

Details in the Battle of Britain Lace

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Sheppey
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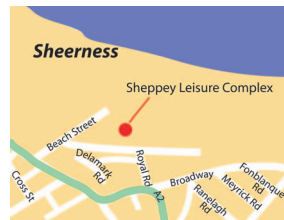
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Managed by
Leisure Connection Ltd
on behalf of Swale
Borough Council



- 1 Harry Cross Designer
- 2 Far left: Badge of the New Zealand Royal Air Force with the National Fern Leaf.
- 3 Centre left: Badge of the Royal Canadian Air Force with Maple Leaf - the National Flower.
- 4 Centre: The words of the *Battle of Britain* on a background of flames.
- 5 Tottering building in Queen Victoria Street (showing N.F.S. Fireman at work).
- 6 City Temple, Holborn, in ruins.
- 7 Centre: Spitfires, Hurricanes, Defiants, Messerschmitt's, Stukas and Dorniers, in combat.
- 8 The Old Bailey
- 9 Centre: Airman "bailing out".
- 10 Centre: A typical Country Cottage with Oak Tree adjacent.
- 11 Buckingham Palace (showing damage to the gates). The Royal Coat of Arms is displayed on the portico.
- 12 Figure of Fighter Pilot standing by his aircraft.
- 13 Centre: "Never was so much owed by so many to so few" - Churchill.
- 14 Border Symbols: Acorns, Daffodil, Shamrock, Thistle.
- 15 *J.D. Herod* and *W.J. Jackson*, Draughtsman.
- 16 Centre: Cap Badge of the Royal Air Force with the National Tudor Rose.
- 17 Centre right: Badge of the Royal Australian Air Force with Wattle - the National Flower.
- Far right: Badge of the South African Air Force (Lug-Mag) with Protea the National Flower. 'Lug-Mag' is Afrikaans for 'Air Force'.
- Bow Church (through the window can be seen the Dome and Cross of St. Paul's).
- 18 St. Clement Danes (showing remaining walls). The edging of the panel comprises ripening ears of corn representing the season which the Battle of Britain took place. Interwoven with these ears of corn are Tudor Roses, Thistles, Shamrock and Oak Leaves.
- 19 Walls of the Guildhall.
- 20 Centre: An English Mansion.
- 21 House of Commons showing damage (figures can be seen in the damaged porchway).
- 22 Centre: Tudor Rose with Thistle and Shamrock each side.
- 23 Centre: St. Paul's Cathedral surrounded by flames. (The sculpture over the portico can be identified and the time by St. Paul's clock is 19.25 hours).
- 24 A/A Gun and Searchlights in action.
- 25 Centre: R.A.F. Badge, Tudor Rose, Thistle, Shamrock, Daffodil, Acorns.

Now on view at Sheppey Leisure
Complex, The Sea Front,
Sheerness

Sunday - Friday 10am - 10pm
Saturday 10am - 4pm

Battle of Britain Lace



The Battle of Britain Lace Panel

The Battle of Britain Commemorative Lace Panel was produced by the Nottingham lace making firm of Dobson & Browne Ltd., between 1942 and 1946, "to perpetuate this glorious epic in our history, and as a tribute to those who gallantly saved this island." The panel is a lace curtain measuring 16 metres long by 2 metres wide, showing exact replicas of the scenes witnessed during the bombing of London, the various aircraft in battle, and the badges of the various Allied Air forces involved, together with the names of the craftsman who created this masterpiece, and Sir Winston Churchill's famous words "Never was so much owed by so many to so few". Mr J. Richards, in his book "The Lace Heritage", states that this piece of lace is "probably the most remarkable piece of lace in existence".

Conception

Lace commemorative panels were not a new idea. A great panel was produced as long ago as 1851 for the Paris Exhibition of that year. It depicted scenes from the life of Joan of Arc, and was then, and still is the largest pictorial work in one piece of lace measuring 5 metres long by 1.5 metres wide. This led to Mr J.L. Were being inspired to make a companion panel as a tribute to the men of the Allied Air Forces, and to all those who showed great courage during the bombing of London.

Manufacture

Designing

Once the decision was made, Mr Harry Cross, the firm's head designer, was given the job of designing the curtain. He was 73 years old, and during the previous 20 years his skill had led to the production of millions of metres of lace in the factory. Every detail had to be accurate, so he worked from photographs, drawings and postcards collected from many sources. Some simplification of the design had to be made because of the medium in which they were to be worked. At the time he said that the most difficult drawing was that of St. Paul's Cathedral, which he produced from a postcard. He put the cottage and castle in the centre to show that rich and poor suffered together. It is reported that Mr Cross said at the time, "They told me to do the best I could, and that's what I did", the work taking him two years to complete.

Drafting

The completed design was then handed on for drafting to Mr W. Herod, a very experienced draughtsman, who unfortunately died when the task was only half finished. It was completed by Mr W.R. Jackson who had been in the trade for 45 years. This is a very skillful job requiring knowledge of the whole production process, as it entails translating the drawing on to squared paper, and variously colouring the squares to show the different threads to be used in the loom. The tedious and exacting task took 15 months.

The Jacquard

A jacquard is a method of controlling the pattern being made on a loom, by a system of differential thread selection. The draft was transferred to the jacquard by Mr Alf Webster who made a set of cards which he individually punched holes to control the varying threads in the loom. In all he punched 40,000 cards which weighed over a ton. The cards completed, they were sewn together in order, to form a continuous strip, hundreds of metres long and about 0.5 metres wide. This strip was then put on the loom. At this stage there was no way of checking the correctness of the punched cards, full dependence had to be put on to the craftsman's skill.

The Loom

The loom used for this curtain was made by Swift & Wass & Co. Ltd. of Nottingham in about 1880. It was of the type adapted by John Livesey in 1846 from the Leavers machine. The machine was 15 point, and the yarn used was 100% cotton. There is no record of the counts (i.e. thickness) used, but from the gauge of the machine it has been deducted by the present firm that - ● pattern threads would have been 2/40 cotton count; ● warp threads would have been 2/60 cotton count; ● bobbin threads would have been 2/80 cotton count; and * the number of threads used in the panel was 4,200.

Note: The two looms of this date and type are still in use, on a daily production at the mill owned by E&A Richards and Co. Ltd. where the panels were made. For further information contact the tourism section, Swale Borough Council, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 3HT. Telephone (01795) 417478 or email us on: tourism@swale.gov.uk