

NOVA FORESTA
YTENE
1079



THE STORY OF
THE NEW FOREST

As portrayed through the New Forest Embroidery

BELINDA MONTAGU



THE NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION

The New Forest Association was founded in 1867 by local landowners to oppose the powers given to the Office of Woods by the Deer Removal Act.

The Act allowed for the fencing of many acres of the Commoners' grazing lands and broad leaved woodlands and replacing them with conifer plantations.

Persistent lobbying by the Association resulted in the passing of the 1877 New Forest Act which safeguarded the Commoners' grazing land and prevented further inclosure of common land.

The New Forest Association has been

the major conservation organisation directly concerned with the Forest for over 120 years. It exists to ensure that concern for the Forest has an independent and influential voice wherever it is needed.

The need for a strong Association today is greater than ever before because of the continually increasing pressures on the Forest.

The New Forest Association invites you to become a member to help to preserve an irreplaceable part of our National Heritage.



Introduction

Derry Seaton

Chairman New Forest Association

The New Forest was established sometime after the Norman Conquest between the years of 1066 and 1086. The traditional date is taken to be 1079.

The New Forest Association felt the occasion of the Forest's 9th centenary, in 1979, should be permanently recorded in some way. It was decided that a pictorial history of the Forest in the form of an embroidery would be a fitting commemoration.

Two people in particular helped the Association to achieve this. Patrick McNair Wilson, our Member of Parliament, who approached local industry to sponsor the project and Belinda Montagu, now our President, who designed and organised the project from start to finish. Her remarkable talents and those of her team of embroiderers produced a superb work of art.

To both of them and to the many who contributed in other ways the Association is immensely grateful.

The Embroidery was originally designed to hang in the Verderers' Hall, Queen's House, but because of the difficulties with public access the New Forest District Council kindly allowed it to be exhibited in their Council Chamber.

In 1988 the Embroidery was moved to the New Forest Museum in Lyndhurst to become the main feature of a permanent exhibition on all aspects of Forest life.

Based on the Embroidery, the Association subsequently produced a series of limited edition mugs (which are now collectors' items) as well as an explanatory handbook.

This, the second edition of the handbook, has been much revised and enlarged. It provides a colourful and informative guide to this unique pictorial history of the Forest.

THE NEW FOREST EMBROIDERY

Making the Embroidery

Belinda Montagu

Designer, New Forest Embroidery

The Embroidery was originally intended to be housed and displayed in the Verderers' Hall of the Queen's House at Lyndhurst and was designed in three panels to fit between the windows of the Hall. Overall it would be some 25ft. long by 2½ft. high.

The commission, which would take over two years to complete, was to depict the 900 years of the life of the Forest, combining the major historical events and the changing of the

seasons. It had to be bold enough to strike the viewer at a distance before drawing him into the detail. Above all it was intended to be fun.

In researching the project local historians found more than sufficient material to fill the panels and the Nature Conservancy Council supplied all the necessary details of flora and fauna.

Initially, small sketches together with a mock-up section were made to show to the sponsors. Experimenting with the fabrics and evolving the best techniques to work them shaped the final design of each of the elements of the Embroidery.



A full size background of the Embroidery was then drawn. On this, the various themes and motifs could be moved around along with the sample materials to be used.

Sixty or so enthusiastic volunteers were sent kits containing the necessary canvas and wools to work the birds, animals, tree trunks and heraldic devices. The individual figures were worked by myself to maintain continuity throughout the Embroidery.

The method used for assembling the Embroidery was a form of Appliqué, incorporating machine embroidery and hand stitching.

The background was the first area to be applied to the full size canvas, mainly made up of silks, taffetas and silk organzas. This was followed by the tree trunks, then the foliage overlapping the trunks, and finally the flora and fauna built up in the foreground using velvets, leather and felt.

Of all the materials used the most novel was in 'Brusher' Mills's beard – wool, straight from the sheep's back!

Footnote:

On moving to the New Forest Museum display purposes necessitated the third panel of the Embroidery being cut into two.

Belinda Montagu (pictured left) trained at the Byam Shaw School of Art and Central School of Art and Craft and has attained City and Guilds Parts I & II in Embroidery. She works as a freelance illustrator and designer and also teaches and lectures in embroidery. She is a member of the Embroiderers Guild and the Sarum Group of Embroiderers. Her book, 'Group Work in Embroidery' was published by B. T. Batsford in 1986.

THE NEW FOREST

Early History

For over 4,000 years following the end of the last Ice Age most of southern England was covered by woodland. This remained largely undisturbed until the Bronze Age brought the first significant settlements and systematic clearing of the woodlands for farming. Bronze Age man was the architect of today's Forest landscape, a mixture of open heath and woodland.

The Forest area was, however, only sparsely populated because of the generally poor quality of the soil. Little archaeological evidence of settlement has been found even from the period of the Roman occupation, apart from the establishment of a pottery industry.

From about 5th century A.D. the Jutes and Saxons settled the more fertile parts of the Forest. This gave rise to the earliest known name of the area: 'Ytene' meaning '(land) of the Jutes'.

'Nova Foresta'

In about 1079 William I (the Conqueror), established "Nova Foresta" or New Forest by 'afforesting' the area and claiming it as his Royal Hunting Preserve.

At that time the word 'forest' described any area of unenclosed land within which the wild animals were protected by means of the forest laws for the benefit of the King. Of the complex system of courts that administered these laws only one survives to this day, in a much altered form; this is the "Court of Swainmote and Attachment", better known as the Verderers' Court. (Verderer: from the Norman 'vert' meaning 'green').

The Evolving Forest

As the importance of timber production increased, woodland was specifically 'inclosed' to protect young trees from the grazing animals on the Forest. In the 17th century these inclosures were largely of oak and beech but from the 19th century conifer plantations began to be introduced. It was the Victorians who started to appreciate the Forest as a place to enjoy Nature, but it was not until the 1950's that the explosive increase in leisure time and car ownership led to the Forest becoming an enormously popular tourist centre.

Future of the Forest?

In spite of being exploited and abused for nine centuries the New Forest has miraculously survived – but how long can it survive into the future? Commercial and tourist interests bring increasing pressures from outside the Forest. Within the Forest, the economic basis for commoning is increasingly unsound. Escalating house and land prices and poor return on their animals make it ever more difficult for the commoner to continue.

It is vital that the New Forest Association and all the other Forest agencies work together to find solutions that will ensure the Forest's survival.

Topography

The New Forest covers 145 square miles of South West Hampshire. Two thirds of this area is made up of Ancient and Ornamental woodland, heathland, grassland and valley bogs. The other third is inclosed plantations of broadleaf and conifer trees. The Forest supports many thousands of species of insects, birds and mammals but it is the grazing animals that predominate, by controlling the plant life and habitats of the Forest.

Deer

The Forest today supports a controlled population of deer despite an attempt in the mid 19th century to eradicate them completely.

The Fallow deer, by far the most common, are thought to be descendants of those introduced by the Normans. Roe deer, after an absence of 500 years, were reintroduced in the late 19th century. There are also small herds of the indigenous Red deer and the more recently introduced Sika deer.

Commonable Animals

Ancient rights established long before Norman times entitle commoners to graze their animals in the Open Forest. About 3,500 ponies and 1,500 cattle, as well as pigs and donkeys, are turned out to forage every year.

These animals, together with the deer, are largely responsible for the continuity of the Forest's unique character and landscape.

Their welfare is the responsibility of the Court of Verderers. The Court is served by four Agisters (from the Norman 'to receive payment') to supervise the stock on the Forest and collect the marking, or grazing, fees which are paid by the commoners for each of their animals depastured.

The animals most synonymous with the Forest are the ponies. It is possible that they are descendants of domestic breeds introduced to this country in Bronze Age times. The breed has developed to be very hardy and well adapted to the requirements of life in the Forest.

In the past most cattle on the Forest were commoners' 'house' cows or dairy herds which would daily return to their holdings for milking. Today they are predominantly beef cattle that remain on the Forest for much of the year.



FIRST PANEL



Key to Panel

1. *King William I presides over Nova Foresta (the 'New' Forest).*
2. *Seals of local religious houses, Christchurch Priory, Romsey Abbey, Breamore Priory.*
3. *Coats of arms of the queens endowed with the Forest and Manor of Lyndhurst: the two queens of Edward I, Eleanor of Castile (d. 1290), Margaret of France (d. 1318); Edward II's queen, Isabella of France (d. 1358); Edward III's queen, Philippa of Hainault (d. 1396).*
4. *The Domesday Book supported in an oak tree.*
5. *Wood pigeon.*
6. *Arms of Beaulieu Abbey.*
7. *King John and a Cistercian monk in a habit of undyed sheep's wool with a model of Beaulieu Abbey.*
8. *The Common Rights of the Forest.*
9. *King William Rufus killed by an arrow while hunting.*
10. *Sir Walter Tyrell, who shot the king.*
11. *Woodman, representing the growing importance of the Forest's timber for building purposes.*
12. *Red Admiral butterfly.*
13. *Nightingale in a bramble bush.*
14. *Chanterelle, an edible fungi.*
15. *Nightjar.*
16. *White Admiral butterfly.*
17. *Dragonfly.*
18. *Brimstone butterfly.*
19. *Heron.*
20. *Fairy shrimp.*
21. *Sundew, with sticky spoon-shaped leaves to trap insects.*
22. *Common Snipe.*
23. *Adder nestling in a clump of tormentil, a perennial herb.*

Hunting Reserve

William I (the Conqueror) established the Forest as a Royal Hunting Reserve in about 1079 and it became subject to Norman Forest Law. All wild animals became the property of the Crown and, in theory, private land could neither be fenced nor cultivated.

The prime consideration was the conservation of the deer for hunting and any interference with the 'beasts of the chase' was severely punished – a man might lose his life for killing a stag.

The harsher penalties for transgressing forest laws were relaxed over a century later but regal enthusiasm for hunting continued for another 600 years. The final link with William's principal reason for 'afforestation' was broken in 1851 by the Deer Removal Act which was intended, in part, to rid the Forest of deer because of the damage they caused to adjoining properties.

Domesday Book

The survey of England carried out for William I in 1086 detailing landownership and resources for taxation purposes was originally called "The Book of Winchester" (Winchester was then the capital of England). By the 12th century it had become known as "The Domesday Book".

At that time the Forest was a place of small hamlets, the arable land was poor and the inhabitants depended largely on grazing their livestock to survive. Despite this the Forest merited a separate folio (two pages) to itself. No other part of England was given such detailed treatment.

The names of four manors detailed in the Domesday Book are shown in the Embroidery: LINHEST (Lyndhurst), meaning 'hillock of lime trees', BROCESTE (Brockenhurst), probably

meaning 'broken woodland', BOVRE (Boldre) and TRUHAM (Throughham).

William Rufus

On 2nd August 1100 William Rufus, son of William I, was killed by an arrow shot by Sir Walter Tyrell while hunting in the Forest. It is uncertain whether it was the result of an accident, a plot by Henry I who was Rufus's brother and successor, or even a bizarre killing promoted by Rufus himself who may have shared the pagan belief that rebirth followed ritual death.

It is known, however, that after the King was shot Tyrell fled to Normandy and no action was taken against him.

Beaulieu Abbey

A translation from the annals (in Latin) of Waverley Abbey, near Farnham, tells us that 'in the year of 1204 King John built a Cistercian abbey which is named BELLUS LOCUS near the spot where William Rufus was killed'.

In the previous year King John, who had been in dispute with the Cistercians, had given them as recompense the Manor of Farringdon in Berkshire for the foundation of a monastery. The site was subsequently changed to the present Beaulieu where the King had a royal hunting lodge. Thirty monks came from Citeaux to establish the Abbey of St. Mary de Bello Loco Regis.

Forest Charter

The Charter of the Forest, an extension of the forestal clauses of Magna Carta, was granted by Henry III in 1217, and provided some relaxation of the Forest law introduced by the Normans.

An amnesty was granted to those who had been outlawed previously for

forest offences, rights of common were protected and landowners were permitted to graze livestock and feed pigs in their own woodlands at will. Venison offences would no longer be punished by loss of life or limb.

Common Rights

The origins of these rights probably date from Jutish times when any area of unenclosed woodland or heath would have been used for grazing by nearby settlements. Common rights were later absorbed into the feudal system as part of a tenant's privileges in return for services to the lord of the manor.

Common rights are attached to land both inside and outside the Forest and not to individuals. Nevertheless, some families can trace their rights back for over six centuries.

There are six rights of common:

PASTURE: the right to turn out cattle, ponies and donkeys. (Under Norman Forest law this was in theory limited to the summer months, except for the 'Fence Month' from mid-June to mid-July when does dropped their fawns. Commoners were able, however, to purchase the right to graze their animals throughout the year).

PASTURE FOR SHEEP: this right was generally restricted to the monastic houses.

MAST (or PANNAGE): the right to turn out pigs during the late autumn to feed on acorns and beech mast which can cause severe poisoning to other animals.

TURBARY: the right to cut turf and peat for fuel.

ESTOVERS: the right to use wood for fuel and repairs (today the Forestry Commission cuts the wood for the few commoners still entitled to this right).

MARL: the right to take clay marl and gravel from twenty-three Forest pits for the improvement of agricultural land.





Key to Panel

1. *Stirrup of Rufus.*
2. *Coat of arms of Thomas Wriothesley.*
3. *Magpie.*
4. *Pair of chaffinches.*
5. *Coat of arms of Margaret of Anjou.*
6. *Calshot Castle.*
7. *Hurst Castle.*
8. *Jay.*
9. *Honey buzzard, now a rarity in the Forest.*
10. *Badge of Earl of Warwick, a bear chained to a ragged staff.*
11. *Barn owl.*
12. *Jackdaw.*
13. *Ship building at Bucklers Hard.*
14. *Green Woodpecker, locally known as a "yaffle".*
15. *Perkin Warbeck riding from Beaulieu Abbey accompanied by a herald.*
16. *Boar or old fashioned pig.*
17. *New Forest pony.*
18. *Rufus stone.*
19. *Mary Dore, celebrated witch.*
20. *Scots pine.*
21. *Pair of Dartford Warblers in a gorse bush with Silver-studded blue butterfly.*
22. *Vole.*
23. *Carrion crow.*
24. *Smooth snake beneath a hard fern.*
25. *Red Admiral butterfly.*
26. *Cock and hen stonechat.*
27. *Badger.*
28. *Robin.*
29. *Wren.*
30. *Lapwing or green plover, sometimes known as a peewit.*
31. *Hedgehog.*
32. *Curlew.*
33. *Sparrowhawk.*
34. *Blackcock or black grouse, now completely disappeared from the heathlands.*

Stirrup of Rufus

The "Stirrup of Rufus", kept in the Verderers' Hall, Queen's House, is a relic of the Tudor era and not Norman times as the name might suggest.

Under forest law it was required that dogs large enough to chase deer had to be lamed by the amputation of the toes from their forefeet, this being known as expeditation. Any dog which could pass through the stirrup was regarded as being too small to harm the deer.

Sanctuary at Beaulieu Abbey

In the Middle Ages fugitives from the law could take temporary refuge in any church. Beaulieu was one of the five principle sanctuaries in the country which allowed an offender to shelter indefinitely.

In 1471, during the Wars of the Roses, Richard Neville (Warick the Kingmaker) was defeated and killed at the Battle of Barnet. His wife, the Countess of Warwick, fled to Beaulieu Abbey where she was to spend the next 14 years. On the day of the battle Margaret of Anjou, Queen of the deposed Henry VI, landed with French troops at Weymouth. Hearing of Warwick's death she may have temporarily sheltered at the Abbey before raising forces for the subsequent Battle of Tewkesbury at which she was defeated and captured.

Perkin Warbeck, the pretender to the throne who impersonated Richard, Duke of York, one of the sons of Edward IV, sought refuge at Beaulieu after abandoning his troops in the West Country. He surrendered to Henry VII and was imprisoned in the Tower of London. Following an escape attempt he was finally hanged at Tyburn in November 1499.

Thomas Wriothesley Earl of Southampton

Following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 Thomas Wriothesley, 1st Earl of Southampton, purchased the Abbey and the 8,600 acres of the Great Close of Beaulieu from the Crown for the sum of £1,350 6s. 8d. As Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII he was ensured the pick of monastic properties.

The monks were pensioned off, the abbot retired and the principal buildings destroyed. Much of the stone was used in the building of the coastal defences of Cowes, Hurst and Calshot castles.

Mary Dore Forest Witch

Mary Dore was a celebrated witch who lived at Beaulieu in the 18th century. One of her more impressive talents was, allegedly, the ability to turn herself into a cat! A stone was erected in her memory but it has not survived.

Rufus Stone

The stone was erected in 1745 by John, Lord Delaware in Canterton Glen near Cadnam to commemorate the death of King William Rufus while hunting. The stone's inscription claims that "Here stood the oak tree on which an arrow, shot by Sir Walter Tyrell at a stag, glanced, and struck King William . . .". The incident more probably occurred, however, in the Manor of Througham as stated in the Waverley Annals (see **Beaulieu Abbey**).

In 1841 a cast-iron casing was fitted over the stone as it had become badly defaced. The Embroidery shows it with the stone hull which originally surmounted it, but which has long since disappeared.

Ship Building/ Bucklers Hard

Until the early 17th century the timber of the New Forest was only modestly exploited for shipbuilding. From that time on demand began to increase dramatically. Initially, oak was felled for the dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich on the Thames, but to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding Navy it was soon additionally being supplied to the Hampshire yards at Portsmouth, Southampton and Bursledon. This industry was largely sustained for nearly a century with oak from the Forest and other local woodlands and continued on a lesser scale until timber became obsolete in shipbuilding in the 19th century.

Some 50 ships were built at the privately owned shipyard at Bucklers Hard on the Beaulieu River between 1743 and 1818, including such famous warships of Lord Nelson's fleet as Agamemnon, Swiftsure and Euryalus which all fought at Trafalgar in 1805. Each vessel involved the use of up to 2,000 mature oak trees for the hull, with additional timber such as beech or elm for planking.

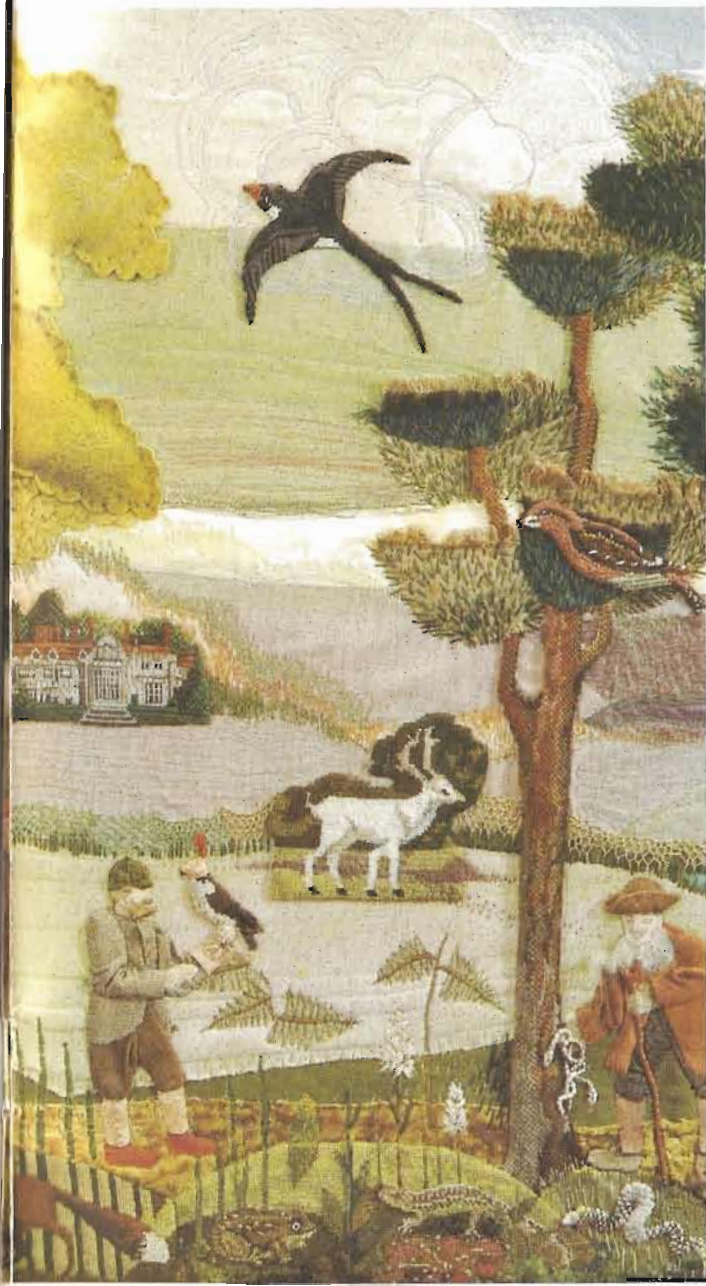
Scots Pine

These trees were reputedly first introduced to the Forest at Ocknell in 1776 as an experiment to see if they could be successfully cultivated to provide top masts and bowsprits for the Navy's ships.

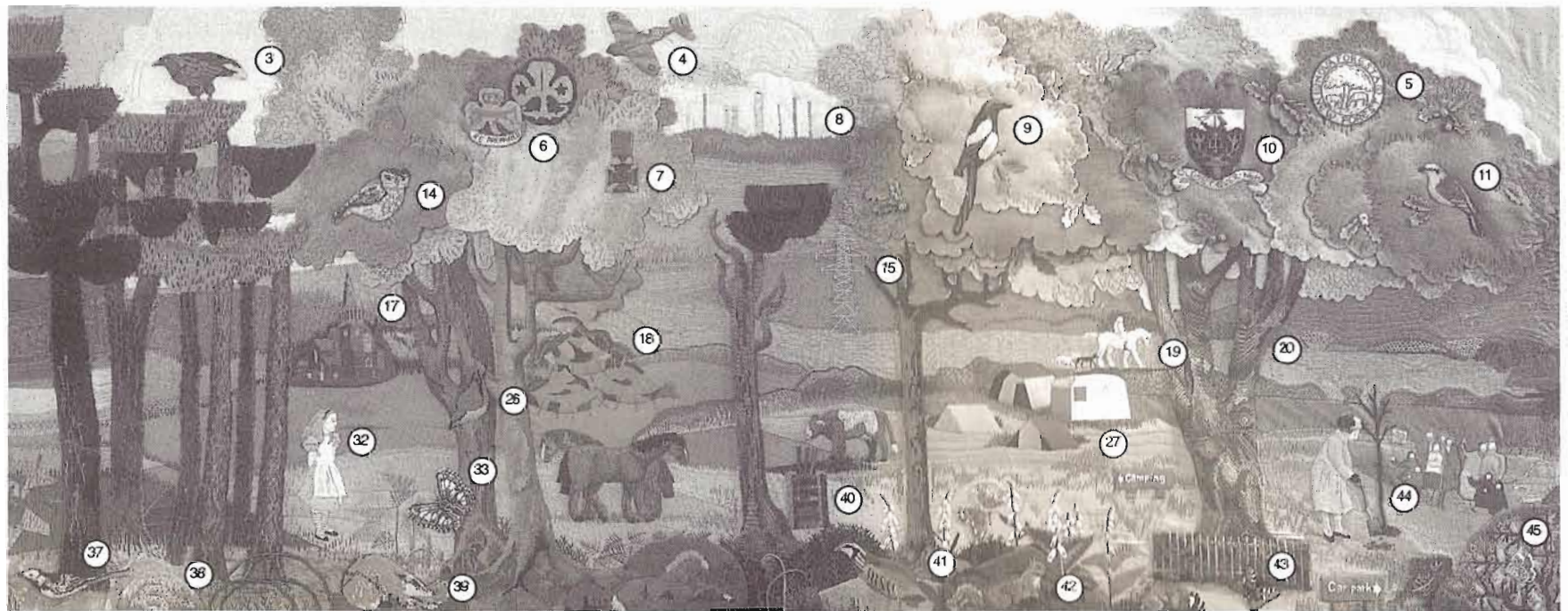
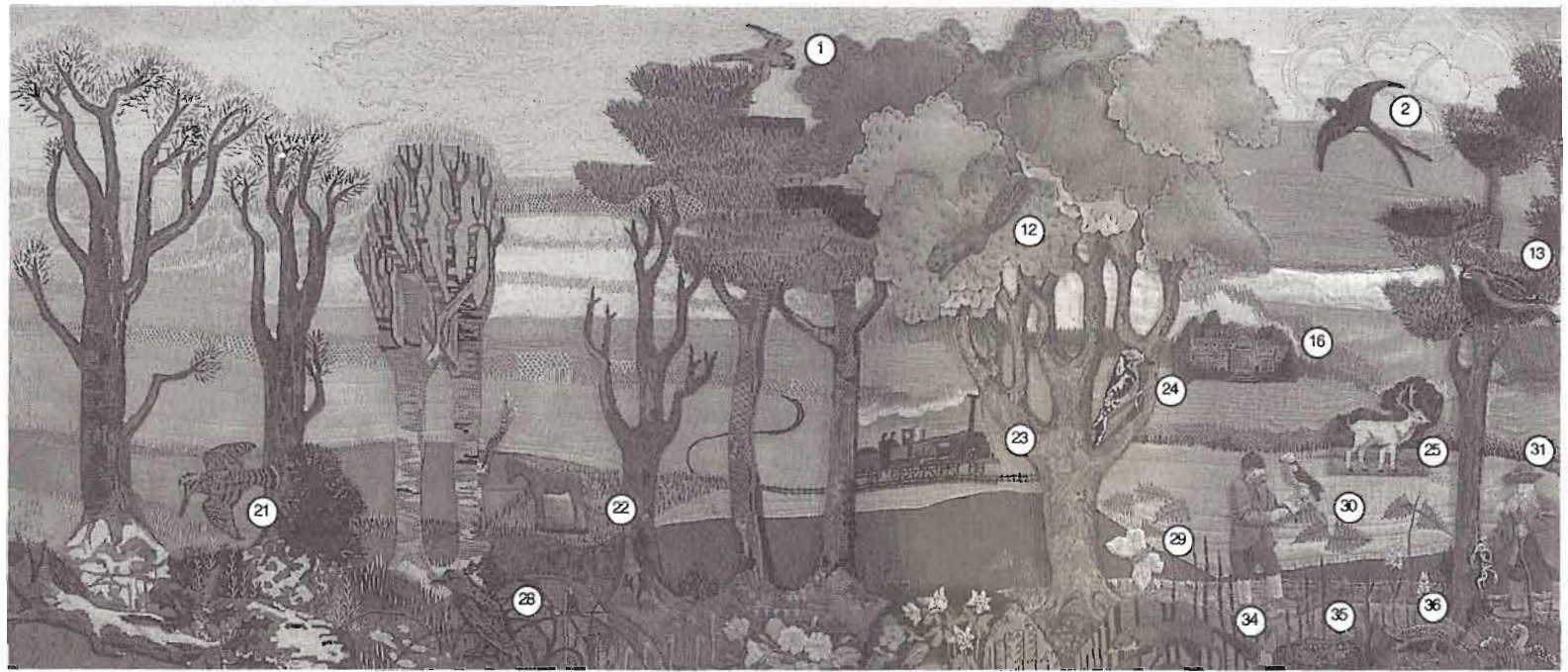
They thrived on the poor soil of the Forest and proved unpalatable to the grazing stock. By the early 19th century they were being planted as shelter belts and nurse trees to delicate young oak plantations. They were the forerunners of the present day softwood plantations managed on a commercial basis by the Forestry Commission.



PANEL



THIRD PANEL



Key to Panel

1. *Montagu's harrier.*
2. *Swallow.*
3. *White-tailed or sea eagle, shot by a keeper in the early 19th century.*
4. *Spitfire aircraft, developed by Supermarine at Southampton.*
5. *Logo to commemorate the Forest's 900th anniversary.*
6. *Girl Guide badges, the international camping headquarters are at Foxlease.*
7. *Victoria Cross of Fl. Lt. Nicolson.*
8. *Oil refinery at Fawley.*
9. *Magpie.*
10. *Arms of the New Forest District Council.*
11. *Red-backed shrike.*
12. *Red squirrel.*
13. *Crossbill.*
14. *Tawny owl.*
15. *Electricity pylon.*
16. *Rhinefield House, built for the Walker Munro family in 1889.*
17. *Lyndhurst parish church, the present building dates from 1863.*
18. *Camouflaged tents of the Second World War.*
19. *Belinda Montagu on 'Allah' her grey Arab.*
20. *Knightwood Oak.*
21. *Woodcock.*
22. *Pony-deer.*
23. *Coming of the railway in 1847.*
24. *Greater spotted woodpecker.*
25. *White buck, a rarity among the deer population.*
26. *Nuthatch.*
27. *Forestry Commission campsite.*
28. *Rook.*
29. *Brimstone butterfly.*
30. *Hon. Gerald Lascelles, Deputy Surveyor.*
31. *'Brusher' Mills, snakecatcher.*
32. *Alice Hargreaves, 'Alice in Wonderland'.*
33. *White Admiral butterfly.*
34. *Fox.*
35. *Natterjack toad, now lost to the Forest.*
36. *Sand lizard beside a heath spotted orchid.*
37. *Pied wagtail.*
38. *Grass snake.*
39. *Badger.*
40. *Fire beaters.*
41. *French partridge.*
42. *Grey squirrel amongst foxgloves.*
43. *Small tortoiseshell butterfly.*
44. *The Queen's visit in April 1979.*
45. *Silver-studded blue butterfly.*

'Brusher' Mills

Henry 'Brusher' Mills was a famous Forest snake catcher. Born in 1838, he lived for much of his life like a hermit in a disused charcoal burner's hut. He died in 1905 and was buried at Brockenhurst Church. His headstone bears a charming likeness of himself holding a seething handful of vipers.

Some of the 35,000 snakes he is estimated to have caught were sold to London Zoo as food for other snakes; others ended up as 'clarified adder fat', a supposed cure for gout and rheumatism.

His sole possessions were a pistol, a watch, a pocket knife and the tools of his trade such as a forked stick for catching snakes. His nickname was reputedly earned one hard winter when he daily brushed the ice for skaters on Foxlease Pond.

Pony - Deer

This rarity of an animal was the property of Mr. T. G. Attwater. The Hybrid was inspected by a Dr. Fowler from Salisbury who was quite satisfied that the filly was a cross between a New Forest pony mare and a red deer stag. It was drawn from life by George Landseer in 1848.

Railway Line

The L. & S.W.R. railway line linking Southampton and Dorchester across the Forest was finished in 1847. During construction at least 11 horses were lost near Brockenhurst while cutting through a treacherous layer of heavy clay. As the fencing of the line was incomplete at the time of opening the company was forced to employ watchmen to warn train drivers if animals strayed onto the tracks.

Hon. Gerald Lascelles

The management of the New Forest is today carried out by the Forestry Commission whose top administrator within the Forest is the Deputy Surveyor. One of the most noted men to have filled this post was Gerald Lascelles.

He was appointed in 1880 and remained as Deputy Surveyor for 35 years. He did much to reorganise the system of 'keeping' in the Forest and was an ardent conservationist of wild life. As well as being a prolific writer he was a keen shot, hunted hounds and flew peregrine falcons.

Alice Hargreaves

Alice Hargreaves (nee Liddell) was the little girl immortalized by Lewis Carroll in the children's classics 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' (1865) and 'Through the Looking Glass' (1871). She came to live in the Forest after her marriage in 1880 and was buried in the family grave at Lyndhurst parish church in 1934.

The Forest at War

During both World Wars the Forest was used by the military as an important staging post and training ground for troops before embarkation to France. Large areas of timber were felled to support the war efforts.

The demands placed on the Forest by the Second War were considerably greater than those of the First War. Some 9,000 acres of land were requisitioned for various uses; there were three major airfields at Holmsley, Stoney Cross and Beaulieu and several smaller ones in addition to a bombing range of over 5,000 acres in the north of the Forest.

Victoria Cross

The only Victoria Cross won actually in this country during the Second World War was awarded to Flight-Lieutenant James Nicholson of 249 Squadron for his part in a dogfight over Lyndhurst in August 1940. He was himself shot down and while parachuting to safety was fired at by the Local Defence Volunteers who thought he was a German airman.

The Forest Post-War

The remorseless expansion of commercial and housing development after the war and resultant increase in road traffic aggravated long standing problems for the Forest.

By the early 1960's accidents involving Forest animals were occurring nearly every day because ponies and cattle were able to wander anywhere within the Forest and well beyond its limits. Uncontrolled access of cars onto the Forest was causing a steady erosion of the heaths and lawns with the consequent destruction of habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Protection measures became essential and by the mid 1970's both the perambulation and the A-roads within the Forest had been fenced and gridded. In addition the Forestry Commission had introduced designated sites for camping and car parking and constructed barriers and ditches barring vehicles from the open Forest.

The Queen's Visit

Two of the panels of the Embroidery were completed in time for Her Majesty the Queen's visit to the Forest in April 1979 for the 900th Anniversary celebrations. Having been driven in an open landau along the Ornamental Drive she planted a commemorative oak sapling alongside the famous, 300 year old Knightwood Oak.

THIRD PANEL

continued



The Queen's Cushion

An embroidered cushion was presented to Her Majesty the Queen when she came to view the Embroidery during the 900th Anniversary celebrations in 1979.

The presentation was made by the New Forest Association on behalf of all the residents of the Forest.

The cushion, designed by Belinda Montagu and embroidered by Midge Burnett depicts a green woodpecker, crossbill, wren, nuthatch, nightjar and Dartford warbler; a buck's head at the top and a sand lizard at the bottom. Also shown are the Great Stirrup and Verderers' crest.

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