



ST LAWRENCE'S CHURCH EVESHAM WORCESTERSHIRE

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Church of St Lawrence is one of two churches founded in the 12th century by the Benedictine monks of Evesham Abbey as parish churches for the people of the growing town. St Lawrence's is first mentioned in 1195. It was rebuilt in the 15th century and little remains today of the earlier church except the crucifixion panel on the north external wall of the porch.

The fortunes of both parishes fluctuated but following the dissolution of the Abbey in 1540, All Saints' Church became the more favoured of the two. St Lawrence struggled to maintain itself as it had fewer and poorer parishioners. From 1659, the church did not have its own vicar but was served by the clergy of All Saint's. This was all part of a steady decline which saw the building decayed enough to be unusable in the winter of 1718.

A public appeal was launched in the early 1730s to raise money to repair St Lawrence's. A new vicar was installed in 1735 and repairs



began in 1737. Unfortunately, these repairs were very poor and the new roof collapsed in 1800. The new vicar had resigned in 1749 and had

never been replaced. With no services and now no church, the parishioners moved to All Saints' and abandoned St Lawrence's.

In the early 19th century the local squire, Edward Rudge, built his manor house in the parish of St Lawrence and decided to partially rebuild the church. He employed Harvey Eginton, an architect, and made major repairs in 1836-37. The church still retained its low-church tradition with a light and plain decor.

By the 1970s the congregation of St Lawrence's was again too small and in 1978 the two parishes were united and St Lawrence's became officially redundant. It was taken into the care of The Churches Conservation Trust in 1979.

Evesham Abbey

The Abbey of St Mary and St Egwin was founded in 709 by Egwin, the Bishop of Worcester. The bishop visited the site in 701 with three monks following reports that a swineherd had seen a vision of the Virgin Mary. He also saw the vision and vowed to found an abbey on the spot and be the first abbot. The name of the town is said to have come from that of the swineherd - Eoves(ham).

By the 11th century the Abbey was dedicated to St Mary and St Egwin. It was one of the leading Benedictine monasteries in the country and the fifth richest in England. The monks presided over the growth of the adjoining town of Evesham.

In 1540 Henry VIII dissolved the Abbey and sold it as a source of stone. Little remains today apart from the two churches built for the townsfolk to worship in, the cloister arch, and the almonry which now houses the Evesham Heritage Centre and Museum and the Great Tower.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

In the shadow of the former Evesham Abbey church, the two parish churches of All Saints' and St Lawrence share a churchyard and a Tudor bell tower (originally the bell-tower of the abbey). St Lawrence's has always followed a more low-church style of worship.

Chancel and Nave

Most of what you see was rebuilt in 1470. It follows a simple layout with the nave and chancel shadowed on both sides by the north and south aisles. There is no chancel arch and rather unusually both the aisles are the same width as the nave and chancel.

The chancel contains mid to late 19th-century features apart from the communion table. This Jacobean table was given to the church by Margaret Hay in 1610. It has an inscription all round it suggesting that originally it would have stood within the congregation as was common practice at that time.

'Margaret Hay, late of the parish of St Lawrence, deceased, here hath presented and given this communion table as her widow's mite, desiring all good Christians to imitate her godly devotion and love towards the church both in life and death 1610.'

The stone altar tablets behind the communion table are by Robert White and date to 1838. The clergy and choir stalls and the floor tiles were added in 1892. The carved wooden pulpit was designed by C Ford Whitcombe in 1906. It copies a 14th-century design and contains the figures of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Bishop Egwin and St Lawrence. The figures of St George and Clement Lichfield are missing.

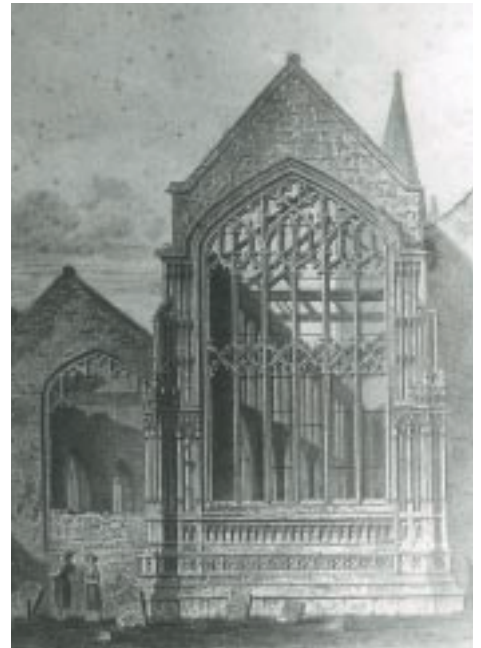
The east window is by Thomas Willement. He has signed it with his monogram and the date 1862. The upper image is of The Resurrection and the lower of the Last Supper. This is flanked on either side by the coat of arms of the Diocese of

Worcester, the grid-iron of St Lawrence, the arms of the Abbey of Evesham and of Squire Edward John Rudge, the donor.

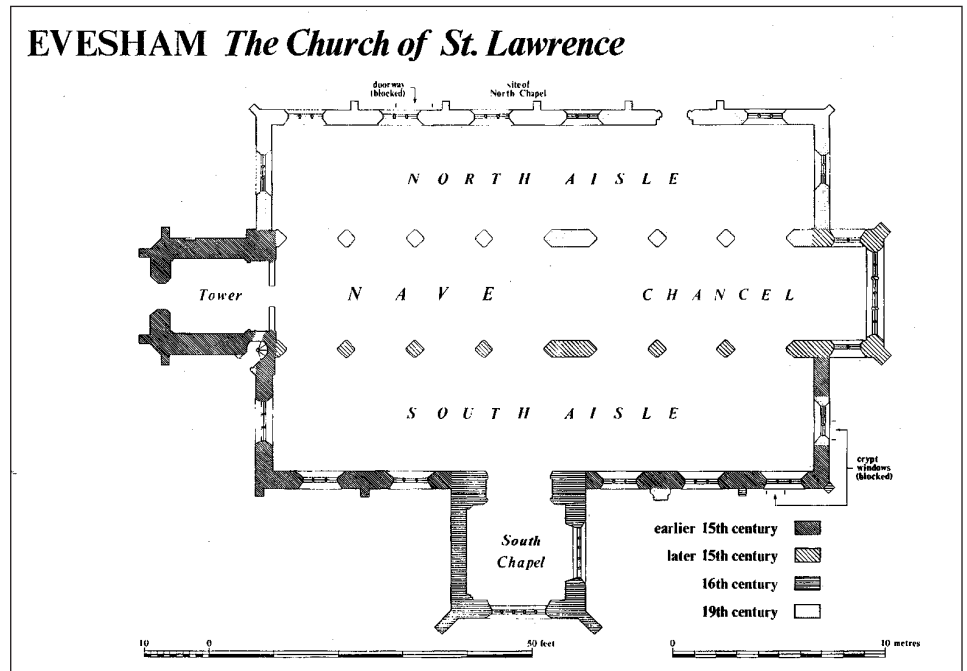
North Aisle

This extends the full length of the nave. It has three elegant stained glass windows designed by Geoffrey Webb (1937-42) celebrating the founding of the Abbey and the Battle of Evesham. The first shows the swineherd, Eoves, having the vision of the Virgin Mary. On the left is St Egwin with King Ethelred below. On the right are the Virgin and the swineherd with the monks below.

The second window shows St Egwin's legendary story. He chained his legs to a post and threw the key



East window of the church in about 1790 before its last restoration.

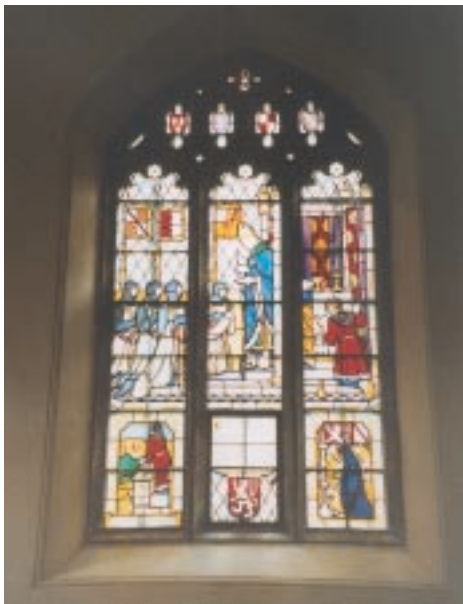


Timeline

709	Evesham Abbey is founded by Egwin, Bishop of Worcester
1195	First mention of church
1295	Church was dedicated by the Bishop of St Asaph
1470	Church was rebuilt in its current style
1524-32	Bell Tower is built by Abbot Clement Lichfield
1540	Dissolution of Evesham Abbey. Bell Tower is bought for the town.
1546	Sir Philip Hoby owns the former abbey lands and estate including the town of Evesham
1659	St Lawrence's had no vicar and was served by the vicar of All Saint's
1718	The building was unusable in the winter
1735	New vicar is installed but he resigned in 1749
1737	Church is reconstructed badly using poor materials and methods of construction
1800	Roof collapses making the church unusable. It is abandoned
1836-37	Church is restored by the architect Harvey Eginton. It reopens
1978	The two parishes unite and St Lawrence's becomes redundant
1979	The Churches Conservation Trust take over the care of the church.

into the river Avon. As a penance, he decided to walk to Rome. Fishing in the Tiber, he caught a fish and found the key to his chains in its mouth. You can easily see scenes from this legend in the window.

The third window celebrates the Battle of Evesham as Simon de Montfort and his knights are blessed at the Abbey on the morning of the battle, 4 August 1265. Simon was killed in the battle but his contribution to our political history is long lasting. It was through his efforts that representatives from towns were summoned to Parliament for the first time to sit alongside the knights.



Window in the north aisle depicting the blessing of the knights before the Battle of Evesham.

In the north wall you can see a sculpture of a lion's head in the form of a Green Man found in 1931 in a local cottage. It is thought to be part of a monument to Abbot Thomas Norton who was abbot of the Abbey 1491-1513. It is inscribed 'dompn(us) T.N. abbas' referring to Abbot Norton.

The organ, moved here in 1874 and into its current position in 1892, was made in 1867.

North Chapel

This was demolished in 1737 when the north aisle was rebuilt. It was similar to the south chapel that still survives. It was endowed by Robert

Hunkes who died in 1523. It contained the altar to St Catherine and a chantry priest celebrated masses for Robert and his family until 1548.

South Aisle

Like the north aisle this also extends along the nave and chancel. It dates from the early 15th century. There was a crypt under the east end and its blocked windows are visible in the walls. It contained bones disturbed by the building or grave-digging of centuries, plus an altar. In 1836 Eginton destroyed the crypt's ceiling and stairs to make the floor of the south aisle level. A lower brick-barrel vault that remained became the Rudge family vault.

In the south wall you can see another sculpture thought to date to 1490. It shows the Abbey's coat of arms with the letters S(anctus), E(gwinus), T(homas) and N(orton). Like the lion's head it refers to Abbot Norton. The S is suspended from a fish-hook, the E is partly made up from a fish, and the T includes a dragon and a fish. It is thought these refer to St Egwin's legendary release from fetters by a key found inside a fish.

The ornate wooden vestry screen was designed in 1909.

South Chapel

This was added to the church in 1500-07 and is attributed to Abbot Clement Lichfield. St Clement's chantry was known to have existed in St Lawrence's by 1507 and the badge of the king's heir can be seen inside. Look for the Tudor portcullis and the ostrich feathers on the elaborate ceiling boss. As there was no heir that lived for more than a few weeks between 1509-1516 then the chapel must predate 1509. A low stone screen originally separated the chapel from the south aisle but it has disappeared.

The east window in this chapel depicts David, St Luke, The Good Shepherd, St John and Isaiah, all dressed in colourful robes. Luke is shown with his symbol of an ox and St John the Evangelist with an eagle. The south window shows ten miracles including the turning of water into wine, the woman healed by touching Christ's cloak, the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus calming the storm on the sea, the healing of the centurion's son, the raising of Lazarus and the man being lowered through the roof to be cured by Jesus. The lack of a window in the west wall is thought to indicate the location of a possible door that lead to the 'great and curious walk' which is said to have linked the church with the Abbey.



The church prior to its restoration in 1836-37.



The font.

The service of St Clement was abolished in 1548 but the chapel was occasionally used for burials as it remained fairly intact even though the rest of St Lawrence's decayed. It was a chantry chapel where prayers would have been said daily for the soul of its founder. After Eginton's restoration, it was used as a baptistery and a vestry. The font is a 19th-century copy of the original late-medieval one which can now be seen in the south aisle near the entrance (above).

Tower and spire

These date from the early 15th century. The access was originally from inside until an external door was added by Eginton in 1837. Eginton also added the stone screen and gallery which was used by organ and singers until 1892 when the organ was moved to the north aisle. The belfry (not open to visitors) originally had space for four bells but now only contains one dated 1813. Look outside on the north face near the ground for the 15th-century stone Crucifixion panel showing the St Mary and St John.

Bell Tower

This tower was built by Abbot Lichfield by 1534. It is richly

decorated on all sides but the south face is plain. The gateway led from the parish churches to the monks' graveyard within the Abbey precinct.

The tower was bought for the town in 1540 following the dissolution of the Abbey by Henry VIII. The original six bells have been increased to the current twelve which ring out across the town on a regular basis.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

A visit to St Lawrence's Church in Evesham is suitable for all ages and is particularly useful for work in history and religious studies, but also may deliver aspects of art, design and technology and literacy. A visit can be combined with work on the adjacent Abbey site or a local town study to include Evesham Heritage Centre.

Preparation

To ensure your visit is successful it is essential to prepare your pupils in advance. Consider their knowledge, understanding and skill development as part of your planning. The visit can be introduced by discussing what places of worship are and why they are seen as special by different faiths, with particular emphasis on the significance of churches to the Christian faith.

Pupils should also be familiar with the features and layout of a church as well as the role different parts of a church play in religious worship. Make a series of cards that list the features, for example aisle, nave, chancel, pulpit, font and pews. Make a matching set with their relevant definitions. Ask pupils to use their dictionaries to match each feature with its explanation. On site a good orientation activity could be to take the listed features and ask pupils to find them, mark them on a plan of the church and write a sentence describing each feature. Key Stage 1 pupils could be given photographs of the features and be asked to find them in the church. They could place a card with the

name of the feature next to it and their helper could write down any words the children give to describe what they have found.

Pupils will need to record what they see on site in various forms such as sketching, taking notes or using a digital camera. It is important to practise these skills beforehand and school buildings can be used to achieve this.

Religious Studies

Pupils can visit St Lawrence's to investigate the main features of a Christian church and their significance to understanding the ritual of Christian worship. Ideas about identifying the main features of the church can be found at the beginning of this section. When pupils have found the key features ask them to look carefully at their position within the building. Why features are placed where they are, for example that the altar is in the eastern end to be closer to God and the font is by the door to represent entry into the house of God. Ask them to record their location on a plan and note:

- any decoration
- the different materials
- if it is elevated higher
- the floor covering.

They could use a compass to understand the east-west orientation of the building. Using this information they can answer the question - Where is the most important area and why? They can then compare their findings with those of other faiths. What similarities and differences do they notice?

Throughout the church you will find examples of memorial stones. These could be used to discuss beliefs and attitudes about death:

- Why did people want to be buried inside the church?
- Why are some close to the altar?

■ Were the people wealthy and important or poor and unknown? How do you know this?

Pupils could record the name, age at time of death, cause of death and other family members from each memorial and consider:

■ Which are the earliest and the latest stones?

■ Did most people die at a good old age? If not, why not?

■ What were the most common causes of death?

History

Looking at interpretations of history is a key element of the history curriculum and pupils can use St Lawrence's Church to explore evidence and how it is presented. They could devise their own trail round the church for young children, create interpretation panels or write a radio documentary for a series on local radio - 'Unknown churches of Worcestershire'. Before making a visit, spend time looking at other examples of trails, panels or listen to radio documentaries. Discuss what elements go into making a good example. Think about the audience, appropriate language to use, how many and what type of illustrations to use (in the case of radio how to describe a feature), and how much text would be needed. Pupils should also understand about the history of the church.

During the visit to St Lawrence's pupils need to record all the necessary information they require, for example:

■ select key features that they feel are important to the story of the church

■ decide on suitable illustrations and take digital photographs if you plan to use ICT

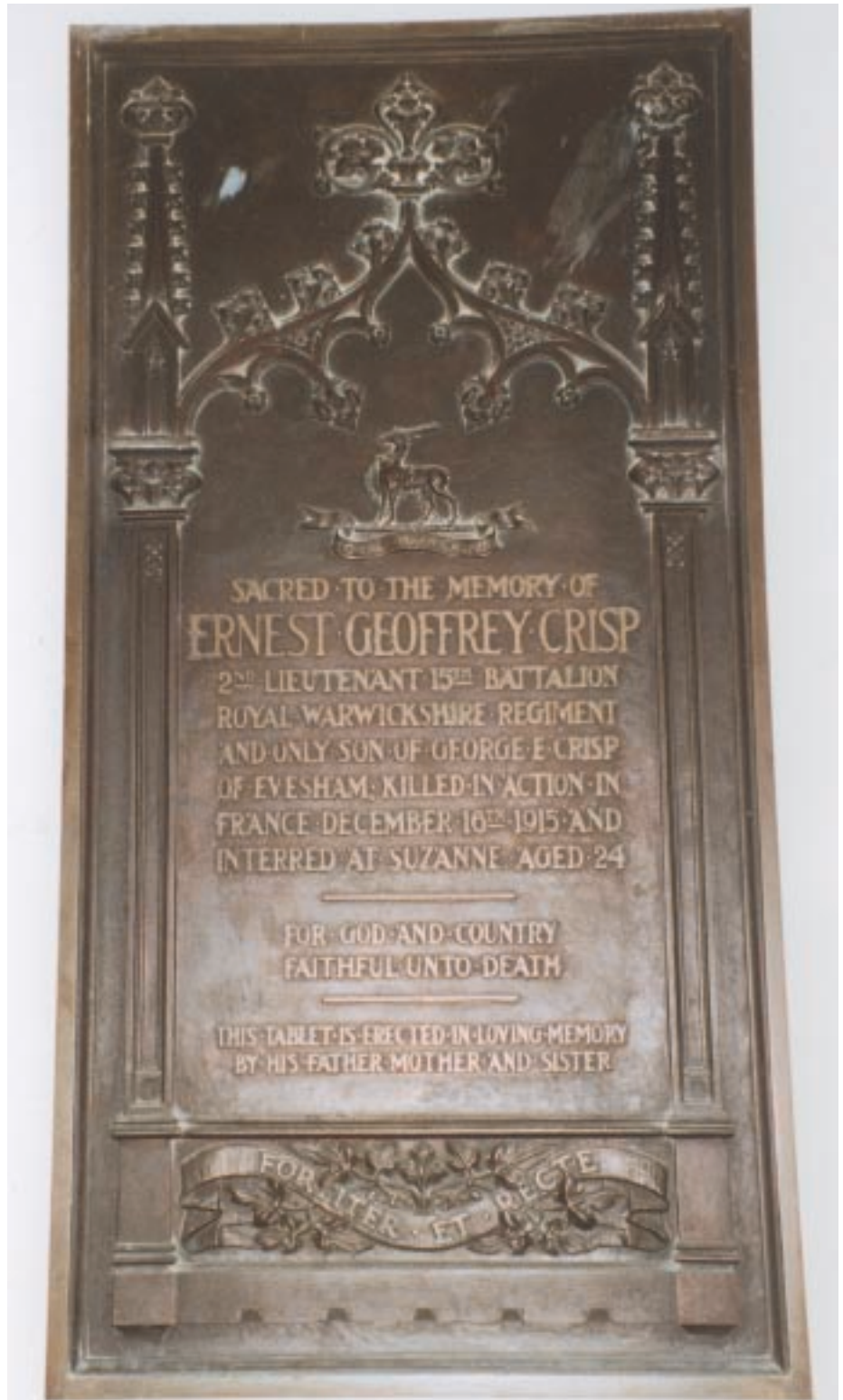
■ make notes and annotated sketches

■ use the plan of the church to write directions for the trail from one feature to another.

Back in school, pupils can work on their ideas and present their finished products to each other or at a school assembly.

St Lawrence's Church can form part of a local history study into the town of Evesham. Pupils could investigate how the town was affect-

ed by the dissolution of the monasteries. The market town of Evesham grew up and was controlled by the Abbey until 1540. It was an important gateway from London to the Welsh Marches. By using maps, old photographs (from the local archive library) and the buildings themselves, pupils can understand how Evesham developed and how important the wealth of the Abbey was to the town in medieval and Tudor



First World War memorial.

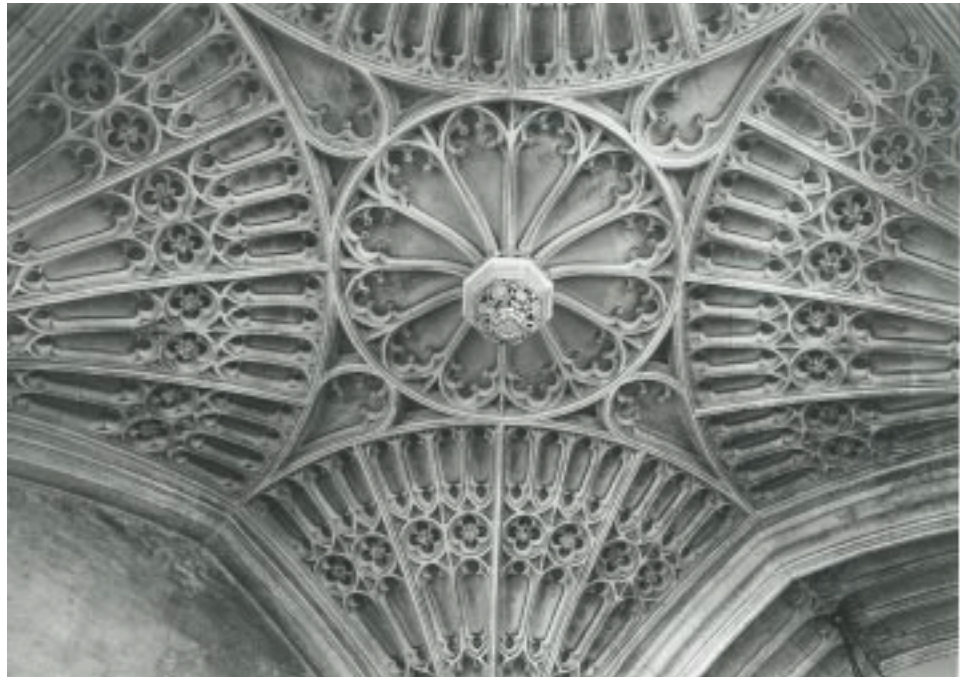
times. Include in your study the former Abbey site, (there are good interpretation panels on site to help your pupils understand what the Abbey looked like), St Lawrence's Church, Evesham Heritage Centre in the old Almonry, and various key buildings in the town, for example Abbot Reginald Foliot's gateway.

English

St Lawrence's Church is a quiet reflective place where pupils can be encouraged to develop their imaginative work through stories and poetry. The stained glass windows in St Lawrence's illustrate stories from the Bible as well as about the history of Evesham, for example the ten miracles of Christ and the Battle of Evesham. These could be used for story writing with an historical or religious theme.

Key Stage 1 pupils could produce a big storybook. They can collect their ideas in four main areas - the person, the place, what went on and the end. They can draw the character and the place adding some words to describe them. You could tell the relevant story whilst sitting near the window concerned. Ask pupils to record some words to remind them of their ideas and draw a picture of what happens at the end. Back in school, use the words to construct sentences and the drawings as illustrations and compile a large class storybook.

A useful framework to collect words for story writing with Key Stage 2 pupils is to use the headings 'I see', 'I feel' and 'I hear'. Ask pupils to sit in a part of the church and record four or five words under each heading. They can do it for today and then do it again for a hundred years ago when Squire Rudge and his family were present. You can help them by asking various prompting questions such as thinking about how it would feel sitting on the pew for an hour's sermon, how warm would it have been, were there any lights and was there music. You could extend the activity and ask pupils to be different people



Part of the decorated ceiling of the South Chapel.

from even longer ago, for example Margaret Hay or Bishop Clement Lichfield. Alternatively, you could use names from the various memorial stones found in the church. Back in school use the words to write a diary extract, create poetry about the atmosphere inside the church during a service a hundred years ago, devise labels for features within the church, or create drama tableaux of the stories.

Key Stage 3 pupils could use their visit to the church for factual writing. One possible theme would be to report on the interpretation available for visitors. What story are visitors being told? For their introduction pupils could give information about the church and how it is currently interpreted. They can evaluate each method considering their advantages and disadvantages, concluding with their own recommendations for future interpretation.

Art

A visit to St Lawrence's provides ample opportunities for pupils to develop their art sketchbooks to provide ideas that can be developed back in school. You could focus on shape and pattern asking pupils to sketch examples such as the ceiling in the South Chapel or the decoration on the pulpit. These patterns

could be developed into designs for wallpaper or a frieze for the classroom. Ask your pupils to design a range of greeting cards or wrapping paper for The Churches Conservation Trust to sell.

Ask your pupils to design their own stained glass window to celebrate the modern town of Evesham. First, pupils need to investigate what a stained glass window looks like by studying the examples within the church. Look at the religious themes and decorative elements, what colours are used, and how the window is constructed. Pupils should then select their window and make a detailed drawing. They could also take photographs to record the window's position within the church.

The Abbey's coat-of-arms can be found on a sculpture on the south wall of the south aisle. Pupils could study the design, looking for what symbols are used such as the bishop's mitre, dragon and fish. You could retell the story of St Egwin (see pages 2 and 3). Back at school pupils could then devise their own coat-of-arms for their school or for The Churches Conservation Trust. Each coat-of-arms could be combined into a class textile hanging or banners.

Design and technology

As a design and technology assignment, pupils could design and produce a tactile interpretation panel for visitors with impaired sight. The panel could include audio, 3D models made of suitable materials, a plan in relief, and materials to show the richness of materials available in the church. This could be a collaborative group work with different groups being assigned a certain part of the church to interpret, but overall each panel needs to follow an agreed class style. During their visit, pupils should decide on the features they want to include on their panel. They can use annotated sketches which record colour as well as texture. These can inform the final designs and prototypes for the tactile panels.



The East Window.

Redundant churches

Parish churches are such a familiar and beautiful part of our English scene that they seem to be as permanent as the landscape itself. Sadly this is not so. For a number of reasons, such as the mobility of the population in town and country and decline in church attendance, many of them cannot now be maintained for their original purpose. But every parish church is special. All over England people are raising huge sums of money to keep their churches standing and in good repair, because they value them so much.

When a church has to close for regular worship, the Church of England at its highest level becomes very concerned and a complicated legal process is set in motion to

decide on its future. A few have to be demolished, usually for very good reasons and as a last resort, but many are given new leases of life through alternative uses. The Churches Conservation Trust cares for over 300 outstanding churches which, because of their beauty and interest remain unaltered and still consecrated for all to visit and enjoy. The Trust makes them accessible to the public and, of course, to educational groups.

The issues that surround redundant churches can make interesting topics for discussion in the classroom or at the church itself. You might want to think about the following:

- the number of places of worship which have been closed in your area (nonconformist chapels, for example)
- the wide variety of reuse that chapels and churches have been put to (from tyre depots to art galleries, or adaptation for other religions)
- the large sums of money needed to restore or repair a church (nearly always an historic building) and where the money could, or should come from.

You could pose specific questions for your pupils and you could take it further by developing role-play, for example:

- You are one of a congregation of 12 (in a village of 100 people) and you love your old church. You have been told to raise £200,000 in two years to pay for repairs to keep it standing. What do you do?
- You have to decide whether to allow a redundant church to be adapted to another use or it will have to be demolished. What kind of reuse would you be happy with and what would you refuse to accept?

MAKING A VISIT

The church is open daily.
The Custodian is
Doug Littlewood
58 Willersey Road
Badsey
Evesham WR11 5HB
Tel: 01386 832081

The nearby Evesham Heritage Centre includes the church in its school tours. Contact Tony Whiting
Tel: 01386 446944.

Sometimes, however, a Churches Conservation Trust church may have to be closed for repairs or in an emergency. Schools are requested to ring in advance to check the church is open and to book their visit.

PRACTICALITIES

A preliminary visit is essential on safety grounds to enable you to complete your own risk assessment. As the churches are historic buildings, they may contain uneven flooring, narrow walkways and limited lighting. This is all part of the experience. (If you require further details of particular churches, please contact the custodian or the Education Officer at Head Office.)

This pre-visit will be useful educationally, even if you already know the site as a general visitor. Decide whether your visit will be an introduction, a culmination or the central part of the work. The last can provide an opportunity for you to build on interest developed during the visit when you are back in the classroom. A well-structured visit can make learning enjoyable and fulfil curriculum targets across a wide range of subjects but do try not to ask pupils to do work in the church that could be done at school.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Evesham Abbey and the Parish Churches: A Guide, Vale of Evesham Historical Society, Alan Sutton Publishing, 1980, ISBN 0-907353-01-0. This is the guidebook.

Charlesworth, M, *The Glass of St Lawrence's Church*, The Churches Conservation Trust, 2000. A leaflet about the stained glass.

Fewins, C, *Be a Church Detective: a Young Person's Guide to Old Churches*, The National Society and Church House Publishing, 1992, ISBN 0-7151-4790-0. An excellent introductory guide for pupils.

Friar, S, *A Companion to the English Parish Church*, Alan Sutton Publishing, 1996, ISBN 0-7509-1284-7. An excellent compendium with good drawings and photographs.

English Heritage Education publishes a number of resources on churches for teachers:

Morris, R & Corbishley, M, *Churches, Cathedrals and Chapels*, English Heritage, 1996, ISBN 1-85074-447-5. In their series of teacher's guides.

Videos from English Heritage Education, available for sale or on free loan for educational institutions:

Buildings and Beliefs, 1990, 20 minutes.

Cathedral Archaeology, 1996, 21 minutes.

Chapels - the buildings of nonconformity, 1989, 18 minutes.

God's Acre - nature conservation in the churchyard, 1993, 24 minutes.

How Parish Churches Evolved, 1997, 21 minutes.

In Memoriam - the archaeology of graveyards, 1990, 21 minutes.

The Master Builders - the construction of a great church, 1991, 23 minutes.

English Heritage is the national leader in heritage education. It aims to help teachers at all levels to use the resource of the historic environment. Each year it welcomes over half a million pupils, students and teachers on free educational visits to over 400 historic sites in its care. For further information contact:

English Heritage Education
Freepost 22 (WD214)
London W1E 7EZ
Tel. 020-7973 3442
Fax. 020-7973 3443
www.english-heritage.org.uk

The Churches Conservation Trust was established to look after parish churches which have been declared redundant. Currently there are over 300 churches in the Trust's care. It has an active programme of repair, maintenance and long-term conservation, as well as providing access, publications and encouraging occasional services. Events are held in many Trust churches. The Trust has joined with English Heritage to establish an education service, of which this booklet forms a part. For more information, contact the Education Officer, Virginia Johnston at:

The Churches Conservation Trust
1 West Smithfield
London EC1A 9EE
Tel. 020-7213 0679
Fax. 020-7213 0678
www.visitchurches.org.uk

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