

Stamford Bridge Tapestry Project

In March 2015, planning began for a community needlecraft project commemorating the Battle of Stamford Bridge. First stitches were worked in September 2015, and the core group of stitchers has steadily increased - there are now around 20 people working on it.

The Battle of Stamford Bridge (September 25, 1066) was a crucial turning point in British history, and we want more people to understand that. The Saxons defeated the Vikings so comprehensively that almost an entire generation of Viking warriors was wiped out. If the Saxon troops had not had to fight the Battle of Stamford Bridge, they would almost certainly have been victorious at the Battle of Hastings, less than a month later, and British history would have been very different.

Like the Bayeux Tapestry, our tapestry is actually an embroidery, stitched in Appletons crewel wool, on linen twill. We use only two stitches - outline stitch and Bayeux stitch - and nine colours, plus small amounts of red and purple for the two kings involved. It has been designed in the style of the Bayeux Tapestry by Chris Rock, Chairman of the Battle of Stamford Bridge Heritage Society, of which the tapestry project is a part. We are currently embroidering the central narrative sections, and will then go back to work the borders and text.

It will be 15m long when finished, which will probably be around 2018/2019. It is being stitched by a team of volunteers, under the direction of Shirley Smith, professional textile artist and York Minster broderer. The intention is for it to become a national heirloom for Britain, in the same way as the Bayeux Tapestry is for France.

Most of us were fairly inexperienced embroiderers when we began. Thanks to our mentor, Shirley, we are now producing work of a standard far higher than we ever expected. Several of us have joined the Embroiderers' Guild, and two of us are busy with our Stage 2 City and Guilds in Hand Embroidery!

Although most of us did not know each other when we began, the project has drawn us into a friendly, supportive group which enjoys meeting and creating together. We are determined to complete the tapestry to the highest standard possible, not only as a national treasure, but as a lasting memorial to our friend Tom Wyles, who sadly died in February 2016. Tom had the original idea for the project, and we are continuing with it as he would have wished.

It's a wonderfully vibrant piece of work which photographs well. We have been featured in Stitch magazine, Yorkshire Life, the Yorkshire Post Saturday magazine, The Dalesman, Down Your Way, the York Press, Northern Living magazine and YorkMix, as well as on Minster FM, BBC Radio Humberside and Look North. We have been approached by a publisher who wants us to write a book about the project. Articles about the project will also be appearing in Sheep Breeder and Medieval Warfare magazines

We make regular appearances at events all over the county. Details of upcoming appearances can be found on our website: www.stamfordbridgetapestry.org.uk

To contact the project, please email publicity@stamfordbridgetapestry.org.uk

Heather Cawte, Secretary