



BRITAIN'S BAYEUX TAPESTRY READING MUSEUM

FACTS AND FIGURES

1. In 1885 Elizabeth and Thomas Wardle visited the Bayeux tapestry and decided to make a full-size and accurate replica “so that England should have a copy of its own”

It was made in 1885-1886 by Leek Embroidery Society (Staffordshire) led by Elizabeth Wardle.

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3. Thirty-five women members of the Society worked on the tapestry.

It's not actually a tapestry! Both Reading's version and the medieval original are really embroideries; hand stitched using woollen yarns onto a linen backcloth.

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5. Britain's Bayeux Tapestry is a full-size copy - over 70 metres long. However, it is slightly taller as it has an extra blue border at the bottom where the 35 women who made the British copy recorded their names under each section they sewed.

Britain's Bayeux Tapestry is based on tracings from full-size hand-coloured photographs in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (then called the South Kensington Museum).

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7. As well as members from Leek, women from Derbyshire, Birmingham, Macclesfield and London took part. Each embroiderer stitched her name beneath her completed panel. Elizabeth added the end inscription in Whitsuntide 1886 (around mid-May).





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It is a very accurate recreation of the original, except for the famous addition of underpants to one of the naked men (the embroiderers copied these pants from the photographs that had been 'cleaned-up' by the South Kensington Museum).

The replica was first exhibited at the Nicholson Institute in Leek in June 1886, 140 years ago. Over the next ten years the tapestry was put on display across Britain, and it even travelled to Germany and America. In June 1895 it arrived for exhibition at Reading Town Hall.

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The Reading exhibition was supported by Alderman Arthur Hill, a former Mayor, and half-brother of Octavia Hill, another philanthropist and social reformer - now best remembered as one of the co-founders of the National Trust.

Hill's offer to buy the replica was accepted by the Leek Embroidery Society in July 1895. He then presented the tapestry as a gift to Reading where it was displayed in Reading Museum.

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In 1993, a permanent tapestry gallery was opened at Reading Museum. The tapestry was carefully conserved and remounted in a specially designed display case. For the first time for many years the entire tapestry could be seen in one gallery.

FIND OUT MORE:

Explore Britain's Bayeux Tapestry online [here](#)

[Breaking the Bayeux code: the fine details of Britain's Bayeux Tapestry.](#) | [Reading Museum](#)

[Five things you probably didn't know about Reading's Bayeux Tapestry.](#) | [Reading Museum](#)

