

Spring 2017

Sheep Breeder

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The premier magazine for the UK sheep industry



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Wool Producer

Spring 2017

Promoting the importance of Wool



Editor's Welcome



Welcome to the spring edition of *Wool Producer*. The days are now getting longer, temperatures are slowly rising and buds and flowers are now appearing. Many spring lambs will now be getting used to their surroundings.

In this edition, the first of 2017 you will see we have covered some major articles so far this year. From a chance meeting at the British Livestock Luncheon before Christmas, we met Clive Taylor, owner of Ellys Manor House in Great Ponton near Grantham. Although the house is not open to the public until Easter, we were invited along, so we could include it in this edition. The original house belonged to a Wool Merchant of the Tudor period and contains wall painting, showing the wealth of someone dealing in wool fleece at the time. The article also compliments the first part of an explanation of why the Bayeux Tapestry, is not a tapestry, continuing the theme of early interior design. We will be continuing the tapestry theme in the next issue, but in this edition give an insight of the laborious detailed procedure which is involved.

My wife and I were very privileged to get an interview with the two Yorkshire Vets in Thirsk. This was to give some background into the making of the successful Chanel 5 television series by Daisybeck Productions on the day to day running of Skeldale Veterinary Practice. Both Peter and Julian gave up their time to meet us. While on the theme of Thirsk, please make a note of the British Wool Show; see information regarding this further in this issue.

In the last two weeks, I was involved as one of the judges for the UK regional heats, in a Society of Dyers and Colourists global competition for Fashion and Textile students. Entries from university students from all over the world will eventually produce this year's global winner.

Recently we attended the second Wool Floor Show London, held at Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea FC; it was again sponsored and organised by Campaign for Wool and the British Wool Marketing Board. More about this in the next issue, however, at last year's 'cream event' virtually every stand showed any colour you wanted, providing it was a shade of cream or beige! This year showed that there was possibly a trend for colour to come back to our floors. Two exhibitors in particular, Alternative Flooring, showing designs based on Liberty Prints and Anta Furnishings of Scotland, with designs based slightly on the tartan theme, really were not frightened of utilising colourful designs. Personally, I cannot see any practicality or advantage for having pale neutral shades on floors.

Bill and Jean Skidmore

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Publisher: Howard Venters

Editor: Bill Skidmore

Co-Editor: Jean Skidmore

Consultant Editors:

Henry Lewis and Peter Reynolds

Editorial Assistant: Liz Venters

Designer: Chris Monk

*Ellys Manor House
and Church Tower,
Great Ponton,
Lincolnshire.*

Photo C M Taylor





Ellys Manor House

A 16th century wool merchant's home

We have mentioned in the past the 'wool churches' of the south east England, built by medieval wool merchants, but until recently have not heard of any merchant's houses. We have assumed that these have either been destroyed or altered to such an extent that they are no longer recognisable. However, a chance meeting, just before Christmas at the Celebration of British Livestock, directed us to a house which gives a good indication of the wealth accrued by the 14th to 16th century wool merchants.

In medieval England wool was big business. There was an enormous demand for it from the weavers in Flanders, and anyone who had land, from the peasants to the Lords of the Manor, raised sheep. The English did make cloth, but it was mainly for domestic use; very little was exported. It was the raw wool, reputed to be the best in the world at that time, which became the driving force of the English economy and the major source of income for the Crown. Even today the Lord High Chancellor sits on a large square bag of wool known as The Woolsack, a reminder that wool used to be the main source of England's income.

As the wool trade increased the great landowners, including Lords and Bishops, counted their wealth in the numbers of their sheep. Large tracts of land, especially in the north, were owned by monasteries. The wool produced was, of course, taxed by the King. Over time the large land owners developed

direct links with the manufacturers but the smaller producers still relied on local wool merchants. The single-masted 'cogs', developed by the merchants of the Hanseatic League to carry goods along the coasts of Northern Europe, filled the ports.

To understand the organisation of the wool trade we must go back to the reign of Edward I who first realised how much revenue he could make from the trade. Realising how valuable this revenue was Edward III went to war with France partly to protect the trade with Flanders. After Calais was taken in 1347, 26 traders were incorporated into the 'Company of the Staple of Calais' and in exchange for its cooperation in payment of taxes, the company was granted a total monopoly of wool exports from England. Flemish and Italian wool merchants were familiar figures in the wool markets of England, ready to buy the bales of wool which were then transported to English ports such as Boston, King's Lynn and London.

The upper classes were much influenced by the Renaissance in Southern Europe and imported Italian ideas and works of art. Henry VIII owned one of the original sets of the tapestries woven from the cartoons by Raphael and in the early 1600's Charles I acquired the cartoons themselves. The merchants and traders, however, were much more influenced by Northern ideas.

Contemporary pictures of Edward VI

The house is open for visitors between Easter and October 31st. Check website for more information. <http://www.ellysmanorhouse.com>



Trees and a border



The fox and the crane



The lion



Detail of the deer

Coronation Procession from the Tower of London to Westminster Abbey in 1527 show a good number of buildings built in the Flemish style along Cheapside, one of the main thoroughfares of London, where the merchants lived at that time. This type of architecture, with the crow-stepped gables, is common even today in the Low Countries and into the Baltic States frequented by the Hanseatic traders. The Great Fire destroyed all trace of them in London. However in rural Lincolnshire, just south of Grantham an almost perfect example still remains – Ellys Manor House, near Grantham, Lincolnshire.

The manor house, with some 14th century features, was enlarged in the early 1500's by Anthony Ellys, a member of the Ellys family, wool merchants of the Staple of Calais. The house is constructed with dense stone walls, deep mullioned windows with shallow Tudor arches typical of the period and, in typical Flemish style, the crow-stepped gable end. The house was fairly modest in size with four main rooms. There was a 21 ft high medieval 'Great Hall' and a parlour on the ground floor and a solar and bedroom above. The ground floor rooms would have been used for entertaining visitors and conducting business and possibly accommodated servants. The upper rooms, originally reached by an external staircase, were the private quarters. All the rooms had high ceilings with moulded oak girders and chamfered joists which still retain traces of original black, ochre and red

paint. Each room had a massive fireplace which dominated the room and would not have looked out of place in a castle.

The manor house has been altered several times. It was possibly reduced in size in the 17th century, altered again and extended c1826. By the early twentieth century it had become two cottages, which were reunited in 1921 and purchased by the Church Commissioners two years later for a rectory

The Great Hall has been divided to make a corridor and two smaller rooms and upstairs a corridor gives access to the solar which is now a bedroom, accessed from the 'new' 17th century turret stairwell. In spite of the alterations, including raising floors, the original structure remains more or less complete.

Ellys Manor House is now owned by Clive Taylor who hopes to be able to return the building to its original 16th century glory. The main emphasis of work at present is uncovering a series of 16th century wall painting on the upper floor but it hoped to also remove the partitions. It is amazing that the house has retained so much of the original structure but even more so that the wall paintings

have been preserved. They were first discovered in the 1930's when the Rector's son knocked away a little bit of plaster from the main bedroom wall. In the 1940's it



Pillar capital, Autun Cathedral



Part of the Coronation Procession of Edward VI

was reported that the walls were running in water and the rector's wife was told to just mop up the pools. Although looked at 'professionally', the cost of uncovering the paintings was prohibitive and the rector, with a little bit of training was told to try to uncover them himself!

The wall paintings are a little reminiscent of the French verdure style of tapestry and, though feint, show stylised foliage, flowers, fruit and leaves. The paintings, in red and yellow, are set in an architectural framework with what appears to be a parapet at the base and a series of columns separating stylised scenes with trees, animals, foliage and flowers topped by a frieze of elaborate scrolls. Each scene has a central group of three trees – possibly representing the Trinity, but other than this the scheme is purely secular. The scheme includes a peacock, deer, a lion and a very clear representation of one of Aesop's fables – that of the fox or wolf and the crane. This was a fairly common theme in architecture in mediaeval times as seen on the capital of pillar in Autun Cathedral and the Great Fountain by Pisano in Perugia. In this painting it is the fox who has a bone stuck in his throat. The story goes that the fox, in terrible pain, asked the other animals to help him, promising a reward. They were all too scared of the fox. Eventually the crane agreed to try to remove it by putting his long

beak down the fox's throat. Once the bone was removed the crane asked for his reward but the fox refused, saying "you have put your head in my mouth and taken it out safely, that should be reward enough". The fable is possibly a reminder that an ally may not always be willing to reward a friend for their assistance.

There are also traces of paintings in other areas of the upper floor which are still to be uncovered and even more may have been destroyed. The canopies of the fireplaces show evidence that they were plastered in the past and were probably also painted.

In another article we have mentioned that tapestries are more common than wall paintings in Northern Europe, however, there are other examples in England, at the Tower of London, at Hill

Hall in Essex and at North Mymms Park, Hertford. They are certainly not 'poor men's tapestries'. Ellys House was clearly built by a wealthy man. The size of the fireplaces suggests that the cold would not be a problem so the high quality of the paintings suggests confidence, stability and prosperity.

This prosperity is also shown by the fact that Antony Ellys also built or rebuilt a tall pinnacled tower on the adjacent 13th century church in 1519. At the top of this is a small bespectacled Gargoyle that is possible of Anthony Ellys himself who is known to have been partially blind if not completely blind.

Clive Taylor continues to work on the history of the house and its place in the Northern Renaissance and

There are also traces of paintings in other areas of the upper floor which are still to be uncovered and even more may have been destroyed



Replica of a 'Cog'



'Recognition', an Allegory of the Northern Renaissance. by Stewart Taylor

has recently commissioned a painting of an Allegory of the Northern Renaissance entitled 'Recognition', by internationally renowned artist Stewart Taylor, based near Hull. This shows the sheep of Lincolnshire, the Church and the house with a vignette of Clive and the wall paintings on one side of a broad river. On the other side several cog boats sail in to London: and another vignette shows President Obama being shown the Woolsack in the Houses of Parliament. In the faint background a cog sails into the misty

distance, spreading the influence of the Renaissance northwards. ■



Bespectacled Gargoyle gargoyle that is possibly of Anthony Ellys



Wolf and Crane fable on Perugia Fountain



Section of the Bayeux Tapestry
Scene 23 Harold taking an
oath to Duke William

To be or not to be?

...the Bayeux Tapestry that is

You may remember in the last edition of Wool Producer, there was a photograph of Publisher Howard Venters sewing or embroidering on a replica of the 'Bayeux Tapestry'. This was part of the celebrations commemorating the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. Why has it always been known as the Bayeux Tapestry?

Firstly, what do we know about this famous piece of work?

The so called Bayeux Tapestry is made of crewel worsted wool on a tabby woven, (plain weave), linen backing or base cloth, measuring 224.3 feet (68.38 metres) wide x 1.6 feet (0.5 metres) high. i.e. it is an embroidery. It shows fifty scenes, leading up to the Norman Conquest and culminating in the Battle of Hastings. There are nine panels which were sewn together at a later stage, when the panels were completed. The background is left plain, with the figures etc in coloured wool. The outlines were done in a stem stitch, filled in by couching stitches, (long floats tacked down in the same or a contrasting colour). The yarns would have been dyed with the natural dyes available at the time, (AD 1070), mostly earth colours of

terracotta, dull golds, olive and sage greens, plus dark blue or black. It is thought it is possibly incomplete with the last panel missing, due to the fact it does not show William being crowned? There have been some repairs done, because it has had a chequered history. In 1792, during the 1789 French Revolution it was commandeered to cover military wagons; it was rescued by a lawyer in Bayeux who kept it in his house for safe keeping. At first it was kept by Bayeux city administration but in 1803 it was taken to Paris and displayed in the Musée Napoléon (now the Louvre). Ironically, it was to be used as propaganda for Napoleons proposed invasion of Britain. When this was abandoned the embroidery was returned to Bayeux where it was displayed in the public library and later in a purpose build museum.

One of the first recorded mentions was in the inventory of the Bayeux Cathedral treasury, written in 1476. However, there are conflicting statements as to who commissioned it and who and where it was made?

It is probable that it was commissioned by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, half brother of William the Conqueror and made in Kent. Some say it shows elements of Anglo-Saxon,

By Bill Skidmore



Figure of Harold. Embroidered on fine linen backing

Conversion of the Proconsul – cartoon and tapestry



having traces of the language along with Latin in the inscriptions describing the people and scenes, and that it bears secret messages against the Normans. Other scholars state, (along with French legend), that it was a product of France, made in the court of Queen Matilda, wife of William the

Conqueror by her ladies-in-waiting. It has been referred to in France as 'La Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilda'. Hence the English description of the Bayeux Embroidery is possibly derived from this. There are several copies of the embroidery, scattered globally; in England there is a Victorian copy inspired by William Morris, now in a purpose built gallery in Reading Museum, where it can be seen in its entirety.

Another corruption of 'Tapestry' in actual fact is Needlepoint, described in French as 'Tapisserie d'aiguille', where a diagonal stitch, (most common), is used on a mesh construction.

The mesh can vary in size, so the wool count used, (thickness of wool) differs to fit the mesh. This is often seen on heavy cushions, upholstery and church hassocks, for kneeling on.

How does this differ from true tapestry?

True tapestry is weaving the pattern in the 'cloth' as it is being constructed on the loom, just like a Jacquard cloth. However, it is done entirely by hand, can be extremely laborious and many individual colours can be used, (sometimes changing colour every millimetre, depending on how many warp ends there are). The more warps (threads) per centimetre, the finer the detail. There are two types of loom, 'Haute Lisse', where the weaver uses a vertical frame, or 'Basse Lisse' where the tapestry is woven on a horizontal frame.

The patterning is weft faced, meaning only the weft can be seen on the surface, this can be mostly worsted wool yarn, but, in the past gold and silver and silk were also used. The warp ends tend to be cotton or linen with a high number of twists per inch/centimetre for strength. Some Aubusson carpets are made in the same way, on Haute Lisse looms and require immense strength due to tension and weight of the finished product.

In both Haute and Basse Lisse the warp is wound on to very sturdy beams, (rollers) and as the construction proceeds, the finished tapestry/carpet is wound on to the breast beam, or lower one in Haute Lisse. Only when finished and removed from the loom, can it be seen in its entirety.

Very often, the weavers work from the back, so that the ends of the numerous coloured yarns can be left on the surface as they work. The weaver is not looking at the technical face, the one which is seen eventually, so they tend to have a mirror so that they can see the 'right side' as they weave. Many tapestries contain figures, (human form), trees and buildings, so there tend to be many vertical lines in the iconography. To make the weaving easier the tapestry is woven on its side- turned through 90 degrees. So what is eventually seen as the top and bottom, whilst under construction on the loom, will be left and right.

Before any weaving takes place, the design and colouration has to be meticulously worked out. Very often, nowadays, yarn will be specifically dyed; this can be hundreds of different variations of hue. The iconography is drawn out, and then enlarged to the required size on paper; this is called a 'cartoon', the origin of what we know as a cartoon today. As these are working 'drawings' they are frequently not preserved.

The most well known set of cartoons are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, produced by Raffaello Santi, (Raphael) in the early 1500's for the Petro Pauline, or Acts of the Apostles series to go in the Sistine Chapel in St Peters in Rome. One reason for wall decorations in churches in Europe, (before the reformation in England), was many of the congregation could not read or write, so the images told the stories.

The original set of these tapestries were woven in Brussels, in the workshop of Pieter van Aelst. Weavers were used to doing their own designs and added alterations to the finished woven tapestries. They also 'signed' their work with their marks woven into the border. Perhaps they thought, in some cases, Raphael's designs were too simple and they wanted to show off their skills by adding more decoration e.g. gold and silver stars on Christ's robe. The cartoons also show colours and gradations that could not be reproduced in fibres at that time due to the limited number of dyes available.

The cartoons were a prestigious commission for Raphael and it was obvious he did not treat them as working drawings. Careful observation shows, that on one there is an inscription on a plinth and the text is the right way round, not reversed as it should be in a cartoon. The cartoons were bought in the early 1600's by Charles I so he could have copies made at the newly founded English

In Northern Europe, in chateaux and castles, tapestries were used for decoration on bare stone walls, but more importantly, for insulation against the cold.



Haute Lisse (vertical) loom

Tapestry works at Mortlake and they have been in the Royal collection ever since. The ownership of the cartoons was normally transferred to the weavers. It is remarkable and unusual to have both working drawings and the actual textiles which have survived 500 years.


One will realise there is a paradox in the next statement. The tapestries were to replace painted 'fake' ones on the walls of the Sistine Chapel, however, tapestries were most commonly used for decoration in Northern Europe, not the Mediterranean. Wall paintings e.g. frescoes were used to decorate walls in the south; the climatic conditions, warm dry atmosphere, were conducive for this. However, even in Rome, during the

*Sheep Breeder
Publisher,
Howard
Venters trying
his hand at
embroidery
recently*



So to finalise, the Bayeux (Tapestry) Embroidery is nothing like a tapestry, it is embroidery on a plain background.

Tapestry weaving
on a Basse Lisse
Loom

BRITISH WOOL SHOW 2017
Incorporating British Crafts and Textiles

Saturday 8th July 10am to 5pm
Sunday 9th July 10am to 4pm

THIRSK AUCTION MART
Blakey Lane, Thirsk, YO7 3AB

Once again the aim of the British Wool Show will be to support the Campaign for Wool in raising the profile of British Wool and the many products produced by the British Textile Industry, Cottage Industries and Craft Workers.

You will find wool, from fleece to finished items, exciting hand crafted treasures for you to discover as you explore the stands at our show, and equipment you will need to enjoy your chosen craft.


The 'Sheep Show Man' and his woolly friends will be performing their entertaining and educational show.

You can relax and have a snack or a meal in the café.

There is a large free car park just outside the building, or if you don't want to travel by car there will be a Shuttle Bus from Thirsk Station and Thirsk Market Square

Details of our exciting 2017 workshops will be on our website soon.

Tickets now on sale at early booking price


www.britishwool.net

winter months they can experience snow and a drop in the temperature.

In Northern Europe, in chateaux and castles, tapestries were used for decoration on bare stone walls, but more importantly, for insulation against the cold. So why put them in the Sistine Chapel, in Rome, apart from a barrier against the cold in winter. Perhaps they were regarded as the ultimate, prestigious means of imagery. They were also quite normal in Basilicas and at this time the Basilica of St Peter was under reconstruction. The Sistine Chapel, the private chapel of the Pontiff, was used for important occasions so it was an obvious choice.

The tapestries were up to 6x5 metres in size; again large hangings in castles etc covered large bare walls. Of the original sets, from the cartoons, four sets were woven:- for The Vatican , Mantua, Madrid and Henry VIII. This later set was sold and ended up in Berlin where it was destroyed during bombing in WWII. These sets follow very closely Raphael's designs, at least for the major elements. In the succeeding centuries many more sets were woven, usually from copies of the cartoons; in total there were something in the region of sixty sets. These were woven in a variety of places, France, (Gobelin), many in the Brussels area, at Beauvais and at London's Mortlake works. As the cartoons were copied, tapestries often woven by less skilled weavers and purchasers required different sizes later versions often differ quite widely from the originals though the derivation is still clear.

So to finalise, the Bayeux (Tapestry) Embroidery is nothing like a tapestry, it is embroidery on a plain background. True tapestry is much more complex to execute, frequently of a different scale and much heavier; many used silk, and precious metal threads as well as wool.

In the next edition of Wool Producer, we will examine how tapestry weaving has developed over the last five centuries to modern day, both in England, Scotland and France.

Bill Skidmore