

Where England Began

The first Kings in embroidery



Can you help us ensure Kingston's Saxon heritage story is enjoyed by future generations for many years to come?

We are proud to be celebrating the link between embroidery and religion, which has existed for hundreds of years.

We need to raise £75,000 over the next 12 months to create seven beautiful embroidered images as a visual record of Kingston's Saxon Heritage, to inspire our community and visitors from all over the world, now and in the future.

We invite donations, large or small, from individuals, community groups and businesses all of whom will be recognised for their contribution to this iconic project in the heart of Kingston Upon Thames.

The success of this important project depends on your support.

For more information or to discuss supporting the project please contact:

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All Saints Kingston

The Beginnings

Seven Saxon kings, including the first 'Kings of England' are traditionally thought to have been crowned at Kingston Upon Thames. Before All Saints Church was built, the site was an important estate of the West Saxon Kings and host to Royal coronations.

We want to tell this significant heritage story by creating seven spectacular and unique embroidery panels depicting the Kings with rich imagery based on events from their reign.

The embroideries will hang in All Saints, within seven empty niche-style spaces on the East wall. This area is a well-used community space and the embroidery panels will offer an invaluable and unique learning resource for visitors of all backgrounds and ages.

A competition was promoted to professional designers and University Departments of Art and Design in England. The panel of judges, including architects Ptolemy Dean were unanimous in selecting art student Sophia Pearson's design as the winner.

The panel designs were then further developed by award winning contemporary embroidery artist and designer Jacky Puzey.

The visual impact of the 'Seven Kings' on the East wall of the church will be impressive and to be enjoyed by many future generations.



Working sketch by Jacky Puzey

The Athelstan Panel

We have completed one embroidery panel featuring Athelstan, the first ruler who could truly be considered the King of England.

We now present the remaining six panel designs that we hope to make into reality with your help and support.



Details of the Athelstan embroidery panel in the making.
Photographs by Taz Kyprianou

Design and making process

The seven panels evoke a long tradition where, over the centuries, embroidery has been used to decorate luxury textiles whether as symbols of power or to tell a story or enforce a message. Such works could be found in the great houses of the nobility or wealthy merchants, royal palaces and of course, in churches.

The panels, created by embroidery artist and designer Jacky Puzey, will use digital technology to stitch the beautiful bespoke embroidered artworks. They will be made with synthetic thread on the advice of our conservation consultant, as it is longer lived and more insect resistant than silk. The panels will be further embellished with hand embroidery and beading by Beatrice Mayfield, contemporary hand embroiderer and visiting lecturer at the Royal School of Needlework.

Each panel will be presented with the highest conservation levels, ensuring a life expectancy of hundreds of years.



Visualisation of the seven embroideries by Jacky Puzey



Jacky Puzey in her studio by Jo Hounsomes photography



Beatrice Mayfield in her studio



Working design for embroidery panel by Jacky Puzey.

Panel 1: Edward the Elder Reign 899-924

Who was Edward the Elder?

As ruler of the West Saxons, or Wessex, Edward conquered areas that previously had been held by Danish invaders, paving the way for the complete unification of England during the reign of his son and successor, Athelstan.

Inspiration for the embroidery design

The key theme for this banner is Edward the Elder as a statesman and warrior, directing and ruling over the consolidation of territories that would become Athelstan's 'England', with the instrumental support and help of his sister Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians. Both Edward and Aethelflaed are shown standing over the networks of fortresses they built, swords down to rebuff a series of rebellions from Danish Vikings, Welsh kings and latterly Norse Vikings.

The imagery on the bottom of the banner was inspired by the rebellion and attempt to seize the Kingship at the start of Edward's reign by Aethelwold, a nephew of Alfred the Great and rival Aethling (Prince/King in waiting) with his Viking allies.

Donations sought for this panel



Embroidery panel by Jacky Puzey.
Photographs by Taz Kyriaranou.

Panel 2: Athelstan Reign 924-940

The first completed embroidery panel shows Athelstan.

Who was Athelstan?

Athelstan was the first ruler who could truly be considered the King of England. After being crowned in Kingston in 925 AD Athelstan defeated the Scots and Vikings, unifying regional kingdoms into one nation.

Inspiration for the embroidery

Athelstan was crowned in Kingston in 925 AD and his crown is heavily beaded, and ornate by Saxon standards, reflecting the fact that Athelstan was the first monarch to be actually crowned at a formal coronation (previous rulers used Military helmets during a coronation).

He is shown above a map of Britain, reflecting his impact on the whole island.

The name Athelstan means sacred stone, and tributes are shown flowing towards a central gemstone. A Viking longship comes across the sea from Norway from King Harald, cattle come from the Welsh kings and sacred relics are given as gifts.

The relics and sword floating over the seas from Europe also refer to the fact that Athelstan was famed for his learning and piety, and was greatly given to buying relics and commissioning religious manuscripts to endow to England's monasteries, churches and other famous buildings.

Panel 3: Edmund Reign 939-946

Who was King Edmund?

Edmund was the son of Edward the Elder, and half-brother of Athelstan, from whom he inherited the kingdom. Edmund had to fight hard to retain the realm he inherited, and his reign was marked by almost constant warfare.

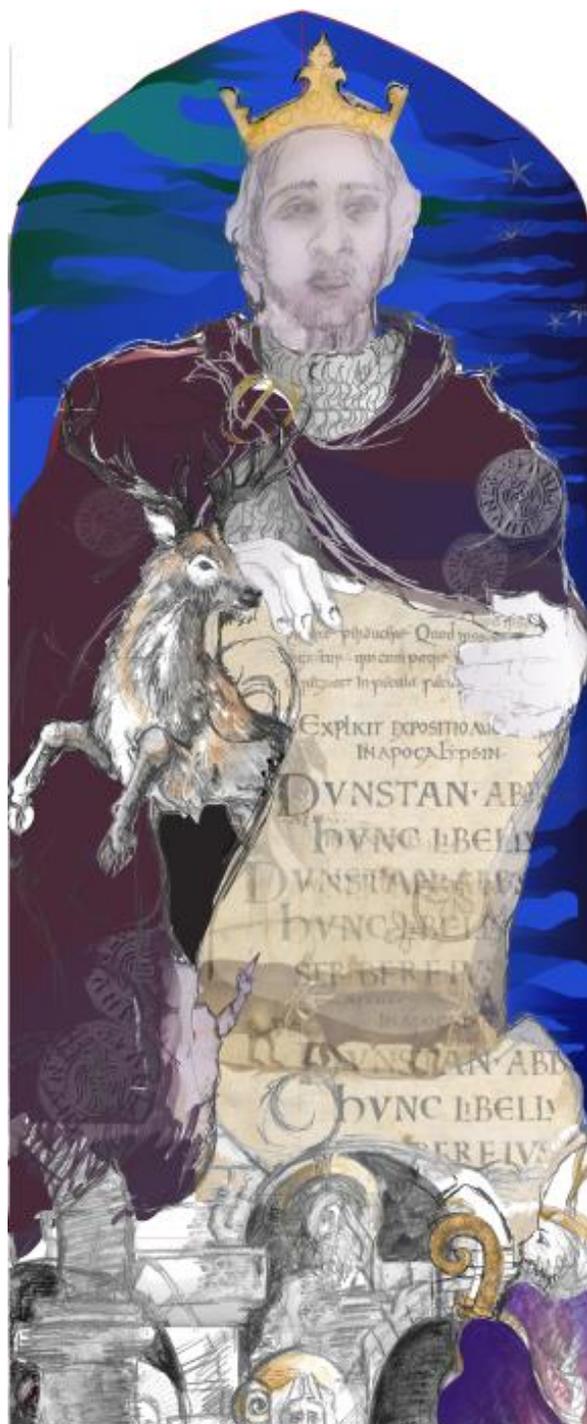
Inspiration for the embroidery design

The key theme for this banner is Edmund as a law maker. Motifs of old Saxon texts and images of the cattle refer to bringing feuding and cattle rustling under control.

The image does not depict weapons directly, yet his robes are embossed with coins referencing the historical capture of the Vikings Raven banner by the English in c.878AD, and Edmund's ongoing battles and negotiations to hold his kingdom.

The stag leaping from behind the scrolls evokes the legend of how Edmund came to grant Glastonbury to Dunstan. The story says that Edmund was miraculously saved from plunging over a cliff while out hunting stags and as he was able to pull up on the brink, he swore to give Glastonbury Abbey to Dunstan.

We are grateful to a private donor for the sponsorship of this panel.



Working design for embroidery panel by Jacky Puzey.



Working design for embroidery panel by Jacky Puzey.

Panel 4: Eadred Reign 946-955

Who was King Eadred?

During Eadred's reign, his key achievement was to bring the Kingdom of Northumbria under complete English control, defeating the Norse Viking Eric Bloodaxe in 954, who had a reputation as a violent Viking raider. He died at the age of 32.

Inspiration for the embroidery design

Eadred is shown amongst flames and smoke glaring down at the blazing ruins of Ripon Minster, with his sword running through the building. The razing of the Minster at Ripon was part of a campaign to punish the Northumbrians who had deserted him for Erik Bloodaxe temporarily.

His face is shadowy, gaunt and ill. Eadred had a digestive illness that eventually killed him; allegedly he could only suck on the juices of his food. He supported Dunstan, entrusting him as keeper of some of the royal treasures. Dunstan was said to help the King to endure his sickness and the image shows Dunstan galloping to see Eadred on his final sick bed.

Eadred's robes are also patterned with coins issued in his realm, referencing the fact that Eadred was the first King to leave money to his subjects, on his death, explicitly to buy them peace from Viking raids should they need it.

Donations sought for this panel.



Working design for embroidery panel by Jacky Puzey.

Panel 5: Eadwig Reign 955-959

Who was King Eadwig?

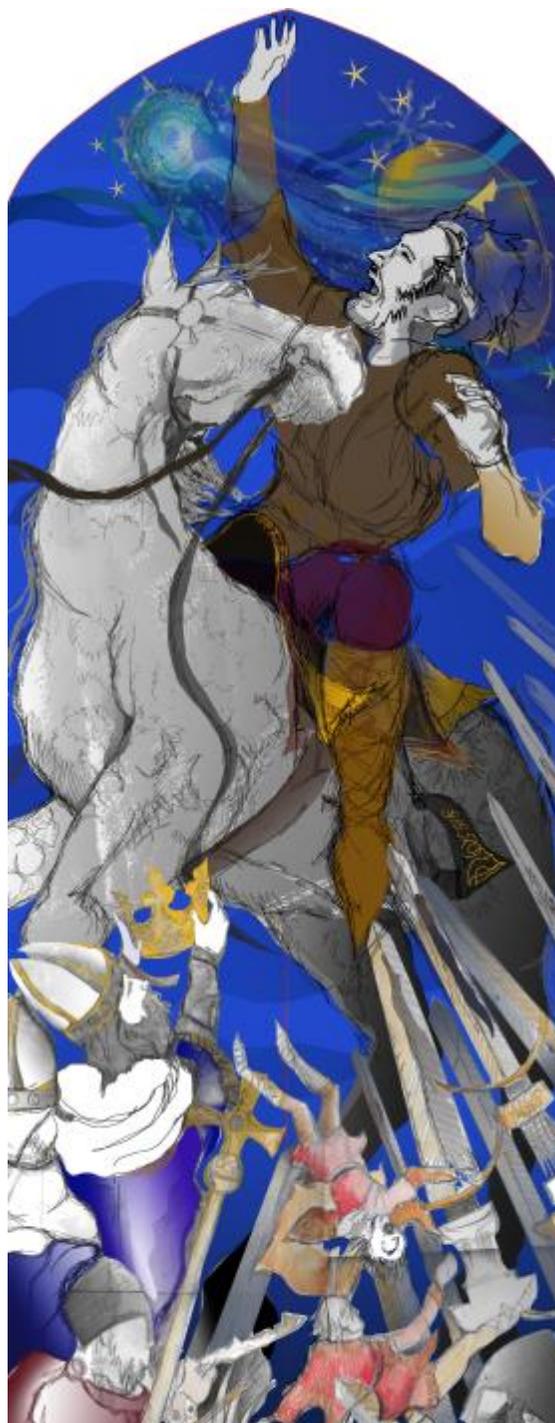
Eadwig (sometimes known as Edwy) reigned for four years. He was 15 when he became King and was said to be young, wilful and an inexperienced King, whose lands and kingdom were fragmenting around him as he tried to appease various factions.

Inspiration for the embroidery design

This panel depicts the argument over the Coronation feast table, with rivals either side with equal access to power. The Coronation feast story is the most known story from Eadwig's reign. The young King allegedly fled the feast table and offended protocol and all the nobles and religious statesmen present, to consort with his wife-to-be and possibly her mother. On the orders of Bishop Oda of Canterbury (who crowned the King), he was hauled back from the bedroom by the priest, Dunstan.

The crown dissolves into the embroidered background, showing the fragmentation of his rule and lands. The River Thames runs out from under the table, showing how the kingdom was divided in two. Eadwig was to rule all the lands south of the River Thames, while his younger brother, Edgar, would rule in the north, with the Thames forming the border between the brothers' kingdoms.

We are grateful to a private donor for the sponsorship of this panel.



Working design for embroidery panel by Jacky Puzey.

Panel 6: Edward the Martyr Reign 975-978

Who was Edward the Martyr?

Edward was just 13 years as heir to the throne, and of disputed legitimacy. He died too young to have made much impact as a King. The early part of Edward's reign was characterised by tensions in the network of statesmen built up under Edgar; particularly the aristocracy opposing the reforms concerning ecclesiastical lands and related issues of Church reforms.

Inspiration for the embroidery design

The dominating feature of this panel is Edward falling backwards off his twisting horse onto the swords below. His crown disintegrates into the halo, depicting his later martyrdom, and the reins of the horse are not in his control. This refers to his alleged murder, which could have been plotted by anti-monastic movement or have been on the orders of his stepmother who intended to put her own son (Ethelred the Unready) on the throne.

A large comet, signaling a bad omen, plunges through the sky behind him. Below the factions descend into civil war and in the background, skeletons represent the famine and subsequent civil unrest which were uncontrollable by the young King Edward.

Donations sought for this panel.



Working design for embroidery panel by Jacky Puzey.

Panel 7: Ethelred the Unready Reign 978-1016

Who was King Ethelred?

King Ethelred was known as 'Ethelred the Unready, yet this does not come from modern word "unready", but rather from the Old English *unræd* meaning "ill-advised". He was the King of England from 978 to 1016, with a period in exile in 1012-14 AD. He came to the throne at about the age of 12 and had one of the longest reigns of any early medieval English monarch.

Inspiration for the embroidery design

The panel shows Ethelred looking over a disintegrating kingdom as he makes ill-advised decisions. A large comet plunges past him, which was recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and carried weight at the time as a sign of doom. The King's robe swirls over a barren burning land, yet the ornate ivory cross signifies the great activity and development of Saxon arts, crafts and Christian culture at this time.

Vikings and warships pour in over the waves and you can see the traces of Viking war helmets or crowns to signify intent. The rough waves indicate the destruction wrought by the regular Viking raids and the Viking mercenaries working for and against Ethelred. Coins swirl into the sea to signify the attempts to pay tribute (gafol) or enlist Viking mercenaries to protect the kingdom.

Donations sought for this panel.

Can you help us ensure Kingston's Saxon heritage story is enjoyed by future generations for many years to come?

We invite donations, large or small, to contribute to this iconic project.

King supporter

The cost of sponsoring a whole panel is £15,360 (which equates to £12,288 for those able to gift aid their donation).

For sponsorship of whole panels, we would be delighted to offer the following benefits:

- Print of the panel.
- Recognition of your support in the accompanying explanatory booklet
- Listing on the electronic church plaque

Crown supporter

For a donation of £925 we would be delighted to offer the following benefits:

- Recognition of your support in the accompanying explanatory booklet
- Listing on the electronic church plaque

Panel supporter

For a donation of £125 we would be delighted to offer the following benefits:

- Listing on the electronic church plaque, as an individual or group

For more information or to discuss supporting the project please contact:

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All donations of any size are welcomed!