Infant teacher Rebecca Purnell with pupils using slates and sand trays to practice their writing skills.

Staverton's Victorian School continued to educate village children through the 20th century and by the 1970's conditions in the small cramped building had become impossible and totally unsuitable to meet the modern educational requirements and standards. In 1996 it was finally replaced by a brand new eight classroom school built on the old school's sports field.



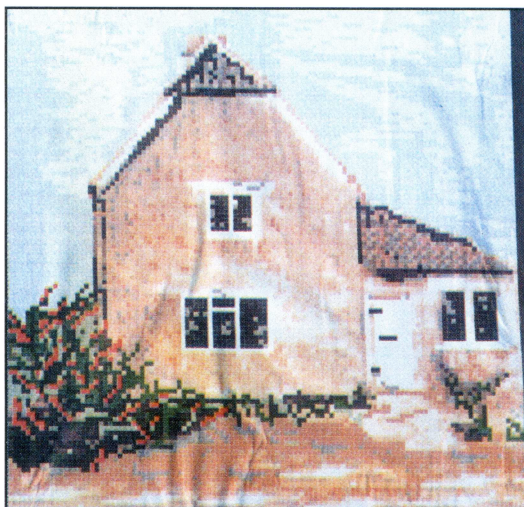
Design stitched by Joan Mallows

Square No. 14 – Avonlea Cottage

Probably the oldest surviving house in Staverton, Avonlea Cottage's foundations go back to the 17th century and it has enjoyed a variety of different uses over the years. It's rubble built walls of local stone originally supported a thatched roof which was replaced later with modern clay tiles. Some of it's outbuildings, also originally thatched, were used as farm buildings in the 18th and 19th centuries and in the early 1800's the cottage became the home of the then Staverton Cloth Factory owner, Edward Cooper, and his family.

Taking up a prominent position on top of the hill that leads down to the river bridge, it was opposite the Staverton Turnpike House and Toll Gate which controlled 'traffic' movements in and out of the village in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Also being close to the Church gates and churchyard it was the ideal dwelling for past St. Paul's vergers and caretakers and the Garratt Family, recorded as *'exemplary Christians'* in the old Church registers, occupied the property almost throughout the 19th century.

The cottage housed the village grocery store in the 1900's and continued to provide a shopping service to residents right up to the 1980's when, due to severe competition from new supermarkets it became unviable as a business and closed down.



Square No. 15 – St.Paul's Church Gates

Design stitched by Stephanie Morris

Visitors to Staverton are often not aware of the existence of the village Church and to some the only clue is noticing the quaint Edwardian gateway that nestles between two of the older village cottages at the top of the hill that runs down to the river. The narrow path that leads down from this gateway, and snakes between the tall wall and hedges of the cottage gardens each side, brings the tiny Church of St. Paul's into view.

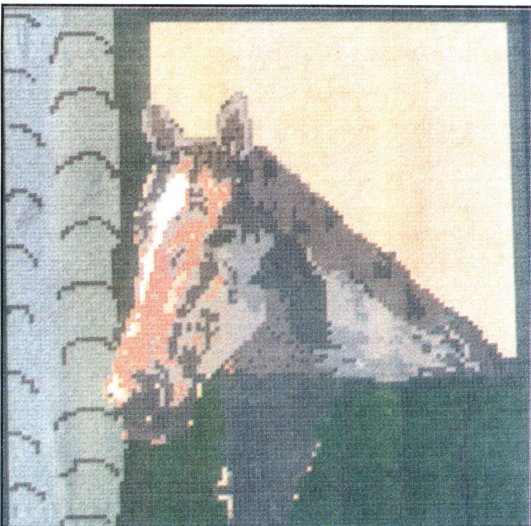
The churchyard, originally half its present size, was enlarged in 1906 with money raised from a village collection which helped towards the cost of preparing the new ground and providing an iron boundary fence on the north and west sides. When completed, the new churchyard was consecrated at a special service conducted by Dr. Wordsworth, the Lord Bishop of Salisbury, and burials of village people, which over the last few years had to be carried out at Trowbridge cemetery, were able to resume in the serene surroundings of St. Paul's Church.

Because of its original size, the churchyard retains its older graves and tombstones on the south and west sides with the oldest known headstone dating to 1718. This peaceful little churchyard contains some fine trees including 3 ancient yews and a magnificent copper beech.



Square No. 16 – Horses

Design stitched by Brenda Wakeford



When Staverton Farm finally disbanded its dairy herd in the early 1990's it spelled the end of its long standing dairy farming tradition in the village and rendered the fields and farm buildings virtually redundant. Michael Blake, who had taken over the running of the farm on his father John's retirement, decided to diversify into equestrian pursuits and converted many of the farm buildings into stabling and facilities for a Riding School. Very soon horses began to appear in the fields around the farm with the business slowly growing over the next few years and which now caters for about 40 horses and their owners. A new barn style building was added in 1998 as an exercise arena for the horses and the Staverton Farm Riding School began organising annual show jumping events for clients in the paddock next to the farmhouse.

Virtually every weekend and holidays now young riders and their parents descend on the farm to visit their mounts and horse riders have become a regular sight on the roads and bridleways through the village. Villagers, who in centuries past, looked out at grazing cattle and sheep in Staverton's fields, now view horses of every size, shape and colour cantering around on the land that used to be an active, productive and abundant food production environment.

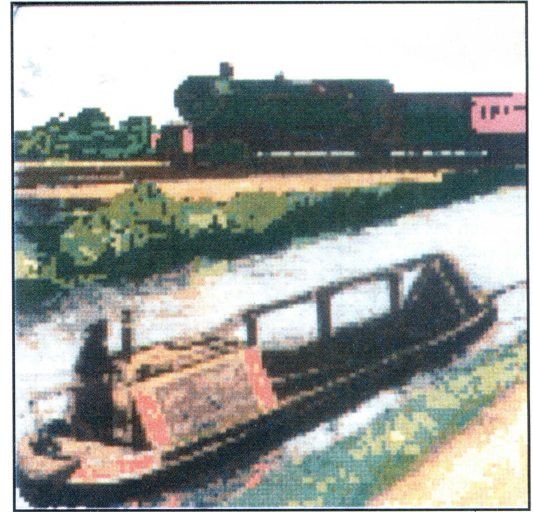
Design stitched by Lily Bristow

Square No. 17 – The Canal and Railway

In the first half of the 19th century Staverton Parish was bisected from north to south by the arrival of two of the new transportation systems that were being developed across the country, the canal and the railway. The first of these to come to the village was the Kennet and Avon Canal, built in 1801, with the section through Staverton linking Devizes with Bath and Bristol. This innovation in transportation soon became busy with horse drawn barges, laden with cargo, mainly coal, offloading their goods at the Staverton Wharf which had sprung up in the early 1800's to cater for the new canal traffic.

The canal became a hive of activity through the early decades of the 19th century and provided many local people with employment as well as creating profitable businesses for some Staverton families such as the Bird's who made their 'fortune' from the coal trade on the canal.

The arrival of the railway in 1848 immediately challenged the canal's monopoly in the cargo carrying business and the faster, more efficient rail service being provided quickly began to take trade away from the Kennet and Avon. The decline of the waterways business was so rapid that by 1852, the canal was taken over by the railways which effectively put it out of business and the canal was virtually redundant as a going concern by the end of the century.



Design stitched by Ruth Matthews

Square No. 18 – The Staverton Cloth Factory



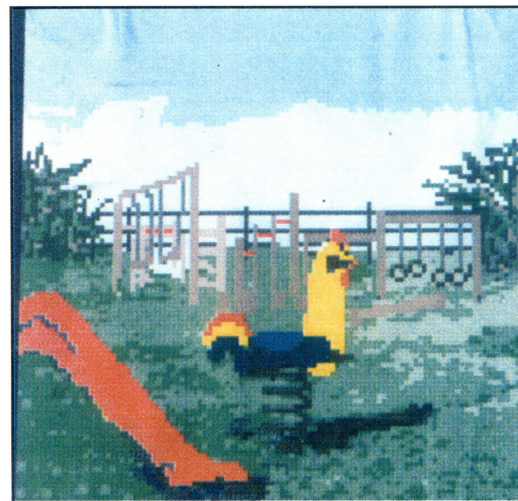
The centrepiece of Staverton's Tapestry is a reproduction of the magnificent six storey village Cloth Factory that was constructed in 1800 and, at the time, was the most modern cloth mill in the district. Erected by Bradford-on-Avon Clothier, John Jones, the original 'manufactory' tragically burnt down in 1824 but was immediately re—built in the slightly different style depicted in this 1870 painting. From it's start up in 1800, Jones began to install newly invented machines, to mechanise the old hand operated processes, and this led to the Shearmen's riots in the village in 1802. The troubles eventually died down and in 1824 the factory was at the height of it's prosperity and said to be creating employment for 1500 local clothworkers. By 1833 Staverton's cloth factory had become the largest in the area and one of the biggest in Britain and was now powered by a combination of waterwheels and steam engines. Tragedy struck again in 1842 when the failure of the Hobhouse Bank in Bradford-on-Avon forced Cooper Bros. into bankruptcy and the factory was closed and put up for sale. It was producing cloth again between 1864 and 1891 when the decline of the West of England cloth eventually led to it's final closure.

Square No. 19 – The Village Play Area

Design stitched by Helen Cosslett

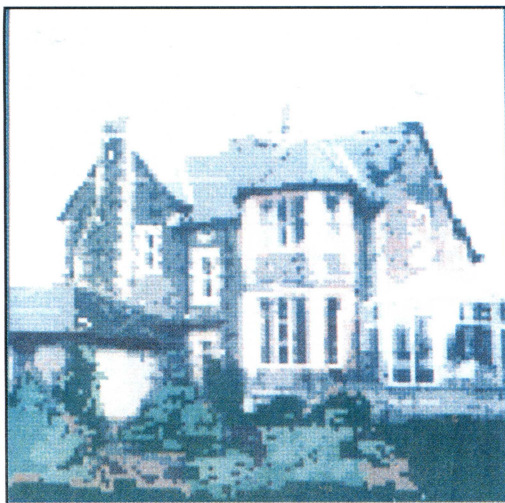
After the second world war a village committee was formed to look at ways of providing Staverton children with a play area and other leisure amenities. The Staverton Jubilee Committee was set up and a village collection raised money to purchase play equipment and install it on a piece of land behind the School leased from the County Council. Initial ideas for the play area included the construction of tennis courts but funds were only sufficient for the provision of swings, a slide and a roundabout which were installed in the mid 1950's. Village children now had a local play area to use and later, enough money was found to add a climbing frame to the other apparatus.

By 1968 the old roundabout was in a bad state of repair and had to be removed for safety reasons. In the 1980's the Parish Council took over the responsibility for maintaining the play area and in 1993 provided funds for a new slide. A fund raising initiative was started in 1997 to collect enough money to completely re-equip the village play area and thanks to a large donation from Cereal Partners, a grant from W.W.D.C. and resident's contributions, sufficient funds had been found by 1998 to purchase some modern play apparatus, including a springer and small slide for toddlers, safety surfacing and new fencing.



Square No. 20 — The Old Vicarage

Design stitched by Carole Stickney



For many centuries Staverton's Church came under the jurisdiction of the Vicars of St. James's in Trowbridge and Curates were sent out to the village to conduct services and look after the religious life of the community. In 1839 Staverton became a separate Parish in it's own right and, for the first time in it's long history, was entitled to it's own resident Vicars. A village Vicarage was needed to house the Staverton Incumbent and a fund raising appeal was launched in the late 1850's to collect enough money to build a 'Parsonage House' for future Vicars and their families. Many donations came in from local people, from many Clergy in the Diocese. £100 was obtained from Queen Annes Bounty and 5,000 bricks were donated by a local Brick Company. Staverton's new Vicarage, which had cost £1,150 to build, was completed and occupied in early 1861. the first resident being the Rev. Philip Maddock who, himself, had contributed a considerable sum of money to the appeal. The village was served by it's own resident Vicars up to 1971 when the last Incumbent, Rev. 'Frank' Maunder, died and the Staverton Parish was incorporated into the Hilperton, Whaddon & Hilperton Marsh Benefice. The empty Vicarage was eventually sold in 1984 and converted into a Care Home for the Elderly.

Design stitched by Claire Magill

Square No. 21 – The Old School Bell Tower

When the second village school was built in 1880 it incorporated a bell in a stone tower on it's roof and this was used to summon Staverton children to lessons and to ring out the start and finish of break times and the end of the school day. Contemporary accounts of the period refer to the Mistress pulling on the long, knotted bellrope at precisely five minutes to nine every morning and viciously scolding any child that did not respond immediately.

The village School in 1880 had bucket toilets in a primitive washhouse and drinking water was obtained with a battered enamel mug that was chained to an outside tap which invariably froze solid in the winter. 'Governess' Barnes, as she was known by village pupils, became the Headmistress in 1883, walked to the School every morning from her home in Trowbridge, and was always attired in an ankle length skirt and tight tweed bodice which had large buttons and fancy patterned braiding all over it.

When the old Victorian School was closed down in 1996 the bell tower was removed and re-erected on the forecourt of Staverton's new Primary School as a lasting tribute to a long standing village institution that had provided an education for local children for over a hundred years.



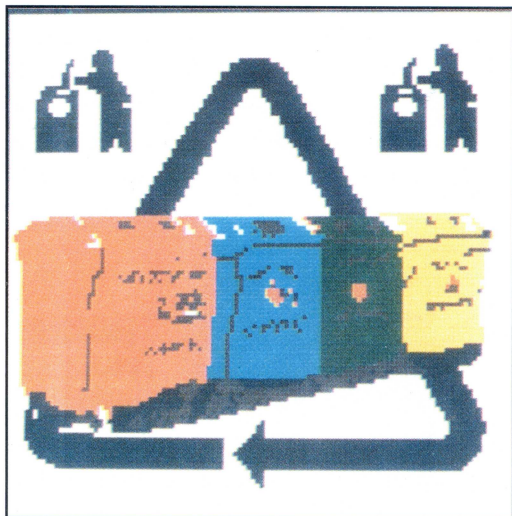
Design stitched by Bobby Magill

Square No. 22 – Staverton's Recycling Bank

The Staverton Recycling Station has become an important facility for the community and is currently one of the most successful village waste collection banks in the West Wilts area. Located inside the entrance to Staverton Club car park, the row of large wheelie bins can collect three types of coloured glass, tins, paper and plastic and are now being used regularly by villagers and people from neighbouring communities.

Village recycling was launched in 1990, initially using two scrap metal drums, acquired from the Nestlé Factory, and a magnet to separate the steel and aluminium cans that were being deposited. The scheme proved a big success and a few years later West Wilts Council provided the proper recycling containers that are in use today. Currently around 40 tonnes of recyclable material annually is deposited in the village bins out of a total of nearly 1,600 tonnes collected from all sites in the district.

Out of 91 sites in the West Wilts area, Staverton has one of the most successful regularly coming out near the top of the recycling 'league table' published by the Local Authority every quarter. As well as helping to conserve waste and protect the environment, re-cycling also generates extra income for Staverton.



Square No. 23 – The Marina Development

Design stitched by Mary White

In the mid 1980's plans were submitted to build a large new housing development and marina complex on the land between New Terrace, School Lane and the canal which was part of the Smallbrook estate. The plans, presented by Erostin were initially opposed by villagers and long, heated discussions took place between local planners, the Parish Council and the Developers until the application went to appeal and Erostin gained consent to go ahead with their plans.

The outline plan proposed that up to 600 new dwellings would be built and a Hotel and other community amenities would be provided to complement the waterside housing. Work on this expansion of the village commenced in 1989 with the construction of a new road bridge over the canal and the digging out of the marina ponds that would also house facilities for a boat hire operation. The first houses in Marina Drive, The Slipway and Swan Drive were occupied in the early 1990's and the first phase of the development was completed over the next couple of years. However, the promised Hotel complex did not materialise and the land allocated for it still lies vacant. Beazers took over the development in 1997 with new ideas for the hotel site and plans to construct a further 350 houses which they should commence in 2000.



Square No. 24 – Elmfield

Design stitched by Gwen Davis



Elmfield, built in 1906, is the Staverton home of the Bird family and it's size and style reflects their status as being one of the prominent village families since the 19th century. It's location, near the Staverton canal wharf, is also significant because it was the coal trade on the Kennet & Avon in the early 19th century that made the Bird's family 'fortune'. Records from that time show a John Bird as running a coal business from the wharf and this was passed on to future generations of the family who remained in the business right up to the 1950's.

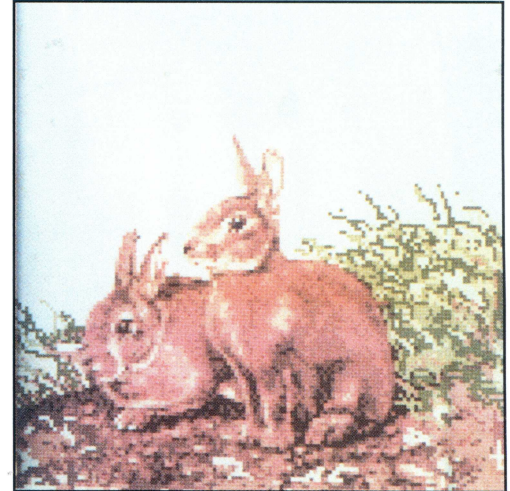
The coal, mainly from the Somerset coalfields, was transported to Staverton in huge horse drawn barges, was off loaded at the wharf and distributed to cloth mills around the area that had replaced water power with steam engines.

A.H. & S Bird ran a successful coal business from the Staverton wharf in the first half of the 20th century and owned a yard on the south side of the bridge where their coal horses, and later a fleet of lorries, were kept. Later generations of the family took up other business interests after World War II, running a milk delivery operation, the Marsh shop and garage and, for a while, the Old Bear public house which they had modernised and added a restaurant named 'Samuel's' in the late 1980's.

Design stitched by Brenda Payne

Square No. 25 – Staverton's Rabbits

A common sight in the fields and hedgerows around the village is the abundance of rabbits that now habitate Staverton's lush green country side. Rabbits were first introduced into Britain by the Normans after the conquest and were used as a valuable food source for the Manors and Castles that sprung up after William's invasion of 1066. Rabbit warrens were specially constructed mounds of earth placed in fields close to Manor Houses and were carefully 'farmed' and protected by the Lord and his household. Wyke Manor, that was sited near the present day Saxon Drive, is recorded as having a rabbit warren in 1535 although no traces of it remain today. Poaching was a very serious offence in the 12th to 14th centuries and any villager caught stealing one of the Lord's rabbits could face severe penalties, sometimes even death. The rabbit population exploded in the 1900's and the vast numbers that were occupying the land around the Parish began to reach epidemic proportions. Angry farmers began to take 'pest control' measures in the 1950's and the horrific disease of Mixomatosis was introduced into the countryside which wiped out millions of rabbits over the next few years. Fortunately, the local 'bunny' population slowly re-established itself and now the rabbit has become an accepted member of the local wildlife.



Design stitched by Joan Hunt

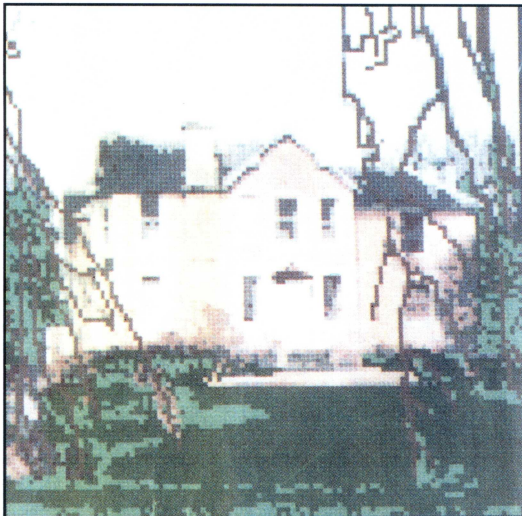
Square No. 26 – Smallbrook House

Smallbrook House, the largest dwelling in the village, was built around the turn of the century on lands formerly owned by Walter Long.

It was occupied by village Vet Thomas Bazeley, and his family, in the early 1900's and later became the Staverton home of the Blease family who lived in the elegant 22 roomed house right up to recent times. Throughout most of the 1900's the Smallbrook lands were farmed by the family and, in the late 1960's, an egg production business was operated from poultry houses constructed on land at the bottom of School lane. The Smallbrook lands were sold for development in the late 1980's and the remaining Blease family members eventually moved out of the house which was put up for sale with later plans to convert it into a small hotel.

The gardens and grounds around the house were also sold off for development and are now filled by the small chose of select dwellings that make up Smallbrook Gardens.

Phylis Blease, one of the leading figures in the community in the 1900's, lived in Smallbrook House up to 1968 after which she moved into Brookfield, a bungalow adjoining the big house. She died in 1996 and Brookfield is now the home of her daughter Julia.



Square No. 27 – The Staverton Canal Wharf

Design stitched by Helen Shepherd

On the north side of the road bridge over the canal ties the old Staverton Canal Wharf which was a hive of activity in the first half of the 19th century. Established in the early 1800's to service the newly opened waterway, the wharf became one of the busiest on the stretch and handled a whole range of goods including coal from the Somerset coalfields. A cluster of canal buildings and warehouses sprang up in the first decades of the 19th century and the profitable canal trade provided employment for many local people in it's peak years.

Bird's coal business operated from the wharf right into the 20th century and the building in the design, to the right of the bridge, became a feed store and stabling for the coal horses. When the coal business finished in the 1950's the building was used as a brush factory, run by Avon's, who operated there up to the 1970's.

Now a private dwelling, the house, known locally as Broombridge, looks out across the private moorings that have appeared in recent years as the canal has changed from a commercial waterway to an amenity for boating and leisure pursuits. A hire boat company, Wessex Narrowboats, set up operations here in the 1970's and now provide luxury craft for the holiday and tourist industries from the Marina.



Square No. 28 — Balloons and Planes

Design stitched by Jane Wickings



In recent years Staverton residents have become used to the frequent short disturbances of their tranquil environment by the roar of aircraft engines from Hercules planes that regularly fly over the village. These large military aircraft, based at Lyneham, use a flight path over Staverton for their journeys to and from the Army training areas on Salisbury Plain and for the many destinations world-wide where British forces maintain a presence. More and more in recent times these flights have been on humanitarian missions to troublespots and disaster areas in many parts of the world. It has always been the firm conviction of some locals that the Hercules use Nestlé's chimney as a landmark and turning point on their flight path and this has been confirmed by a Pilot from Lyneham who regularly overflies the village.

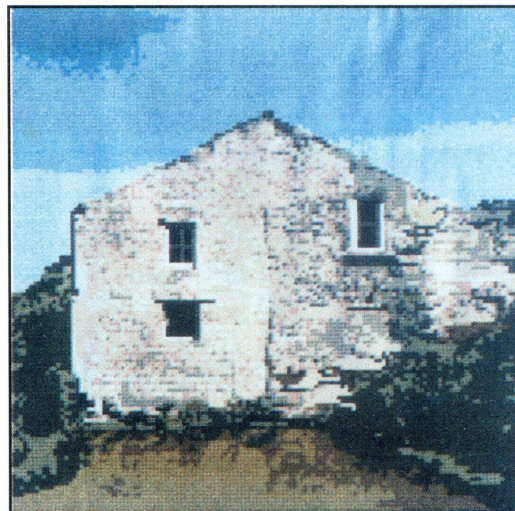
Not so noisy, but very visual. Hot Air Balloons from bases in the Bath and Bristol areas are a regular sight in the skies over the village, particularly on warm, sunny, summer evenings and the faint buzz and flare of their gas burners are the usual indications that they are overhead. Local people who have taken a trip in one of these balloons have thrilled at the magnificent view of the village below and the tranquillity of floating in the clear blue skies over Staverton.

Design stitched by Gwen Davis

Square No. 29 – Staverton's first School

Staverton's first School was founded in 1850 in a building adjacent to Wharf cottage and leased from the Kennet & Avon Canal Co. by Walter Newth who became one of its first School Managers. The building, now gone, was a converted canal warehouse and its outer wall followed the line of the present pavement which runs alongside the cottage and up to the canal footbridge. At first, the School had no permanent Teacher and was run by the village Vicar and a group of voluntary helpers. The first Headmistress, Emily Hooper, was appointed in 1857 when there were 50 pupils on the books and parents had to pay a small fee of several pence per week to send a child to school.

Schooling had not been made compulsory in those days and the numbers attending varied considerably depending on the weather and the seasons with very few turning up during the autumn harvest time. The facilities in the School in the early days were very primitive with lessons being conducted in a small single roomed building with pupils sitting on wooden benches and being taught by Monitors, usually the older ones, under the scrutiny of the Headmistress. By the 1870's the School had become totally inadequate and plans were made to provide a new Schoolhouse which was opened in 1880.



Design stitched by Janet Blake

Square No. 30 – Staverton's 60+ Club

Staverton's 60+ Club was formed in 1958 with 25 members and caters not only for senior residents from the village but also those from the Hilperton Marsh and Wyke Road areas. Growing from strength to strength over the last 42 years the club now has 65 members and meets every fortnight in St. Mary's Church Hall.

At their Thursday afternoon get-togethers members enjoy tea and biscuits, a raffle, competitions, Whist and, most of all, a good 'chin wag'. Meetings usually conclude with a game of Bingo and trips to the coast are arranged each year in the summer months.

Janet Blake, originally from Staverton Farm and now living in Hilperton, organises the Club's activities and ensures that her over 60's are provided with a comfortable, active and fun-filled afternoon during their fortnightly gatherings. Particular excursions in recent times have taken Club members to the Wye Valley and Weston-Super-Mare and some of them have been involved in the making of the Village Millennium Tapestry. The less abled members, some with mobility difficulties, are collected from their homes by volunteers, taken to meetings by car and then returned safely after an enjoyable afternoon's entertainment.



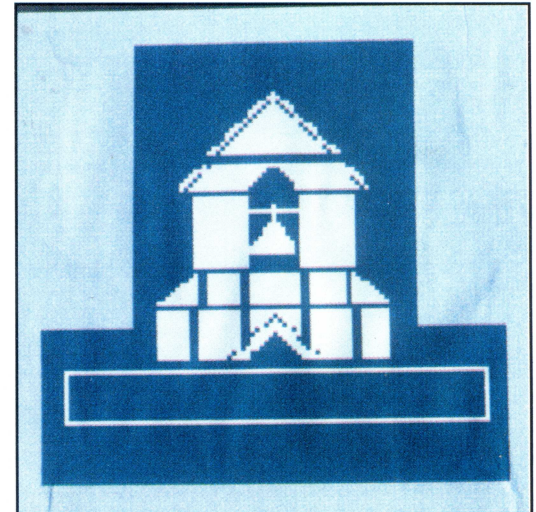
Square No. 31 – The School’s Bell Tower Logo

When the new village Primary School opened in 1996 it adopted the old school’s bell tower as it’s logo and this was a suitable recognition of the old school’s long history of providing an educational facility for past generations of Staverton children.

The blue and white logo now adorns the School’s letterheads, booklets, reports, news letters, uniforms and the large signboard near the main entrance to the premises. Although no longer used in schools, the school bell and it’s traditions can be traced back to the days of the first Church of England Schools and were a continuation of the historic church bells heritage that has roots way back to the original foundations of English Churches. Church bells, for many centuries, were used to summon villagers to Mass and also to warn of dramatic national events such as potential threats from foreign powers. They were also rung to announce good news and were recently peled across Britain to celebrate the new millennium.

Staverton’s old school bell tower, now a prominent feature in front of the new school, conceals a time capsule in it’s base which, when opened at some date in the future, will show later generations of village people what Staverton School was like at the end of the 20th century.

Design stitched by Gwen Davis

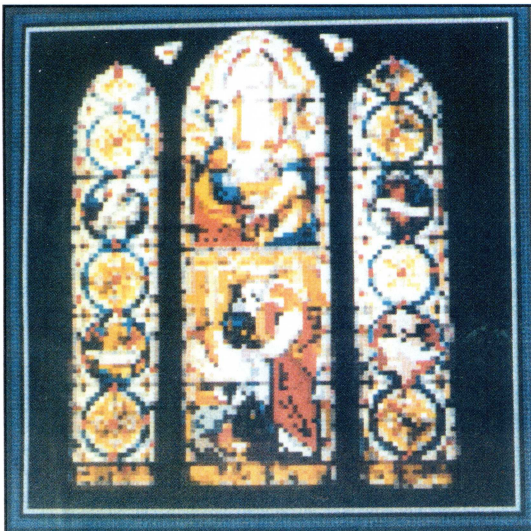


Square No. 32 – St. Paul’s Stained Glass East Window.

Design stitched by Teresa Russell

One of the most colourful features in St. Paul’s Church is it’s magnificent stained glass east window which was installed by the Hargreave’s family in 1890 in remembrance of their daughter Mary who died at a relatively young age.

The Hargreaves were owners of the Staverton Cloth Factory from 1870 to 1891 after which the business was put up for sale as a ‘going concern but it turned out to be the last successful cloth making operation on the mill site. The window depicts the four Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in roundals on the outside panes with an illustration of Our Lord raising Jairus’s daughter on the larger centre panel. Above this is a representation of the Ascension into Heaven and an inscription at the base of the window commemorates the death of Mary Elizabeth, eldest daughter of James and Elizabeth Hargreaves, who passed away on the 19th March 1887. aged 30. Prior to the installation of this window St. Paul’s had no stained glass of note other than a simple coloured window which is thought to have been replaced by the Hargreave’s window and relocated as the NE window of the Nave. It contains a basic pattern of crosses in it’s centre and a narrow border of wheat sheafs signifying the village’s historic farming heritage.



The Swans in this design represent the wealth of bird life that lives on and around Staverton's waterways. A whole variety of wildfowl frequent the stretches of river and canal that run through the Parish and many different species can be spotted by locals walking along the banks, towpaths, pond edges and marshland that line Staverton's canal and river and are found in the fields and meadows around the village.

The new Marina lagoons on the west side of the Kennet & Avon Canal have attracted families of swans and ducks to their waters since they were created in the late 1980's and residents who live near the waterside are often visited by these attractive water birds who wander into their gardens and onto their lawns in search of a tasty scrap or two thrown out of household kitchens.

The river Avon is an ideal habitat for swans, ducks, moorhens, coots, kingfishers, and the occasional heron, and every spring the many nests along its banks and reed beds are alive with the chirping, fluttering and splashing of the next generation of Staverton's water birds.

After many decades of pollution in local water courses, it is reassuring to see environmental controls over recent years have cleaned up these important nature areas and Staverton people can once again enjoy the wildlife around them.



By the 1970's Staverton's old Victorian School had become totally inadequate to meet modern educational requirements and cater for the growing number of pupils that had to be found places. Staff, Governors and Parish Councillors fought a long, hard campaign to get a new school for the village and in 1993 the Local Education Authority finally agreed to finance the provision of a new educational facility for Staverton.

The brand new Primary School, costing almost a million pounds, was opened in early 1996 and at last village children could be taught in a modern, spacious and comfortable environment, something that their predecessors never had the opportunity to experience. Built on the old school's sports field, Staverton's new eight classroom school, constructed to the latest designs, contains a large hall, kitchen, staff room, toilet blocks, offices and project rooms, is sited in landscaped grounds with car parking facilities, has large hard surface play areas and a small nature reserve in one corner. A new school sports ground was provided just across the road at the bottom of School Lane and the modern, state of the art, facility is designed to meet the educational needs of the community in the first decades of the new millennium. Currently the School has nearly 200 pupils enrolled with numbers steadily increasing.

Square No. 35 – Staverton's Flora and Fauna

Design stitched by Miriam Pinto

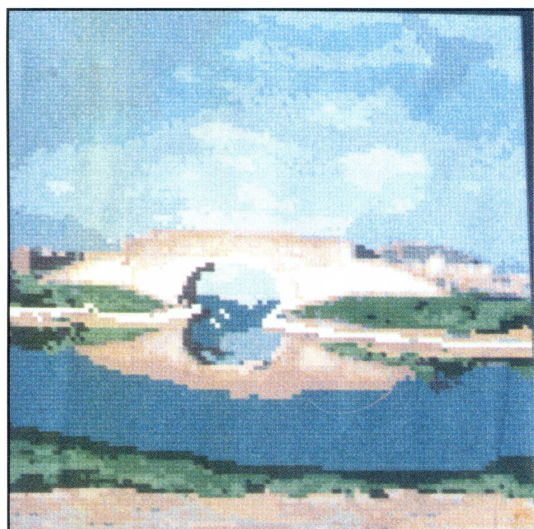
This colourful design represents the extensive variety of flora and fauna found around the village which is home to a wide range of wild flowers, birds, animals and trees. Very much a rural environment, Staverton enjoys the beauty and freedom of its open countryside and residents are fortunate indeed to be able to look across the acres of green pastures and woodlands that surround the village.

Quite often foxes, rabbits and badgers are seen in the fields and hedgerows, and village gardens buzz with the activities of dozens of species of birds particularly in the spring and summer months. Wild flowers blossom in the banks, margins and headlands of the meadows and clusters of gently nodding daffodils put on an attractive and colourful display to locals and passing motorists. Varieties of exquisitely patterned butterflies flit about on sunny days and the odd pheasant occasionally scurries across the road playing 'chicken' with approaching vehicles. Staverton people are extremely lucky to live in such a pleasant environment and we should all shoulder the responsibility of preserving and protecting it for the sake of our children, our grandchildren and the future generations that will inherit our lovely little village and its quality of life.



Square No. 36 – Parson's Bridge.

Design stitched by Betty Osborne



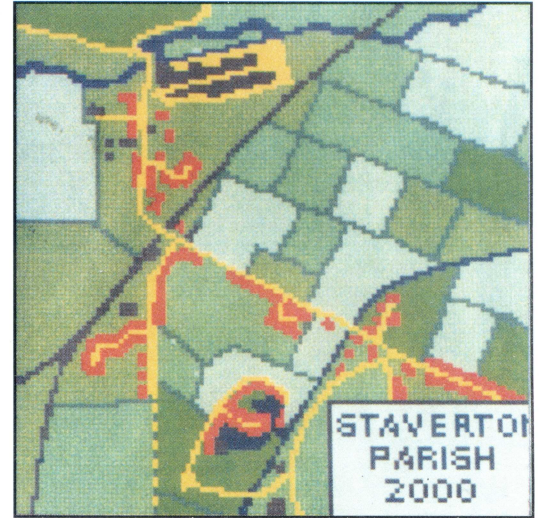
Parson's Bridge is one of the six accommodation bridges that were built to traverse the Kennet and Avon Canal when it came through Staverton in 1801. Originally sited where the new road bridge to the Marina Development now crosses the waterway, it was provided to link the Wyke Estate hands with the Smallbrook lands further along the village. Designed by canal architect John Rennie and built by Masonry Superintendent George Fletcher, this typically styled canal over-bridge was already in a bad state of repair by 1803 due to the poor quality of the stone used in its construction. Resident Engineer Dudley Clark was blamed for the poor workmanship, dismissed from his job, and the bridge reinstated to an acceptable standard but at a considerable extra cost to the Canal Company.

It was demolished stone by stone in 1989 and re-erected to form an attractive entrance into the large lagoons that front the waterside houses on the Marina Development. Staverton's narrowboats and pleasure craft pass under this bridge to enter the main stretch of the canal, the structure also carrying the towpath across the Marina entrance. Close examination of the bridge reveals the grooves along its arch sides worn into the stonework by the ropes used to haul the barges in the old horse towing days.

The tiny village of Staverton experienced very little growth in past centuries and remained a close knit cluster of dwellings around the Mill and the Church right up to the start of the 20th century. In the early to mid 1900's buildings began to appear in the School Lane and New Terrace areas but it is only in fairly recent times that the village has begun to expand southwards with the advent of several large housing developments and the provision of the new village Primary School.

The Civil Parish was reduced in size in the 1930's due to boundary changes and is now contained between the canal to the south and east and the river to the North and West. Towards it's southern border the first stages of the Marina Housing Development has more than doubled the number of dwellings in Staverton since the early 1990's and the addition of smaller housing estates such as School Lane Close and Smallbrook Gardens have more than trebled the village population in the last ten years.

The ultimate completion of the Marina Development, which should contain up to 650 new houses, will change the style and culture of the village and will close the gap between Staverton and Trowbridge making the community a suburb of the town and taking away it's unique identity for ever.



THE STAVERTON MILLENNIUM TAPESTRY

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The Tapestry designs were taken from photographs and illustrations of village features and converted into working patterns with colour guides.

It is made up of 36 foot square panels plus a larger two foot square centre panel, the overall size of the completed Tapestry being 10' X 4'.

Each foot square panel contains approx. 14,400 individual stitches with the centre panel made up of approx. 57, 600 individual stitches.

Totally, the Tapestry contains over 603,000 stitches and was produced by a team of about 40 volunteers from all sections of the community.

The cost of the materials and equipment to make the Tapestry, including the stretching and framing, was £1,500, the money being raised from donations by Nestlé, Cereal Partners and Staverton Parish Council.

The Tapestry wool used for the stitches was exclusively Anchor in over 180 different colours.

The project ran for just over 12 months from start to completion and the Tapestry was presented to Staverton Primary School where it will remain on permanent display in the School's entrance hall.

Acknowledgements

THE STAVERTON MILLENNIUM TAPESTRY PROJECT TEAM acknowledge with thanks the help and support given by the following in the production of the STAVERTON MILLENNIUM TAPESTRY.

Overall Project Co-ordinator

Pete Lavis

Tapestry Design & Tapestry Team Co-ordinator

Angie Hulin

Tapestry Team Co-ordinator & Technical back up

Gwen Davis

Technical support

Lynn Jones

The Tapestry Team

Betty Russell

Jacky Connell

Grace Stickley

Marian Matthews

Gillian Lucas

Marjorie Beard

Helen Cass

Angie Hulin

Lillian Heeks

Mary Gredington

Roger White

Lesley Warne

Jean White

Joan Mallows

Stephanie Morris

Brenda Wakeford

Lily Bristow

Helen Cosslett

Ruth Matthews

Carole Stickney

Claire Magill

Bobby Magill

Mary White

Gwen Davis

Brenda Payne

Joan Hunt

Helen Shepherd

Jane Wickings

Janet Blake

Teresa Russell

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Betty Osborne

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Simon Humphries of Nestlé UK Ltd. for help and advice with the computer work.

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Chris Webster of Staverton Parish Council for looking after the project finances.

Jem Marsh of Lailey's, Bradford-on-Avon, for stretching & framing the completed tapestry. Staff of Stonar School for information, help and advice.

The many residents of the Parish, Parents and Pupils of Staverton School who expressed their interest and gave encouragement. Keith Pass for computer work on the booklet.

Tapestry Booklet designed, written and Produced by Pete Lavis.

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June 2000