

## THE PEW CUSHIONS

in

St Anne's Church

Kew

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As a student of architecture in the 1930's I spent much time at Winchester, studying and measuring the great cathedral. I recall being most impressed by the embroidered seat cushions in the chancel which had recently been completed. Twenty-five years or so later, I was partner to Sir Edward Maufe, when his great work, Guildford Cathedral, was nearing completion. Lady Maufe was arranging the furnishings and I became involved with the embroiderer's Guild. I designed some 200 of the kneelers and made one or two myself. My wife, Kath, and family also made some of the embroidered alms bags and Kath had the tedious task of making up these bags and attaching them to their metal handles.

When this project was over we felt that we should do something for our own church. So we made a set of alms bags which, sadly, were hardly used since dishes were considered more suitable. In 1960 we designed and made a cushion to commemorate the life and work of Henry Ridley, the botanist who introduced rubber plants into Malaya and virtually founded the rubber industry. He lived for many years in Kew and died in 1956 at the age of 101. We made many mistakes with this cushion but learnt a lot as well. In 1961, with much encouragement from the Vicar and our friends, we initiated the bold scheme of making cushions for all the church pews.

The idea was that each cushion should illustrate some person, place or thing connected with the history of the village. As an experiment I made the first three cushions myself and they were made on one piece of canvas. This was a mistake and it was soon realised that for ease of handling it would be better to make each cushion separately and then sew them together in twos and threes as required. These first three cushions commemorated Joshua Kirby, Thomas Gainsborough and Jeremiah Meyer who seemed to me to represent the spirit of historic Kew. Kirby was architect for the enlargement of the church in 1770 and lived at 61 Kew Green, where we lived for 21 years; Meyer was a medallist who lived next door to Kirby and their friend Gainsborough was a frequent visitor to Kew. These three friends were buried side by side in Kew churchyard and it seemed fitting that they should be linked in these cushions. From my experience in making these cushions

I estimated that it would take twenty years to fill the church. In fact the task was completed in 17 years.

My wife and I had a party at our house to show off the first cushions and we soon enrolled a dozen or so ladies and formed an embroidery guild. The members met regularly at our house and also had instruction from my cousin, Mrs Rose Fielder, a brilliant professional embroideress who was on the staff of the Richmond Adult College.

In order to achieve an overall harmony of design and colour, we devised a standard pattern with a framework providing panels at top, bottom and sides for suitable inscriptions and a large centre panel for the main design. We also used standard colours of green, pale grey and reds. The basic stitches were cross-stitch, long legged cross-stitch and florentine with variations to suit individual tastes and abilities.

The work proceeded well and by 1969 I had designed and drawn 140 cushions and my wife had made them all up - a mammoth task. We both felt stale and decided to relinquish the task.

Fortunately one of the original members, Mrs Margery Charles, was able to take over as leader of the enterprise and her devotion and inspiration carried it through to the end. Mrs Ursula Holttum and Miss Ann Green joined the Guild and their designing abilities ensured the maintenance of the standards which had been set. Mrs Christine Wollen and Miss Dorothea Haigh were responsible for the lettering and drawing of the cushions. Mrs Margaret Daniels and her mother, Mrs Ethel Fiddes carried out the making up and upholstery until 1976 when Mrs Fiddes died and Mrs Daniels moved away. The work continued steadily with members providing their own designs.

The original idea of including only historical subjects was modified and a series of cushions with ecclesiastical designs was produced under the guidance of Mrs Margaret Sackville-Hamilton. A number of personal memorial cushions were also produced.

The Guild was throughout financially self-supporting, materials being paid for either by the embroiderers or from donations and the proceeds of coffee mornings, bring and buy sales and other social events. Mrs Rosemary Crommelin initiated a scheme for making 'mini-cushions' and a considerable sum was raised from their sale. In 1976 a celebration party was held at the home of Mr and Mrs Charles - a grand gathering of the embroiderers when my wife and I cut a cake designed to represent a Pew Cushion.

By 1979 the project was completed with a special cushion commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Kew Group Boy Scouts, designed

by me and made by Mrs Charles. The Pew Cushions have added greatly to the beauty of our lovely church. They provide an historical record of the village and have attracted much interest. We acknowledge with gratitude the devoted work of all those who took part and the generous support they received from the many friends of St Anne's.

#### BRIEF NOTES ON SOME OF THE HISTORICAL CUSHIONS

Cushions Nos 1, 2 and 3 commemorate three distinguished artists connected with Kew.

1. JOHN JOSHUA KIRBY was a friend of Reynolds and Hogarth and one of the founders of the Incorporated Society of Artists. He published books on perspective and was appointed Clerk of Works at Kew Palace and Teacher in Perspective to the royal household of George III. He moved to Kew in 1759 and until his death in 1774 lived at No 61 Kew Green. He was architect for the reconstruction of St Anne's Church in 1770 when the nave was extended and the north and south aisles were added at the expense of King George III.

The cushion depicts the implements used by an architect and classical columns arranged in perspective.

2. THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, the great master of the English school of painting, was also a great friend of Joshua Kirby. He often visited Kew, where he stayed with George Engleheart. Here, in 1792, he made sketches for the well known painting 'The Little Miss Haverfield' now in the Wallace collection. She was Elie, grand-daughter of John Haverfield, first Superintendent of Kew Gardens.

His cushion has a design of an artist's palette and brushes.

3. JEREMIAH MEYER was born in Wurtemberg in 1775 and came to England in 1749. He was an artist in enamel and a miniature painter. He was naturalized in 1772 and appointed enamel painter and miniaturist to the King and Queen. He then moved to Kew and lived, until his death in 1789, in the house next door to his friend Joshua Kirby, on the other side of what is now Ferry Lane but which was then called Meyer's Lane.

His cushion shows his profile portrait of King George III afterwards used for the coinage, and the magnifying glass of the miniaturist.

These three friends were all buried alongside one another at the South side of St Anne's Church.

4. SARAH TRIMMER was the daughter of Joshua Kirby and his wife Sarah. She was born at Ipswich in 1741 and moved to Kew with the family in 1759. In the 1760's Joshua Kirby designed St George's Church, Brentford, and the family became well acquainted with one of its benefactors, James Trimmer. In 1762 Sarah married the younger James Trimmer and moved to Brentford where they had twelve children. The stories she told them were the basis of her early writings and she became well known for her books for children, among them the famous 'Story of the Robin'. Sarah became interested in the needy poor and in educating their children. She established one of the first Sunday Schools and later instituted Charity Schools and Schools of Industry.

Her cushion has the spinning wheel of industry and, of course, the Robin.

5. FANNY BURNEY was born in 1752 at King's Lynn and gained fame early in life with a well received novel 'Evelina' published in 1778. In 1786 she became second keeper of the robes to Queen Charlotte and during her five years of royal service she kept a full diary, which was published in 1842 in five volumes, which sheds much light on the life in the court of King George III. In 1793 she married General D'Arbly and though she continued her writings, her books and plays met with little success.

Her cushion has her book 'Evelina' as its main motif.

The next cushions (Nos 6, 7 and 8) mark the connection of Astronomy with Kew in the early 18th Century.

6. DR JAMES BRADLEY (1693-1762) was a most celebrated astronomer who was elected F.R.S. in 1742. He was a conscientious and hard worker and among his many great discoveries were the 'aberration of light' and the 'theory of mutation'.

The cushion design shows a telescope of the period.

8. SAMUEL MOLYNEUX was a politician and amateur astronomer. He was made secretary to the Prince of Wales, later George II, and was a Privy Councillor and a M.P. for various short periods. In 1717 he married Lady Elizabeth Capel, great-niece of Lord Capel, from whom she inherited Kew House. In the pursuit of his hobby Molyneux made the acquaintance of James Bradley and with him experimented with a  $24\frac{1}{4}$ " telescope by Graham which they set up at Kew. Their work together led to Bradley discovering the aberration of light. Molyneux was appointed in 1727 one of the Lords of Admiralty and died in 1728 at the age of 38.

The design of the cushion includes one of the globes for which Molyneux was well known.

Three celebrated gardeners are featured on the next cushions (Nos 9-11)

JOHN HAVERFIELD was a west countryman who became known for his 'skill and taste in landscape gardening'. On the recommendation of Lord Bute he was appointed Superintendent of her gardens at Kew by Princess Augusta and retained that position until his death in 1784. He lived at No 24 Kew Green, known ever since as Haverfield house and shown on his cushion. He played an active part in the life of the village and the church and was Chapel Warden from 1764 to 1766.

He brought to Kew as his principal assistant

WILLIAM AITON who had been assistant to Philip Miller at the Botanic Gardens at Chelsea and he was appointed Manager of the Botanic Gardens at Kew. In 1783 he took over the running of the Pleasure Gardens as well and can be said to have founded the reputation which Kew has since enjoyed. In 1789 he published the 'Hortus Kewensis', a great catalogue in 3 volumes of all the species cultivated at Kew. (It is shown on his cushion). He died of a disease of the liver in 1793 and is buried in Kew Churchyard.

He was succeeded at Kew by his elder son

WILLIAM TOWNSEND AITON who had already attained distinction as a landscape gardener. He was highly thought of by the Royal Family and had arranged the gardens at the Pavilion of Brighton and carried out numerous alterations at Windsor. On the death of William IV he returned to look after the gardens at Kew until he retired in 1841. In 1810-1813 he published an enlarged edition of the 'Hortus Kewensis'. He was one of the founders of the Royal Horticultural Society and contributed a paper on the cultivation of cucumbers for which he received a silver medal in 1817.

His cushion features the 'Hortus Kewensis' and cucumbers.

Three more distinguished horticulturists come next:

SIR JOSEPH BANKS was a wealthy man with a passion for botany and his voyages in the Atlantic and Pacific with Capt. Cook have become legendary. On his return and on the death, in 1772, of Princess Augusta, he succeeded Lord Bute as unofficial Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew. He established there an enormous collection of plants to be maintained in the interest of science and economic development. He arranged for botanical collectors to travel to all parts of the world and it is estimated that 7000 new plants arrived at Kew during his directorate. The gardens grew to a pinnacle of success which declined rapidly after his death in 1820.

His cushion shows the Banksian Medal, one of the senior awards made by the Royal Horticultural Society

SIR WILLIAM JACKSON HOOKER from his early years devoted himself to travel and natural history. He made botanical trips to many parts of the world

and after his marriage in 1815 he settled in Suffolk and began to assemble his extensive herbarium. He was Professor of Botany at Glasgow and his services to science led to his appointment as Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, which in 1841, were taken over by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests. In this position his great administrative talents showed themselves and in his lifetime the garden of 11 acres was extended to 75 acres of botanic garden and 250 acres of arboretum and pleasure grounds. Many new houses were erected, including the Palm House and the Temperate House and it was in 1845 that the magnificent entrance gates and screen (shown on his cushion) were erected. Hooker's herbarium of a million specimens was, after his death, purchased for the nation and formed the nucleus of the present world renowned collection.

On his death in 1865 Sir William was succeeded by his second son

SIR JOSEPH DALTON HOOKER who shared his father's love of travel and botany and took part in many plant collecting expeditions to various parts of the world. He was a member of the Ross Antarctic Expedition from 1839 to 1843 in H.M.S. Erebus (shown on his cushion) and later spent several years in Sikkim and Assam. He was a tremendous plant collector and sent back species from Syria, Palestine, Morocco and North America. In 1855 he became assistant to his father and ten years later became Director. In his 20 years in the job he made many improvements to the Gardens. He was President of the Royal Society and published numerous books and papers.

The next series of cushions - Nos 20-28 - tell the story of the development of St Anne's Church.

In 1710 a group of the inhabitants of Kew, under the leadership of

CHRISTOPHER APPLEBY, JOHN LELY and SIR CHARLES EYRE petitioned the Queen, as Lady of the Manor, for consent for the building of a chapel at Kew. In 1712 the Queen gave her consent and granted a piece of waste land on Kew Green, 100ft square. The inhabitants raised by subscription the sum of £200 to which the Queen added £100 and as the cost of the chapel was £500, the balance was raised by a rate paid over four years. The chapel as erected and dedicated in 1714 is shown on the three cushions. It was a rectangular building, 64' x 27' containing only 21 pews.

When King George III and his family were living in Kew, the chapel proved to be far too small and, in 1770, it was greatly enlarged at the King's expense and to the designs of Joshua Kirby. The nave was extended and the north and south aisles added, the latter being separated from the nave and divided to provide accommodation for the school and for the sextoness. It is shown on cushion No 25.

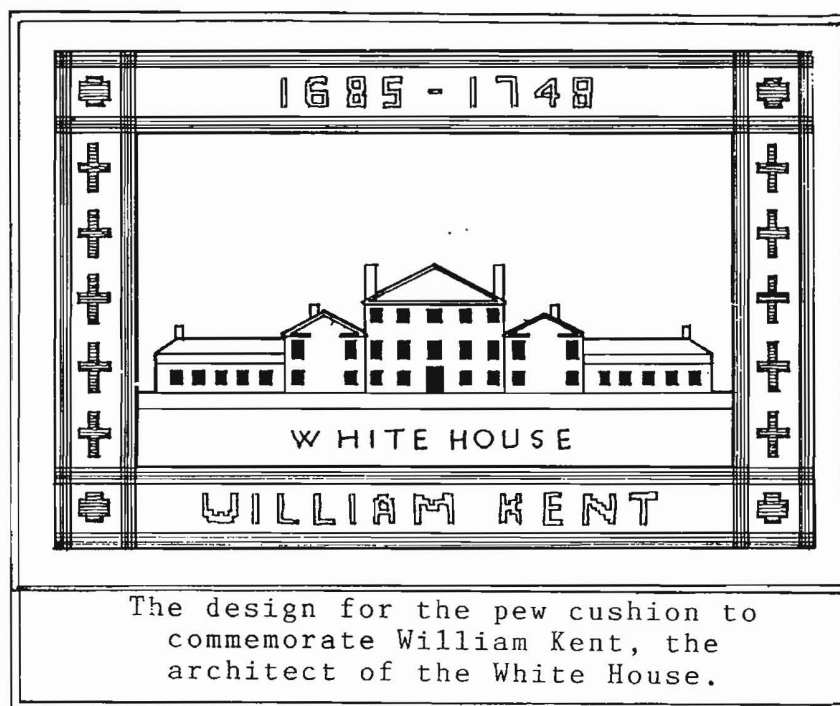
In 1805 George III further enriched the church by the addition of the Royal Gallery.

In 1836 the west end was remodelled at the expense of King William IV and to the design of Sir Jeffery Wyattville who added the portico and cupola

(shown thus on cushion No 26)

Wyatville was the son of James Wyatt and the principal official architect of the day. He carried out extensive works at Windsor Castle and built King William's Temple in Kew Gardens.

The final alterations to the church were in 1884, when the architect Henry Stock added the magnificent chancel, with its unusual dome, and the south porch (cushion No 28).



Next we have cushions which feature the three Royal Palaces which are part of Kew's history. The first of the three was originally known as Kew House and was acquired by Frederick Prince of Wales in ~~1788~~. He had it *about 1730* rebuilt in a severely classical style by the famous architect,

WILLIAM KENT as shown above in the illustration of cushion No 30. It was in this house that George III lived as a child and to which he returned when he became King. Here it was that he and his Queen Charlotte brought up their fifteen children and here he spent many periods of his life before he was put away to Windsor. From then the house fell into decay and it was demolished in 1802.



The second palace is the present Kew Palace also known as the Dutch House which is shown on cushion No 29. A house existed on this site in the sixteenth century and was at one time leased by the Earl of Leicester. It later came into the possession of the PORTMAN family, various members of which lived there in the early 17th century. They are commemorated by cushions Nos 34 to 39. In 1630 it was bought by

SAMUEL FORTREY, a London merchant of Flemish descent, who rebuilt it in the Dutch style as it now remains, with his initials S C F carved on the front. Early in the next century it was leased by the Crown and used to house visitors to the Palace and was the home of the children of Frederick Prince of Wales and of George III. ~~and After his death it was the residence of Queen Charlotte who died there in 1818.~~

The third palace was the fulfilment of George III's ambitious plan for a fine castle at Kew. In 1800 JAMES WYATT was commissioned to design this building and work began the next year. The stone castle was in a romantic gothic style and, though completed, it was never furnished or occupied. It became a laughing stock and a symbol of the King's madness and was demolished by George IV in 1827.

Then we have cushions which celebrate the three Kew Bridges. In 1747 the owner of the horse ferry at Kew,

ROBERT TUNSTALL, a merchant from Brentford, obtained consent by Act of Parliament for a bridge on the site and in 1759 it was opened. Being made mainly of timber it proved very costly to maintain and was a financial failure. It is shown on cushion No 40.

The second bridge is on cushion No 41. It was of stone and designed by

JAMES PAINE, who also designed Richmond Bridge, and was of seven arches and was very beautiful. It was opened to the public in 1787 and lasted until 1898 when it became too steep and narrow for the greatly increased amount of traffic. So a new bridge was built by the Middlesex and Surrey County Councils to the design of SIR JOHN BARRY. Cushion No. 42.

It was opened by King Edward VII in 1903 and is still in use.

The close connection with Kew of the Royal Family in the 18th and 19th century is demonstrated by a series of cushions Nos 60 to 83.

FREDERICK, PRINCE OF WALES, and his wife PRINCESS AUGUSTA lived at Kew House and with their friend and adviser THE EARL OF BUTE who lived at Cambridge Cottage, nearby, were responsible for the establishment of the Royal Gardens and the glory of Kew.



GEORGE III and his QUEEN CHARLOTTE lived much at Kew and they and their fifteen children are represented on cushions by their personal coats of arms. These made an interesting study in heraldry and in their design we were lucky to have the expert advice of Mr C.W. Scott-Giles.

Cushions Nos 187 and 188 take us back to the very beginnings of Kew. One of the earliest known houses in the area was called Kew Farm and to this was attached the original Chapel which was licensed by the Bishop of Winchester in 1522 as a private chapel for

THOMAS BYRKIS AND HIS WIFE ANN. They owned much property in Kew at that time.

It is hoped that these brief notes on some of the historical cushions may lead to a closer study of their very many local associations.

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