

Sewing Studley's Past

Traffic in Studley's Priory Square was halted for 40 minutes last Friday (September 9th) for the erection of an inspiring work of public art on the roundabout. The event was watched by several of the village's volunteers who were delighted by the positive responses of passer's by, and the encouragement of motorists who sounded their horns in approval.

The central theme is Studley's needle-making past, represented by three triumphal silver needles around which runs a gold lattice tapestry richly emblazoned with significant symbols. This striking sculpture is the culmination of many years campaigning and endless paperwork led by Ward Member Hazel Wright, Chairman of Studley Improvement Partnership.

The commissioned artists Planet Art worked closely with Studley's schools, setting up a series of workshops for children to research noteworthy facts about the village, reflecting themes about its past, present and future. They also consulted with older members of the community, especially those who lived through the turbulent years of the needle industry.

Artist Julie Ward of Planet Art explained the symbols in the tapestry: "Nature was a big theme, seen on the tapestry in birds, flowers, trees. The River Arrow is represented with an arrow, the fish found there, and wildlife and flowers found at the water's edge. The elephant was the logo of Empire Needles and appeared on their packets, and the fish hook reminds us that these were also made here. The gold thread forming the name Studley links to its Anglo Saxon origins: "Stud" meaning horse, and "Ley" meaning open field. The horse also reflects the name and the beer mug and barley sheaf were inspired by the local publican trade. The final symbol is of the historically important Parish Church. The work has taken six months to design and construct."

Hazel Wright said: "It has taken over twenty years of persistence, repeatedly explaining verbally, or filling in forms to explain why Studley should have a gateway that complements our village. Studley Improvement Partnership, Studley in Bloom and many other people who have generously given their time and effort deserve to be thanked and it is hoped to do this formally in the near future"

Studley Improvement Partnership was formed in 2006 to supplement the work of local authorities in the maintenance of safety and upkeep in the village. Liaison with officers in both Warwickshire County Council and Stratford District Council has initiated regular village walk rounds to identify problem areas and agree actions for improvement. Its achievements so far include the replacement or removal of unnecessary or unsightly signage and street furniture, the production of a cookery book to support local shops, and the establishment of the Studley Heritage Trail, for which a leaflet and video are shortly to be published. They also direct the efforts of the Community Payback teams to help keep the village clean and tidy.