



# Guide

# Lines

The *Occasional* Newsletter  
of the  
Winchester Area Tourist Guides Association

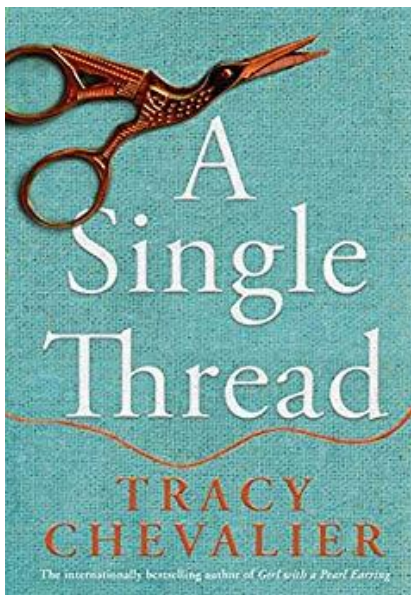
Issue of Winter 2019

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Item: 1	Title: <b>Single Thread by Tracey Chevalier</b>
Date: 30 Nov 2019	Contributor: <b>Sue de Salis</b>

**A *Single Thread* by Tracy Chevalier: 2019 Novel featuring Winchester, the Cathedral, the Broderers and the Bellringers**



I was recently lent this book by a friend and, having just finished reading it, thought I would put something in Guide Lines so Guides generally are aware of it. Some of you, particularly those involved with the Cathedral, may already know all about it and our very own Colin Cook features in the acknowledgements as a source of expert advice on bellringing.

If you haven't heard about the novel, you may well have heard of Tracy Chevalier-she is best known as the author of *Girl With a Pearl Earring*-and she also wrote the lovely novel about fossil hunter Mary Anning-*Remarkable Creatures*.

Tracy is an American by birth but lives in London and says she is “drawn to Cathedrals” so decided to write about one. She chose Winchester since, although it cannot claim the most striking exterior (her heroine describes it in the novel as “squatting like a grey toad in a forgettable green off the High street”!), it has, in Tracy’s words, a “magnificent interior and some cracking stories attached”.

The story Tracy chooses to highlight is not one that I was previously familiar with: the work of a group of women in the 1930s to create cushions, kneelers, alms bags etc. to brighten and improve the comfort of the Cathedral. The Dean at the time, Dean Selwyn, contracted an extraordinary woman, Louisa Pesel, who was an expert in needlepoint, to design and supervise the making of these fabric furnishings. She, together with artist Sybil Blunt, managed to inspire and train a group of nearly 200 volunteers who became the Winchester Cathedral Broderers and, between 1931 and 1938, they produced 360 kneelers, 96 alms bags, 62 stall cushions, and much more. Their work formed a model for other Cathedrals and is continued to this day: the Broderers (the name coming from a medieval term for embroidery) still meet on Monday mornings and continue to work on new designs, as well as repairing older works. They have managed to maintain the 1930s kneelers and cushions and these can still be found in the Quire, Presbytery and Lady Chapel. Many of the kneelers that sit on the seats in the Presbytery have the date, 1932, and initials of the maker on the reverse. Do take a look.

The novel uses the work of the Broderers as a symbol of something that can be created and made to last, like the Cathedral itself, even though those involved may have felt of little significance. Our heroine, Violet, is one of the “surplus” women-her fiancé killed in WW1 and, at 38, a spinster, one of the two million more women than men after the Great War. She is drawn to the Broderers and her chance to make her lasting contribution, encouraged by the positive approach of Louisa Pesel who appears as herself in the novel. The “love interest” comes in the shape of a Cathedral bellringer-the bellringers all being male, just as the Broderers are predominantly female.

The novel includes a lot of detail about both needlepoint and bellringing. Tracy taught herself how to embroider for the purpose of the novel and, if you look on her website, there are examples of the different stitches used, which you can see for real in the cushions and kneelers in the Cathedral. On the bellringing side, she, of course, consulted Colin, enabling her to explain some of the mysteries of change ringing and of the hierarchy and discipline of the Cathedral bellringing band.

In addition to the very interesting descriptions of the techniques of embroidery and bellringing, Tracy includes a lot of detail about the Cathedral and about Winchester in the 1930s. I felt that some of this read a bit like extracts from a guide book-she recites the William Walker, Round Table and West Window/Civil War stories much as we might on a guided tour! But for the many readers who are not familiar with these stories, the book will hopefully encourage interest and a desire to visit the City. She also picks on a sensitive detail for the pre-WWII period: part of Louisa Pesel’s design involves swastikas (or fylfots), based on the ancient symbol depicted on the stole worn by the effigy of Bishop Edington in his chantry, but obviously with more worrying

associations. The cushions that feature the swastikas are the “Arthur” and “Tree of Life” cushions which can currently be seen close to each other on the vergers’ seats at the west end of the Quire.

There is quite a bit of information on the Cathedral’s website about the novel and about the Broderers and Bellringers. Some of the designs described in the novel appear on the Website and Colin has provided a picture of one of the more esoteric offerings, the James W Elkins Cushion (see below), which is also at the west end of the Quire at the moment.



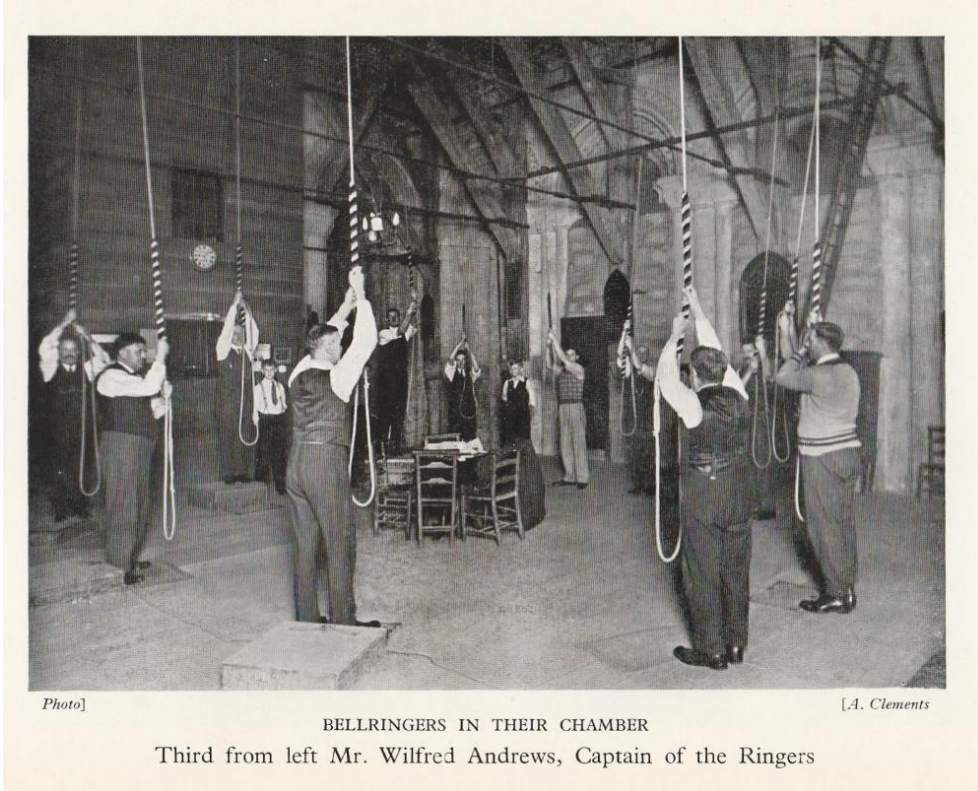
**The James W Elkins Cushion**

Photo: Colin Cook

**Extract from Obituary - *Hampshire Chronicle and General Advertiser* 8 July 1939**

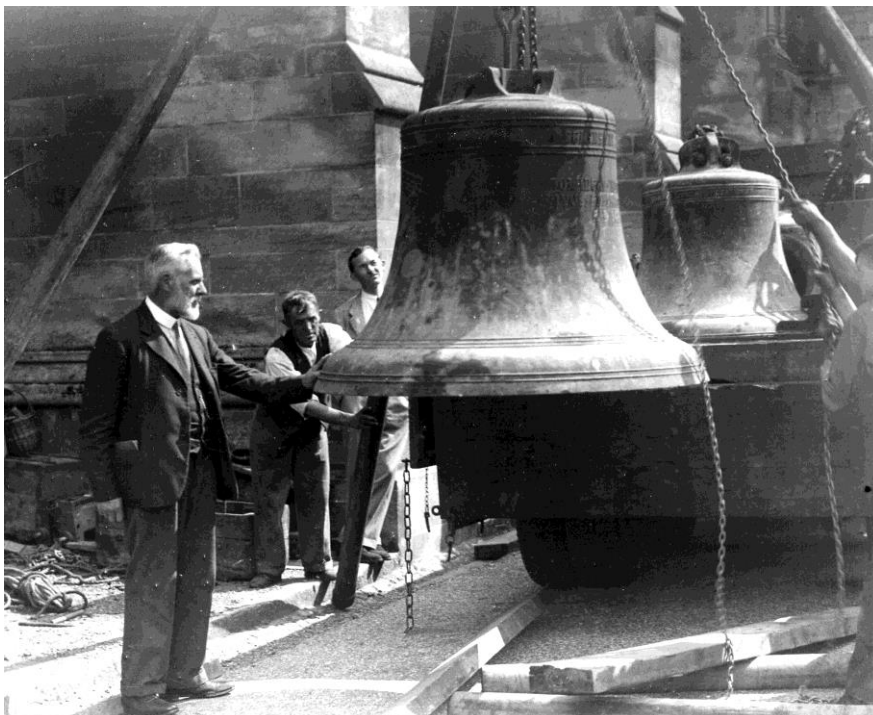
“.....He enjoyed the unique honour of having his portrait, in characteristic style reproduced in embroidery by the Cathedral Broderers, a specimen of their work which is inspected by visitors almost more than any other piece, the portrait in wool being a capital likeness.....”

Colin has also contributed a couple of fabulous 1930s bellringing photos featuring Wilfred Andrews, “Tower Captain” from 1899 to 1949. Tracy reproduces Wilfred Andrews in the book as William Carver, the stern supervisor of the band of bellringers.



*Bellringers at Winchester Cathedral 1937*

*Cathedral Record 1937*



You may also want to read a bit more about Louisa Pesel. There is quite a bit of information about her on the Internet and she strikes me as a good addition to any future remarkable Victorian women tour. She was born in Bradford in 1870, worked at a school in Athens and travelled in Egypt and India, returning to Bradford where she helped shell-shocked WW1 soldiers learn to sew as therapy. She became the first president of the Embroiderers Guild of England in 1920 and then moved to Hampshire where her embroidery work for the Bishop led to her being asked to undertake the Cathedral project by the Dean. She died in 1947 and her ashes were scattered in the Cathedral Precinct. Her original designs and notebooks are now held in the University of Leeds.

The novel is currently out only in hard back but hopefully will prove popular and increase interest in the City and its Cathedral. At the very least, we probably need to be aware that some visitors may have read the book and may ask about the Broderers.

Item: 2	Title: <b>Winchester Cathedral at Christmas</b>
Date: Dec 2019	Contributor: <b>Pauline Shier</b>

The following images of Winchester Cathedral at Christmas were taken by Pauline whilst attending Midnight Mass which, is by all accounts, a memorable experience.



Item: 3	Title: <b>Thomas Thetcher 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2014</b>
Date: 26 Dec 2019	Contributor: <b>Michael Fielding</b>

**Thomas Thetcher, who “died when hot the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1764”**



The story will be well-known to Members of WATGA, so I shall not expand upon it here. One aspect which may have been forgotten is that the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his demise was marked by a small ceremony in 2014. Wreaths were placed against the headstone by The Royal Hampshire Regiment and by the local branch of Alcoholics Anonymous. The event was covered by the Hampshire Chronicle. As I recall, the wreaths were only in place for about ten days.



Item: 4	Title: <b>Burne Jones in Winchester</b>
Date: 31 Dec 2019	Contributor: <b>Clare Dixon</b>

I'm thankful to Mike Craze for drawing my attention to the fact that some of the Pre-Raphaelites made a visit to Winchester in 1866. Edward and Georgiana Burne Jones and their children were staying in Lymington to escape an outbreak of cholera in London with their friend and poet William Allingham. Georgiana tells us in her book 'Memorials of Edward Burne Jones' that

*'... we went in August to Lymington, so as to be near Allingham, who had an appointment in the Customs there. One day the two men crossed over to the Isle of Wight and called on Tennyson .... We made an expedition also to Winchester, when Morris came down from London to meet us, and as we waited for him at the door of our hotel, I remember his swinging toward us along the High Street with a look as if he had easily walked all the way. Then we went on together over the water meadows to St Cross, and mourned over the 'restoration' it was suffering.'*

The 'restoration' at St Cross church was being carried out by the architect William Butterfield who, in the spirit of the Gothic Revival, was fond of inserting what he took to be medieval features. In the case of St Cross these included some amazingly jazzy painted designs on the pillars and roof of the church (now thankfully almost gone). We can imagine that Morris, with his great respect for true medieval art and architecture, would not be impressed.

*'We of this Society at least know the beauty of the weathered and time-worn surface of an ancient building, and have all of us felt the grief of seeing this surface disappear under the hands of a "restorer;"* (Talk by Morris on Architecture and History for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 1884)

Allingham's own diary adds that the architect Philip Webb was also in the party who visited Winchester that day. I like Allingham's shorthand description of St Cross:

*'Old man, dining-hall; men's rooms, old cloisters, wooden arches — mixed up with leaves and flowers. The Dole.'*

No mention of Morris disliking the renovations. But Allingham did complain about the price of dinner for five:

*'Dinner at 'The George,' tough mutton, parsonic waiter, red-faced grinning Landlady, bill 19s.'*

After St Cross they also visited the College and Cathedral, where

*'A Verger, tall, sallow, and melancholy, did not offer his services, but made a remark or two which seemed to imply, in a self-respecting manner, that he was ready to go round with us officially if we cared for him. But, taking slight notice of him, Morris discoursed away, and the Verger hastened with the rest of us, at one point civilly correcting Morris on a detail ..... I made some sort of apology aside to this man for not availing ourselves of his guidance. With a mournful pride he confessed his sympathy with our views, saying, 'I should do just the same myself. I never meet any one in a place like this that I would care to have go round with me.'*

Returning up the High Street the group finished off their day by taking the ‘field path’ back to Winchester station!

Item: 5	Title: <b>Best Tip</b>
Date: Jan 2020	Contributor: <b>Clare Dixon and Patrick Craze</b>



I thought we might ask guides what is the best tip they have ever been given (as in a gratuity, not a piece of advice!) Mine is a balloon flower which one passenger made for me at the end of a recent coach tour. My other contender was a £1 note which someone gave me some years ago, but still about 30 years after it had ceased to be legal tender!

Editor’s note:

Fabulously entertaining suggestion from Clare. Over to you to send in details of your “best tip” although looking at the balloon flower it is going to be tough one to beat! Or is it?

You may recall Clare’s suggestion, from the last Guide Lines, for guides to send in their “best tip”. I thought we might be inundated, but this turned out not to be the case, and I can only offer the tip which both Valerie Walker and I each received from a Belgian coach tour group last year.

The group were from Mechelen and they kindly gave us hand crafted beer and delicious chocolates from their home town and a selection of historic and contemporary views.

I still think Clare’s balloon flower will take some beating!



Item: 6	Title: <b>Wintonian Heritage Plaques</b>
Date: Jan 2020	Contributor: <b>Clare Dixon</b>



I don't very often have cause to walk up the Romsey Road, but a couple of weeks ago I spotted a blue 'Wintonian heritage' plaque on the wall of The St James Tavern. The wording reads: *'Harold Pinter, 1930 – 2008, Whilst drunk orchestrated a conga line past this spot. September 1976.'*

A little research on the internet produced photos of two more plaques in the series:

One said to be on the White Swan (Mucky Duck) in Hyde Street which reads: *'The Rolling Stones Rock Band Late for Lido gig because they couldn't drag themselves away from this pub. December 1963'*





**Wintonian Heritage plaque on facade of the Hotel du Vin & Bistro.**

And a second on the Hotel du Vin in Southgate Street: *'James Martin (1972 - ) Banal TV chef and generic cookbook author probably walked past here once. Assuming anyone gives a shit.'*

I haven't been to check whether these last two still exist – if indeed they ever did. In the case of the second it seems unlikely!

Can anyone shed any light?

Editor's Note:

The clue to the originator of these plaques lies in the spoof English Heritage logo, at the bottom of the first two plaques, which contains a stylised "S". This S is also the logo of a satirical magazine, Smug Winchester, which can be accessed on line and downloaded as a PDF.

Issue 4 page 10 suggests that Hampshire Cultural Trust is responsible for putting up the plaques and is less than complimentary about HCT.

I can confirm I am not the editor of Smug Winchester and do not condone its content or views!



Item: 7	Title: <b>Winchester during WW2</b>
Date: Jan 2020	Contributor: <b>Patrick Craze</b>

The 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day, followed on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2020 by 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory over Japan (VJ) Day, and an end to WW2. To mark the anniversary of VE Day there will a themed tour on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May describing events, and the impact, WW2 had on Winchester.

Colin Cook and I have been researching Winchester during WW2 and plan to give a presentation of our findings at the next WATGA General Meeting, Thursday 5th March 2020, 2pm, at the Kincaid Gallery, the Royal Green Jackets Museum, Peninsular Barracks. Colin has also rustled up two redoubtable characters, who were school boys together in Winchester during WW2, and they will be giving their anecdotal accounts of what it was like to live in Winchester during WW2.

The event which probably had the greatest impact on Winchester during WW2 was the arrival, in November 1943, of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division US Army. The following website will give you some idea of the American soldiers thoughts on their stay in Winchester and the surrounding district.

<https://9thinfantrydivision.net/9th-infantry-division-in-winchester-england/>

I also managed to track down a Pathe News reel which is titled Churchill and Eisenhower inspect troops (1944) dates/locations unknown. I have identified the locations from start to finish as:

- Membury Airfield, Lambourn, Berkshire, home to 436th Troop Carrier Group (9<sup>th</sup> Div) and the paratroopers are from the 101st Airborne, US Army.
- Barton Stacey Camp, Field Artillery Battalion, 9th Inf Div, US Army.
- Bushfield Camp, 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 9th Inf Div, US Army.
- Peninsular Barracks, Winchester, 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment 9th Inf Div, US Army.

Click on the link to view great footage of Churchill and Eisenhower at Peninsular Barracks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwBTJjbqURw>

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### Guide Lines Dates

- Summer Issue
  - submit copy by 20 June 2020
  - publish 30 June 2020
- Autumn Issue
  - submit copy by 20 September 2020
  - publish 30 September 2020
- Winter Issue
  - submit copy by 20 December 2020
  - publish 31 December 2020

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