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This is the end of the famous Bayeux Tapestry: Alderney's Finale gets official seal of approval

"It is a little known fact that the Bayeux Tapestry is incomplete. The famous embroidery tracks in 560 scenes the events of the Norman conquest leading up to the Battle of Hastings, but runs out before this period of history reaches its conclusion: the coronation of William the Conqueror in London on Christmas Day in 1066"..

Widget Finn – Weekend Telegraph, 10 November 2012.

In fact, most experts now believe that a piece between 8-10 feet, depicting a scene of the coronation of William I, would have been included in the original work.

Now an embroidered panel produced in the Channel Island of Alderney has delivered the missing chapter with a plausible conclusion.

Created by Alderney residents Kate Russell, a librarian, and artist Pauline Black in February 2012, inspired by an earlier work by Jan Messent, Alderney's tapestry took one year to complete as it snowballed into one of the biggest ever community projects involving over 400 people who added their stitches to make history.



And they couldn't have wished for a better ending: on Friday 5 April 2013, when Alderney's tapestry panel was officially unveiled on the island by the curator of the Bayeux Tapestry Museum, Mme Sylvette Lemagnen, and the President of the Conseil de la Manche Jean François Le Grand, this unique masterpiece instantly received their seal of approval.



Mme Lemagnen described it ***“as good as the original”***, and confirmed that she would be happy to exhibit it in her museum, and M. Le Grand exclaimed ***“I feel proud and emotional to see Alderney’s tapestry unveiled - proud because it tells of our shared history”***.

Mme Lemagnen commented: ***“The colours are excellent and like the original. I like the attention which has been paid to detail: even the chain-mail worn by the soldiers is very much like the chain-mail in the first part of the original. And it’s good to see women in the tapestry – there are only three in the original.”***

She added: ***“I particularly like the fact that so many people took part, because the original was also embroidered by many hands. The ending is as we would have liked it to be and the reference to the Channel Islands is excellent .”***

Alderney’s panel measures just 3 metres in length and 50 cms in height (*compared to the original Bayeux Tapestry which extends to nearly 70 metres*) but Mme Lemagnen commented ***“It’s brilliant. The further I step back from the tapestry the more I can see”***.

Kate Russell said: ***“I was overwhelmed by Madame Lemagnen’s reaction to our work and her genuine enthusiasm. Her endorsement means everything to me and to all involved in this project”***.

Alderney’s tapestry finale may soon claim a place next to the famous original in the Bayeux Tapestry Museum, but meanwhile its pride of place is in the Alderney Library where it all started.



The Inspiration and Concept

Fascinated by the Bayeux Tapestry and even more fascinated by the missing scenes of the Bayeux Tapestry, Alderney librarian Kate Russell and local artist Pauline Black decided to create and deliver the final chapter of the incomplete Bayeux Tapestry. From the outset, Kate Russell was determined to create a Finale which would look as though it could have been the original ending, whilst also embracing its strong and historic Normandy connection.

Their final chapter features the coronation of William at Westminster Abbey and concludes with the construction of the White Tower using stone imported from Caen.

Community project turns into biggest stitch-up

Alderney's Finale project was masterminded by Kate Russell who originated the project, artist Pauline Black who produced the designs and Robin Whicker who provided the inscriptions, using the Latin current at that time and, assisted with expertise from Oxford-based Jane Bliss. Both Kate Russell and Pauline Black decided this should become a true community project .

Its purpose was to provide an unusual activity for Islanders and visitors to Alderney and an opportunity to bring new people into the Library, as well as providing a vehicle for acquainting people, especially the children of Alderney, with the events that led to the Channel Islands becoming English possessions. At the time, though, it may have seemed more that England became a Norman and, therefore, Channel Islands' possession.

On 1 Feb 2012, Kate and Pauline completed their first stitches. Since then over 400 people have added their stitches to Alderney's Bayeux Tapestry Finale - islanders and visitors alike - from all corners of the world. Men and women, boys and girls aged from 4 to 100, including several people with vision problems and one young lady who is totally blind, have turned Alderney's Bayeux Tapestry Finale into one of the biggest community projects of its kind. The most famous stitchers were Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall who visited the island on 20 July 2012.



On 28 February 2013, this unique and ambitious masterpiece was finally completed and on 5 April 2013 it was officially unveiled.

A Stitch in Time: 1066 history comes to a plausible conclusion in 2013

The Alderney Tapestry Finale shows four important historic scenes and is stitched on linen of the same weave with the same sort of wools in the same colours and follows the same style as the original tapestry. The history of the times is depicted in the central panel and with upper and lower borders which sometimes show mythical animals similar to those found in the Bayeux Tapestry and sometimes show other images which augment or comment on the images in the central panel.

Interesting Angle: The Channel Islands Connection

There are two Channel Island references, one of which is an anachronism that would definitely indicate that this could never have been part of the original work. This is the inclusion in the upper border of Scene Two depicting Wace, the author of the Roman de Rou, which tells the history of the Normans from the settlement of Normandy through to the reign of Henry II

Wace states that William sailed to England with 696 ships. Wace says, “but I have heard my father say—I remember it well, although I was but a lad—that there were seven hundred ships, less four, when they sailed from St. Valery”.

This might just have been possible, but Wace was writing in the 1160s, and the tapestry, it is believed, was created within 20 years of the Battle of Hastings. His inclusion in this work is because he was born in Jersey.



The second Channel Island reference is shown in the lower border near the end where the animals representing Guernsey (*donkey*), Jersey (*toad*) and Alderney (*puffin*) are shown being encircled by the English lion's tail to represent that this was how the Channel Islands became English possessions

Alderney's Tapestry sets the scene

Scene One: 14th October 1066



The Battle of Hastings has been fought between Harold II and William, Duke of Normandy, and William has been victorious. At the close of battle, he has set up this table and tent on the spot where Harold fell and dines with his half-brothers Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and Robert, Count of Mortain. The bodies of the slain lie scattered about where they have fallen. **'Rivers of blood'** flow down the hill. Anglo-Saxon women arrived on the following day to retrieve the bodies of their relatives. The **'beasts of the battle'** are shown in the lower border devouring the bodies of those not buried or claimed.

The caption reads **'Here Duke William dines'**.

Scene Two: Early December 1066



Romney, Dover, Canterbury and Winchester have submitted to William. London has resisted William, but now William has cut them off from re-supplies by destroying a swathe some 20 miles wide cutting off London. He has crossed the Thames at Wallingford and has reached Berkhamstead where the nobles submit to his rule. The English party includes Edwin, Earl of Northumbria, Morcar, Earl of Mercia, Ealdred, Archbishop of York, and Edgar the Aetheling, the only remaining member of the English royal house.

The Caption reads, **'Here the nobles of London surrender'**.

Scene Three: Christmas Day 1066 : Coronation



The coronation of William at Westminster Abbey. William is crowned by Ealdred, Archbishop of York, assisted by Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutances as translator. The acquiescence of the three estates of Anglo-Saxon society is shown: clergy, nobility and peasants. William could not speak English and shows concern, or possibly anger, when the shout of the English, who are asked if they will accept him as king, is misunderstood by the Normans as a call of rebellion. In the ensuing chaos, the congregation flees.

The Normans outside the Abbey devastate Southwark, shown in the lower border.

The caption reads: ***'Here they gave the crown of the kingdom to William', and 'And here the English acclaim the king'.***

Scene Four: Christmas Day 1066



By the time of his coronation, William had chosen the site to construct the White Tower using the famous white stone which he imports from Caen. It is through his numerous fortifications that he overcame English resistance to his rule. The Tower is shown in outline to indicate that its construction lies in the future.

The final caption, between the turrets of the Tower is in old English and reads:

'The end will be good, as God wills.'

This is the concluding line from the entry for 1066 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A ***'Hand of God'*** identical to the ***'Hand of God'*** above Westminster Abbey in the Bayeux Tapestry is

seen pointing to this enigmatic phrase, which can be interpreted differently by the English and Normans.

The final imaged in the lower border is of two women at their embroidery frame, which is in the shape of an Alpha and Omega, the biblical reference to God. ENDS



Photo: Kate Russell (left) and Pauline Black (right)

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Note to the Editor:

A wide selection of high resolution images, divided into different sets and scene-by-scene, can be viewed and downloaded from

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/alderneybayeuxtapestryfinale/>

For more information, including the current location of this tapestry, please visit

www.alderneybayeuxtapestry.com