

the Newbury Mosaic

a pictorial romp through
the history of Newbury



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About the artist

Paul Forsey is an artist and designer trained in painting and printmaking at Middlesex Polytechnic and the University of Reading. His work is featured in many collections including The Arthur Andersen Art Collection, P and O and a series of 10 works in paper in the Strand Headquarters of Enterprise Oil. His religious paintings have been exhibited in Church buildings throughout England including Douai Abbey, Sheffield Catholic Cathedral, Lincoln Minster, Wells Cathedral, Winchester Cathedral and York Minster. In 2004 *The Life Of Jesus Through The Eyes Of An Artist* was published. It is a bible entirely based on Paul's paintings. For more information about this and other work by Paul please visit www.stepintothepicture.co.uk

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Seldom in life . . .

. . . does the realisation of a dream exceed all expectations, but for me the Newbury Mosaic does just that.

When I was Mayor in 1999, I had an idea for a public art project that was totally locally based and involved a number of schools in its realisation. It was to take the form of a mosaic that portrayed a ‘parish’ map of the town, with the pieces being inserted by some of the school children. It was to be roughly three metres in diameter, and made up of sections, like slices of a cake.

However, being Mayor occupies quite a bit of time so you really need to think of a project like this before you start, and not two thirds of the way through your time in office. So having had the idea but no time to carry it out, it was left to sit on the shelf.

Time flew by and my dream remained just that. I was then honoured to be Mayor again in 2004/2005, and here was the opportunity to bring the idea to life. During my inaugural speech, I announced that realising this project would be one of my undertakings during my Mayoral year, and that Vodafone had agreed to fund the initial stages of the project.

Mike checks for spelling mistakes in the black granite surround.

The artist I had in mind was Paul Forsey, and he was ideal in every way. Locally based, with a proven track record of delivering on time and to cost, the style of his most recent work lent itself to the technique of mosaic production. An approach was made, at which point I gave him a detailed outline of the idea and timescales involved. Off he went fully briefed . . . a week later he was back.

To use modern parlance, I was ‘gob smacked’, my ‘cake’ idea had gone, and what I was presented with was a proposal for a mosaic that was now over one metre wide and 12 metres long, taking the form of 12 panels depicting events in the history of Newbury.

I was delighted: already Paul was demonstrating his ability to deliver. The work was now really underway and the Mayor was once again on the fundraising trail, while the artist went to Italy to do further research.

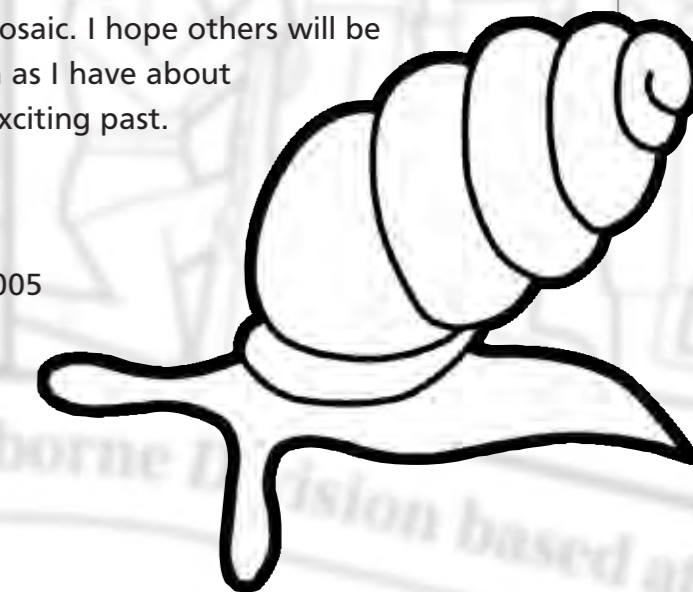
We then began what was to be an absorbing year, with both of us revelling in the task before us. Paul’s new proposal was great because I had the perfect site in mind for it.

Now here we are. We have our mosaic: a genuine piece of public art and a lasting testament to everyone in Newbury who took part and to all those who made this possible through help or sponsorship.

This is *our* mosaic. We all made it and we all own it. I would like to say thank you to everyone involved. What great fun we had. Special thanks are due to Paul, who, through his professionalism and dedication, made this such an enriching experience and such an exciting project to be part of.

Here, through the pages of this book, our pictorial romp through Newbury’s history is explained, as is the creation and making of our mosaic. I hope others will be able to learn as much as I have about Newbury’s rich and exciting past.

Mike Rodger
Mayor of Newbury
1999/2000 & 2004/2005





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Creating a *visual* history of Newbury

7

In April 2004, I was invited to submit a proposal for a large mosaic, to be situated outdoors, depicting the history of Newbury in West Berkshire and involving as many of the townspeople as would like to take part.

In May 2004, my proposal was accepted and I began the research part of the process.

This was an ambitious project with a tight timescale of only one year. However, outside of the brief, I was given a great deal of latitude in terms of content. In a sense, this was quite difficult as, relatively speaking, not much has been written about Newbury. So, in addition to published sources, I had to rely on independent websites, verbal information, interviews and so on.

I elected to start at the Domesday book. This is essentially the first written historical document which records the area where Newbury is now situated.

As the medium, I planned to use Venetian glass, an ancient material used in many of the great mosaics in Italy. For a community project that would involve 'non-artists', I also had to devise a method where others could take part, but I would retain the bulk of the decision-making process to ensure that the finished piece would be coherent.

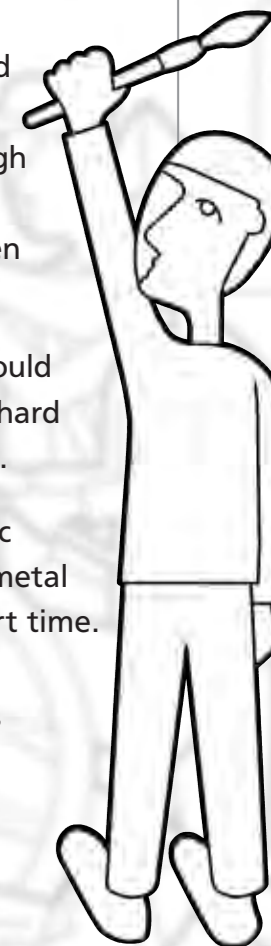
This was achieved through an industrial computer-controlled milling and machining process, which fixed the drawing elements and composition. I am very grateful to Delcam UK Tooling Services for their assistance in this process.

I would also like to thank Vodafone and Greenham Common Trust for contributing substantial funds, and some 4,000 people, young and old, who participated in the building phase and financed the project through their own generous donations. Thanks also to Jonny Diorio, without whom it would never have been finished on time.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the vision, foresight and hard work of Mike Rodger, Mayor of Newbury, 2004-2005.

The journey that both Mike and I took as this mosaic evolved from conversations and ideas into granite, metal and glass was a long one but accomplished in a short time. We were joined by the sponsors, the engineers, the manufacturers, the suppliers and, most importantly, the townspeople of Newbury who have contributed generously in terms of time, effort and money.

Paul Forsey November 2005



Well, what *is* Newbury famous for?

During a radio interview in late 2004 when I was explaining a bit about the background for this project, I was asked “Well, what *is* Newbury famous for?” The answer for most people today would be one word . . . Vodafone. Millions use their services worldwide and if you open virtually any newspaper or watch any televised sporting event, there is a good chance that you will not have to look too hard to find Newbury-based Vodafone represented there.

Dig a little deeper into history and it is truly amazing who crops up and the effect that events in humble Newbury have had on England, the United Kingdom and the rest of the world.

From a local perspective, perhaps most noteworthy is John Smallwood, or Jack of Newbury as he is known. He was a Tudor Richard Branson or Henry Ford, and made Newbury the centre of pre-industrial cloth trading in developed Europe. Dick Whittington was a very successful cloth trader at that time and would have visited Newbury. Had he chosen to settle here, perhaps the pantomime would celebrate Whittington as ‘Lord Mayor of Newbury’.

Oliver Cromwell commanded a force of Parliamentary cavalry in the Second Battle of Newbury in 1644 as King Charles ran for his life. Glenn Miller played at the Corn Exchange during his last tour in 1944 and Eisenhower visited Newbury on 5th June 1944 to meet airborne troops about to be involved in the Normandy landings. We burned both Catholics and Protestants in Enborne Street, offered hospitality to Horatio Nelson whilst he travelled from Bath to London. We even get a mention in the Domesday Book (ironically as part of Thatcham), as William the Conqueror and then William II began to organise the collection of taxes to support the defence and welfare of the Norman Kingdom.

Then there are the Peace Women, who for nearly 20 years became the conscience of many Ministers of Defence as the ‘cold war’ thawed and eventually drew to a close. I visited Greenham Common that day in April 1983 when the peace protesters organised a 14 mile linking of hands between all of Berkshire’s nuclear sites, and again in December when 30,000 women held hands to ‘embrace the base’. These events were what we call today ‘a media frenzy’, and projected the events in Newbury onto every TV channel and into every newspaper around the world.

*Two views of Greenham Common;
101st Airborne prepare for D-Day in 1944 &
the peace protests (below) which lasted for nearly 20 years.*

I remember that it even got a mention in a booklet of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union encouraging unilateral disarmament for NATO members.

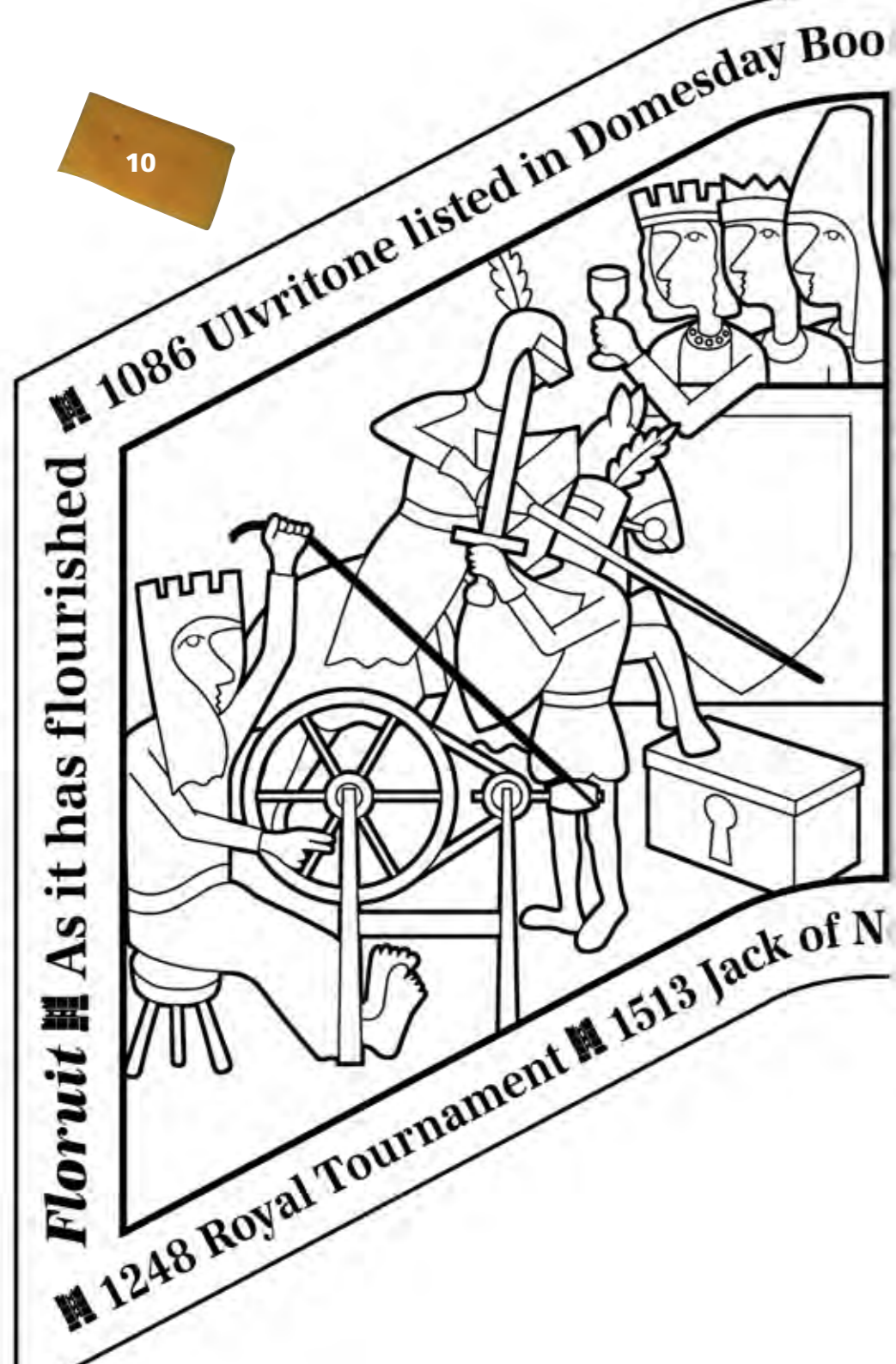
Today, Greenham Common is the relatively peaceful home to a growing number of enterprises both large and small, ably and generously overseen by Greenham Common Trust.

As the ideas for the content of the mosaic developed, it was more a case of deciding what to include rather than searching for content. To condense it all into 12 panels was quite a challenge.

Each panel was created either individually or in tandem with the surrounding panels. Initial ‘scamps’ or visual notes evolved into drawings. The primary aim was that the piece should work visually as well as being historically accurate.

The drawings were transposed to the Apple Macintosh and rendered, whereby line weight, layering etc could be specified and kept consistent throughout. It was important to be accurate in this project, as these vector drawings would become the basis for the computer-controlled milling. Mistakes could be very expensive!



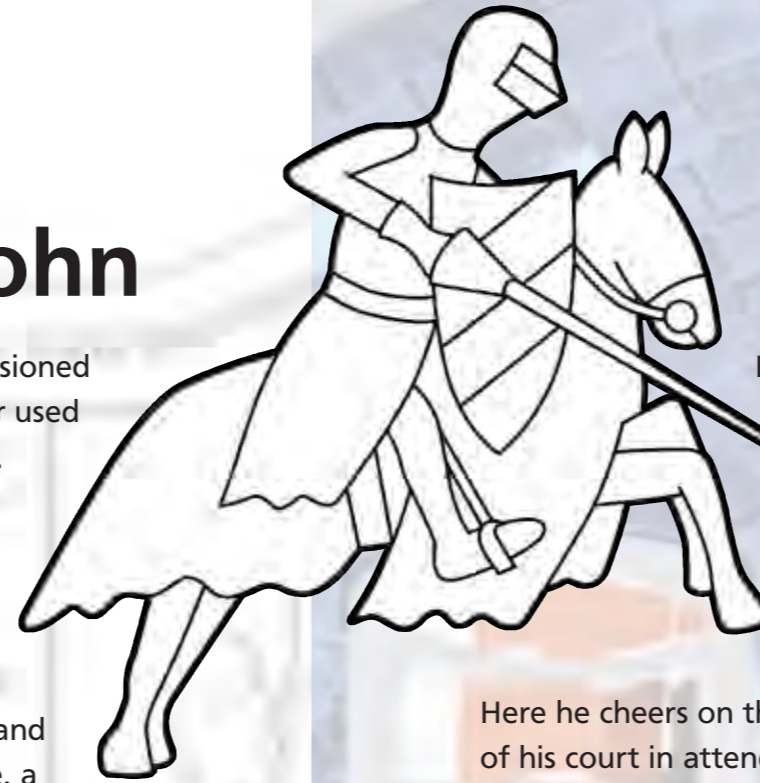


Domesday Book & King John

The story starts with the Domesday Book, commissioned in 1085 and begun in 1086. William the Conqueror used the information that was collected to raise money. These taxes were used to bribe King Canute of Denmark and King Olaf of Norway to stop sending marauders to England. This is generally recognised as the first instance of the state collecting information about income and property - in other words William invented the Inland Revenue! Newbury is included as part of Ulvritone, a manor within Thatcham Hundred, and many believe that this is where the competitive relationship between Newbury and Thatcham started.

Pictured under the hoof of the jousting horse is one of the Domesday chests.

Legend has it that King John hid whilst on a visit to Newbury and disguised himself as a spinning woman to escape murderous opponents. The year is 1200, and I was very careful to include a spinning wheel of the right kind, taken from the 14th century Luttrell Psalter.



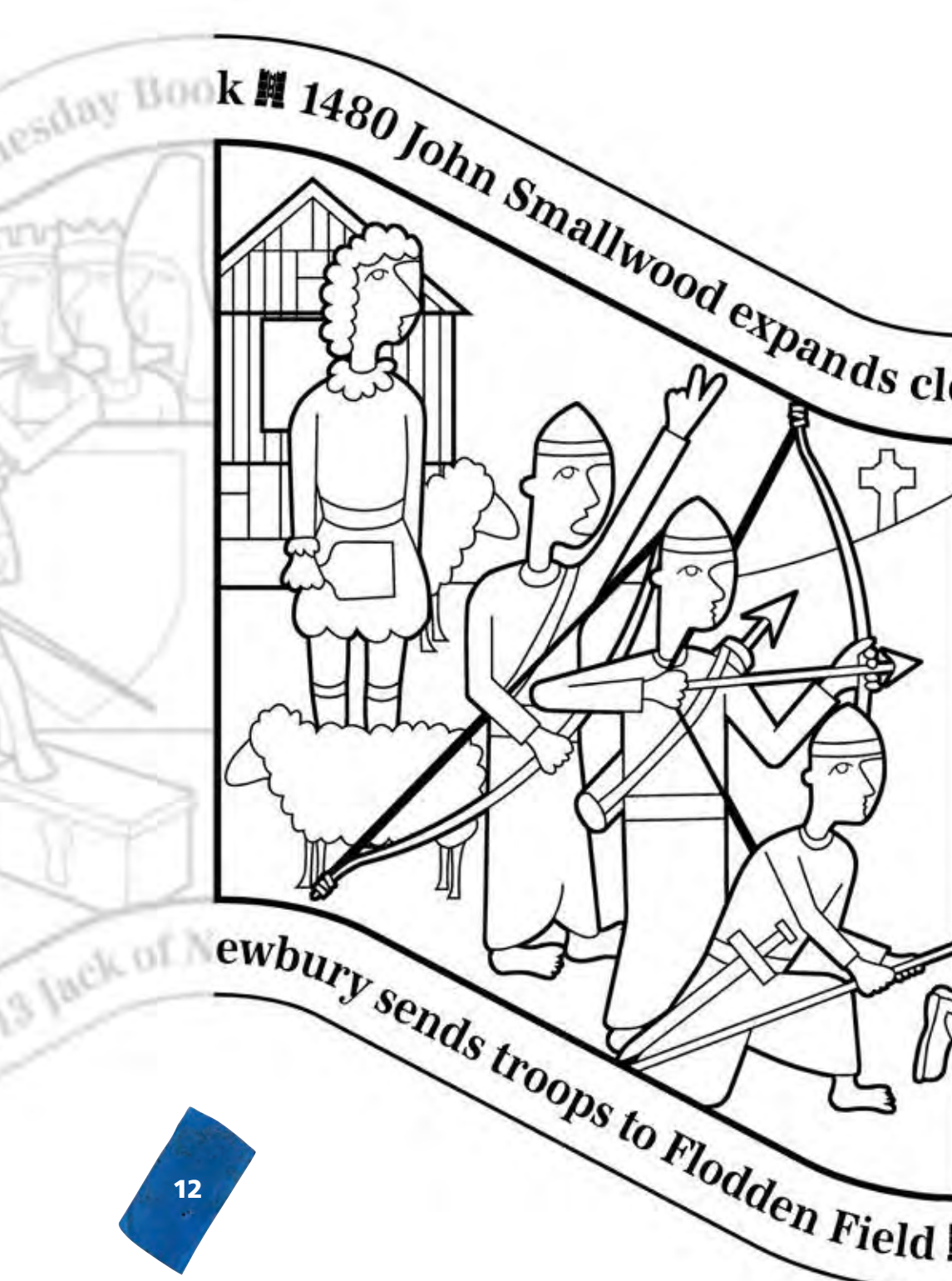
It was a type common before the invention of pedal-powered spinning wheels.

In 1248, King Henry III hosted a Royal Tournament in Newbury. Here he cheers on the contestants, with members of his court in attendance.



Spinning wool from the Luttrell Psalter circa 1350.





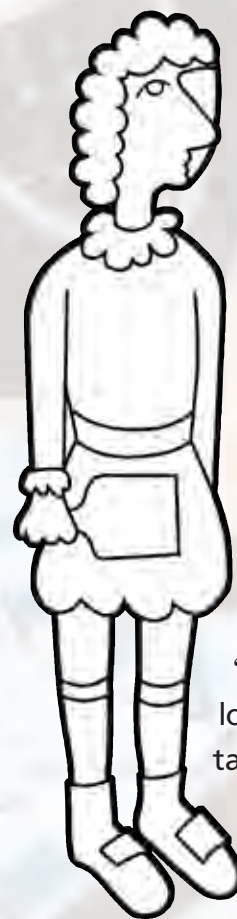
Jack & the Battle of Flodden Field

Jack of Newbury, or John Smallwood, escaped a monastic life of sobriety and celibacy and came to Newbury as a young man. He began working in the cloth trade, and within a few years had inherited his former employer's business and his wife as well! Newbury became one of the major centres of the cloth trade in Europe, with Jack at the centre of it. He was rich and powerful, and friend and host to Royalty.

In 1513 the English were at war with both the French and the Scottish, with the bulk of the English army in France. By royal decree, able-bodied men not yet in war service were required to enlist and march to Scotland. Jack was asked to provide a few men, but he led 50 fully-equipped horsemen and 50 pikemen/bowmen. Whether they ever saw action is doubtful, but a contemporary ballad sings their praises in glowing terms, which becomes the basis for this panel.

My inclusion of this caused some consternation in the local museum. Some expressed a wish to have it removed and see other aspects of what were described as 'the real history of Newbury' in its place. However, on reflection, I considered that the archers with their bare feet and

Detail of the brickwork in the remaining part of Jack's house in Northbrook Street.



provocative gesturing at their enemy, however far-fetched, were much more interesting than a picture of a cloth hall or some such building. So it stayed, complete with the Flodden Memorial in the background.

In 16th century England, use of the longbow was a national requirement and, so effective were English longbowmen in battle, their enemies used to cut off English prisoners' index and middle fingers. The 'V' sign was a gesture used by posturing longbowmen to indicate to their (soon to be dead) targets that English archers were still fully operational.

Jack stands with his sheep and his wool comb in front of his house in Northbrook Street. The building, some of which still stands, is very distinctive with its black beams and herringbone pattern brick infill.



The Newberrie Archers at Flodden Field

Come, Archers, learn the news I telle
To the Honour of your Arte,
The Scottyshe Kinge at Flodden fell
By the point of an Englyshe Darte;
Though Fyre and Pyke did wond'rous thynges,
More wonders styll dyd wee,
And ev'ry Tongue with rapture syngs
Of the Laddes of Newberrie.

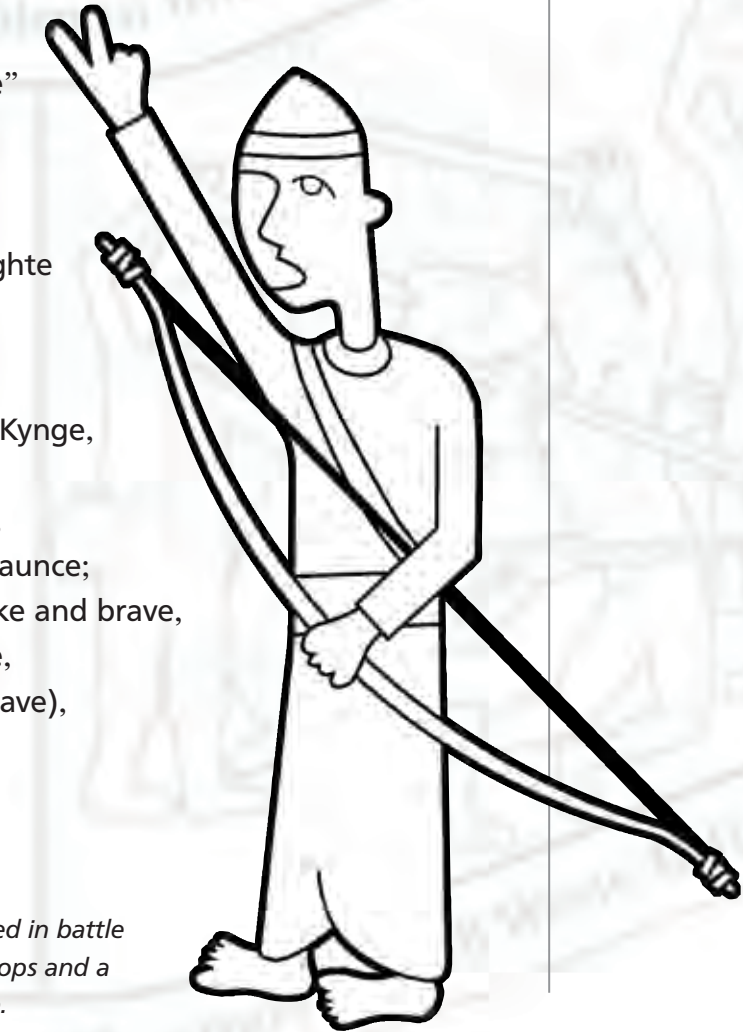
The Bonnie Laddes of Westmorelande,
And the Chesshyre Laddes were there
With Glee theye took theyre Bows in Hande
And wythe shoutes disturb'd the Ayre.
Awaye they sent the Grey Goose Wynges,
Each kylled his two or three;
Yet none so loude with fame dyd rynges
As the Laddes of Newberrie.

They swore to scale the Mountayne bolde,
Where some in vayne had try'de;
That theyre Toes myghte take the better holde
Theyre Bootes they caste asyde.
Barefooted soone theye reach'd the hyghte,
'Twas a gudellie syghte to see,
Howe faste the Scottes were put to flyghte
By the Laddes of Newberrie.

Lord Stanlie sawe with much delyghte
And loude was heard to saye,
"Eche oughte, by Jove, to be
a Knyghte,
For to theme wee owe the Daye"
The Chesshyre Laddes began
the route,
And the Kendall Boys so free,
But none of theme all have foughte
more stoute
Than the Laddes of Newberrie.

Now God pres'rve our Lord the Kynge,
Who travaills farre in France,
And let us all of Bowmen synge,
Whyle rounde our Cuppes we Daunce;
The Chesshyre Laddes were briske and brave,
And the Kendall Laddes are free,
But none surpass'd, (or I'm a knave),
The Laddes of Newberrie.

Legend has us believe that Jack engaged in battle against the Scots with 50 mounted troops and a further 50 footmen with bow and pike.



Jack with John & Frances West

By this time Jack has married Alice, his former employer's widow, and extended what is now his cloth business. He, established what some consider to be the first factory in England, employing some 1,000 men, women and children who operated some 200 looms in one huge building. A contemporary historian describes him as "the most considerable clothier England ever beheld".

Jack is pictured as he is in the brass in St Nicolas' Church, dressed as a wealthy merchant.

St Nicolas' Church was built between 1500 and 1532 and looked very much as it appears today. The tower was added with some considerable financial help from Jack, and here he stands with the mason's tools and materials at his feet. In the background, the Church is shown, complete with Victorian additions and clock.

To the left are John and Frances West, wealthy residents of Newbury in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Childless themselves, legend has it that they encountered a child from Christ's Hospital begging on the steps of St Nicolas' Church. They were so moved by this sight that they used their fortune to establish a trust which supports scholars at

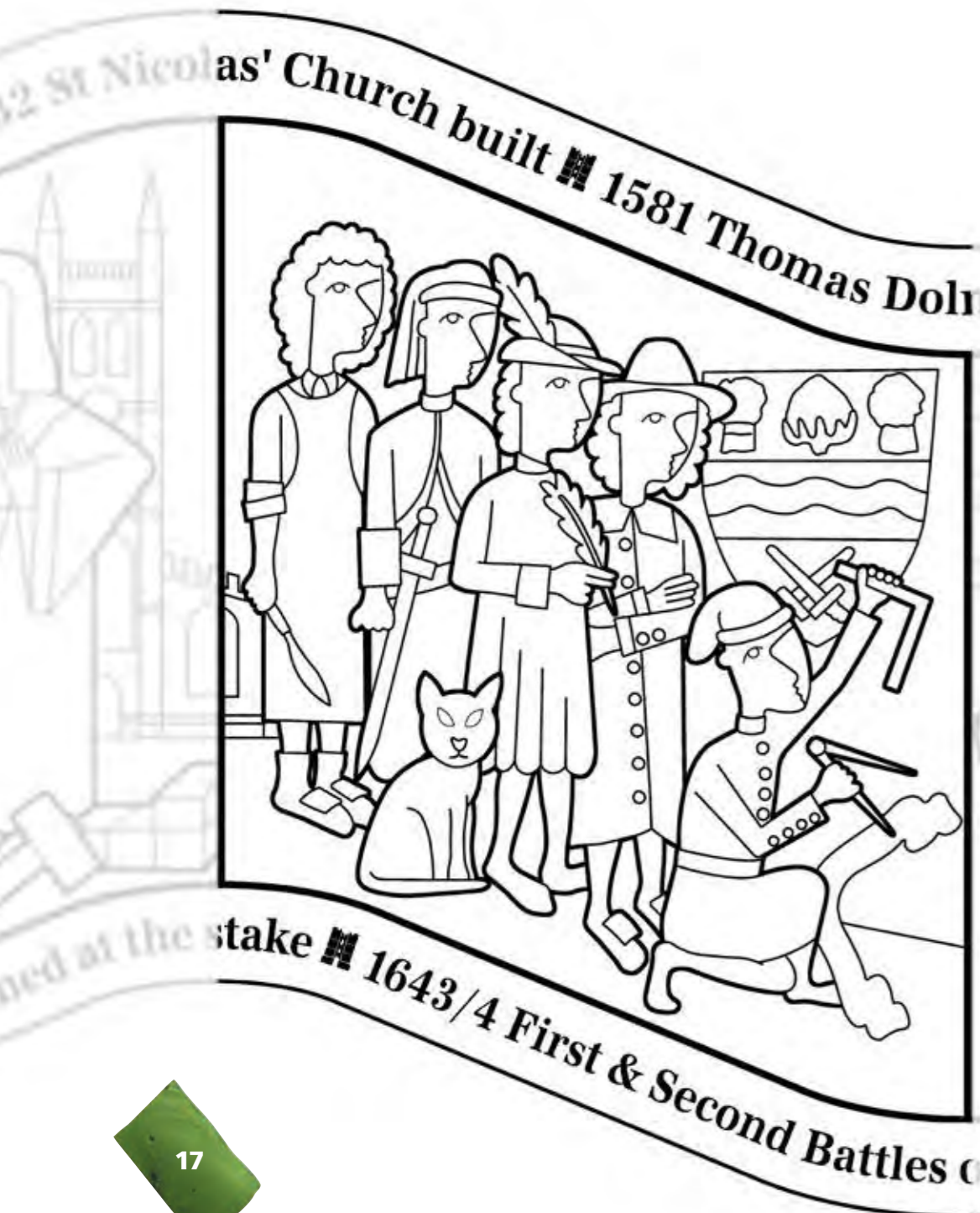


West Gift Scholar at Christ's Hospital wearing traditional ceremonial uniform complete with scholarship badge.

Christ's Hospital through what is now called 'The West Gift'. Scholars wear a badge on their uniform to indicate this generous support.

Christ's Hospital was, and indeed still is, a Bluecoat School. It was established by Edward VI in 1552 to educate orphans and the children of the poor and needy. In the early days rats were a constant problem, especially at night, so the students would soak their socks in saffron, the smell of which rats hate (apparently), and

place these socks near their heads to ensure an undisturbed night's sleep. It was the saffron that turned their socks yellow. Even today, Christ's Hospital students wear the traditional attire of a Bluecoat School, complete with yellow socks. I am assured by the school that there are no longer any rats!



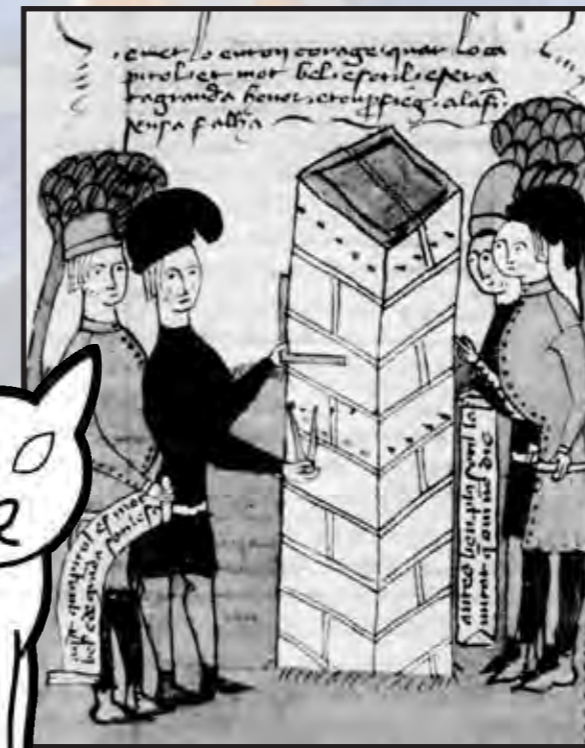
Founding the Borough of Newbury

In 1596, Queen Elizabeth granted Newbury a Royal Charter. The town was to be governed by a Mayor and Corporation. There were to be five companies for the principal trades in Newbury: Tanners (people who tan animal hides into leather), including Barbers and Surgeons; Mercers, including all Provision Dealers and Apothecaries (Chemists); Clothiers (Tailors), including Scriveners and Schoolmasters; Weavers and Clothmakers; Braziers, including Masons, Carpenters and Builders.

Barbers and Surgeons at this time mainly used to be the same person, as pictured in this panel. Before the invention and use of anæsthetic, the death rate on the surgeon's table was high, as was the cost of the surgery. Surgeons would supplement their income by cutting hair and removing teeth. How would they have coped with league tables?

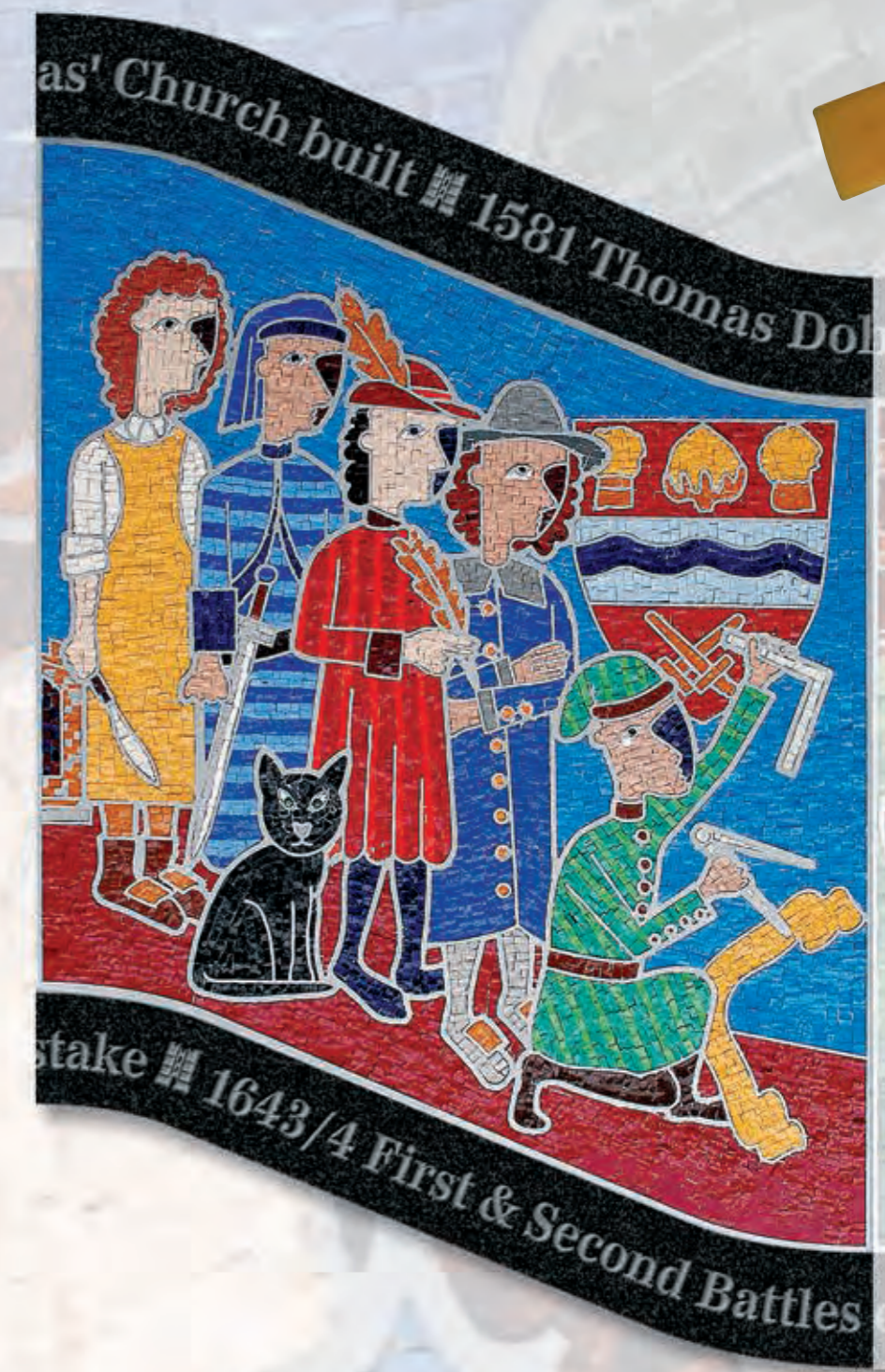
Mercers were traders in high quality cloth. Many would travel throughout Europe finding and selling these cloths. As Newbury was one of the major European cloth producers, many Mercers would visit the town. Perhaps the most famous Mercer is a character known to many of us through the Christmas Pantomime (oh, no we don't!); it is of course Dick Whittington.

Stonemasons with compass and square circa 16th century from Caxton's Illustrated edition of The Canterbury Tales by Chaucer.

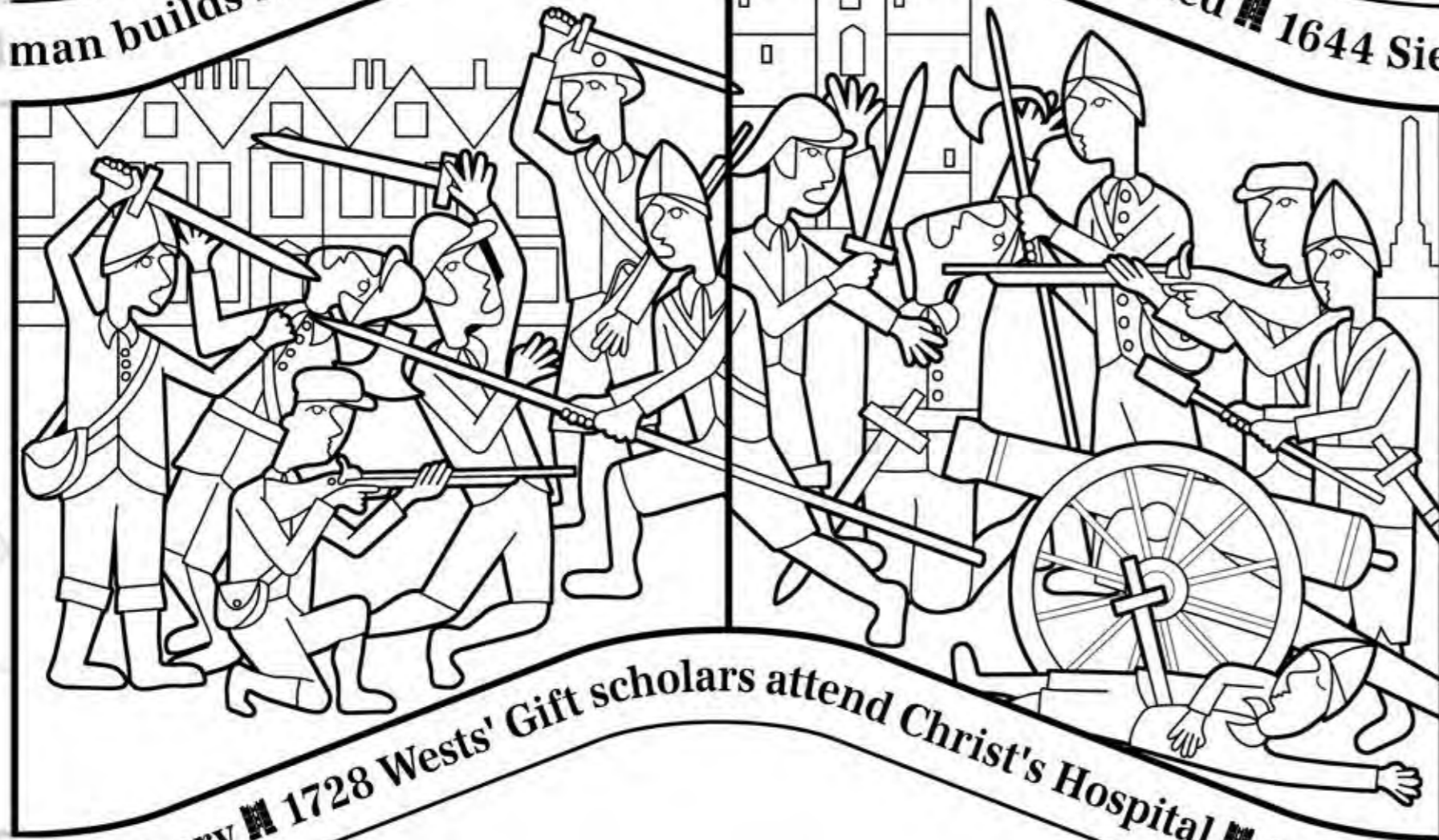


Before his political career in London, it is highly likely that in the course of his travels he would have visited Newbury to trade. In the panel, Dick is pictured with his cat, the famous feline that helped him to make his fortune and to begin his charitable work.

The Mason comes from an illustrated version of The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer. The Mason, with his compass and square, is assembling the part of the Borough Arms.



man builds Shaw House ■ 1596 Borough of Newbury formed ■ 1644 Sie



of Newbury ■ 1728 Wests' Gift scholars attend Christ's Hospital ■ 1810 Ken

The Civil War & the Battles of Newbury

Two famous battles took place at Newbury during the English Civil War, as well as a legendary siege at Donnington Castle just outside the town. For the purposes of the mosaic, I elected to combine all three events into two panels, with the distinctive landmarks in the background: Shaw House, Donnington Castle and the Falkland Memorial to the fallen Royalists.

The first battle took place on the outskirts of the town, with the Parliamentarians in the countryside and the Royalists on a hill overlooking them and blocking their retreat to London. Over 20,000 men took part in the battle of 20th September 1643, and accounts of it indicate that more men died on this day than on D-Day, 6th June 1944.

The lanes were choked with the dead and the dying, whilst the Royalist cannons at what is now 'The Gun' public house and Battery End bombarded the London Apprentices. The battle ended at about midnight with the Parliamentarians gaining a little ground and the Royalists withdrawing under cover of darkness.



The wounded were brought into town on farm carts and treated at St Nicolas' Church. Meanwhile on the roof, troops stripped the lead to make extra shot for their muskets.

The second battle in October 1644 was centred around Shaw House, Speen and Bagnor. Charles, having relieved a siege at Donnington Castle, was attacked by Parliamentarian forces. In an attempt to destroy Charles' forces, the Parliamentarians engaged in a famous flanking movement. They divided their army and marched 15 miles in order to attack the Royalists from both sides. Charles had withdrawn to Bagnor, and an unco-ordinated attack meant that this battle was inconclusive, just as the first had been. Oliver Cromwell took part in the second battle, but his cavalry proved ineffective.

It is worth remembering that communications at this time were virtually non-existent. To split a force at night, move troops silently and secretly, and then have the divided forces attack the same objective the following day, was an impressive achievement.

In the first panel troops are engaged in front of Shaw House. Even to this day, it is still possible see the musket dents in the brickwork at the front of the building.

The Civil War & Siege of Donnington Castle

The Siege of Donnington Castle lasted some 20 months. Captured and held by the Royalists, Cromwell wanted it reduced to rubble. It virtually was by the time it was returned to its rightful owner in 1646. The

Parliamentarians had deployed all manner of assaults on the castle walls and earthworks, including a huge siege cannon. By all accounts, the Royalists under John Boys were particularly effective at mounting raiding parties, which crept up on the besieging troops and stole food, supplies and munitions before returning to the castle.

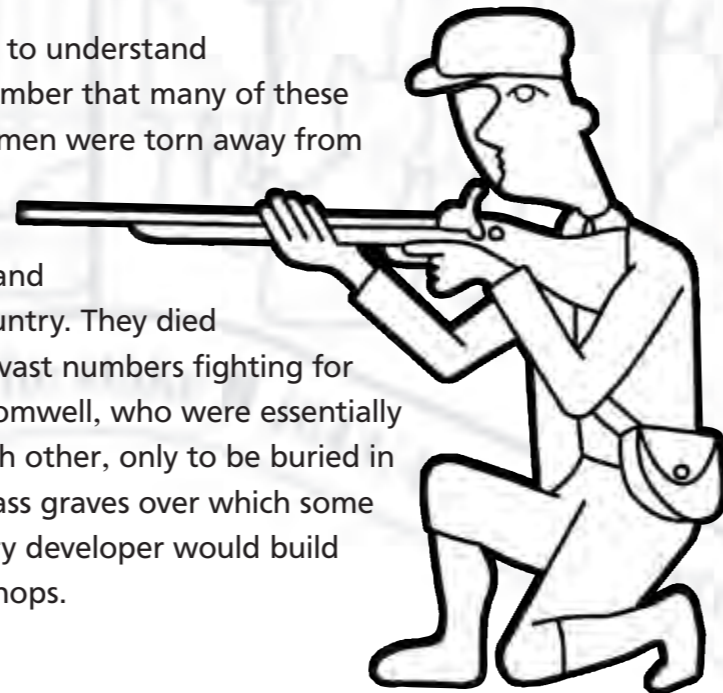
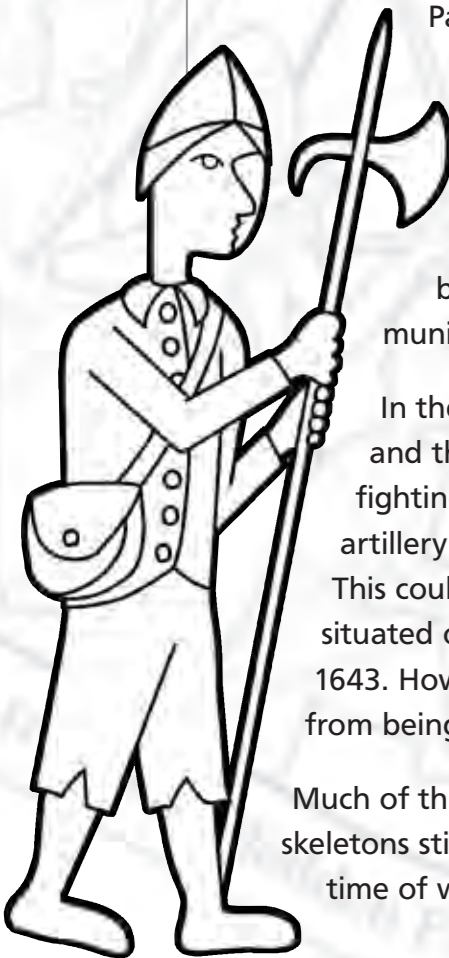
In the second Civil War panel, Donnington Castle and the Falkland Memorial are the backdrop to the fighting that takes place. Royalists defend their artillery position against advancing Parliamentarians. This could be Battery End, where the cannon were situated on the high ground above the battlefield in 1643. However, poor reconnaissance prevented them from being decisive on the day.

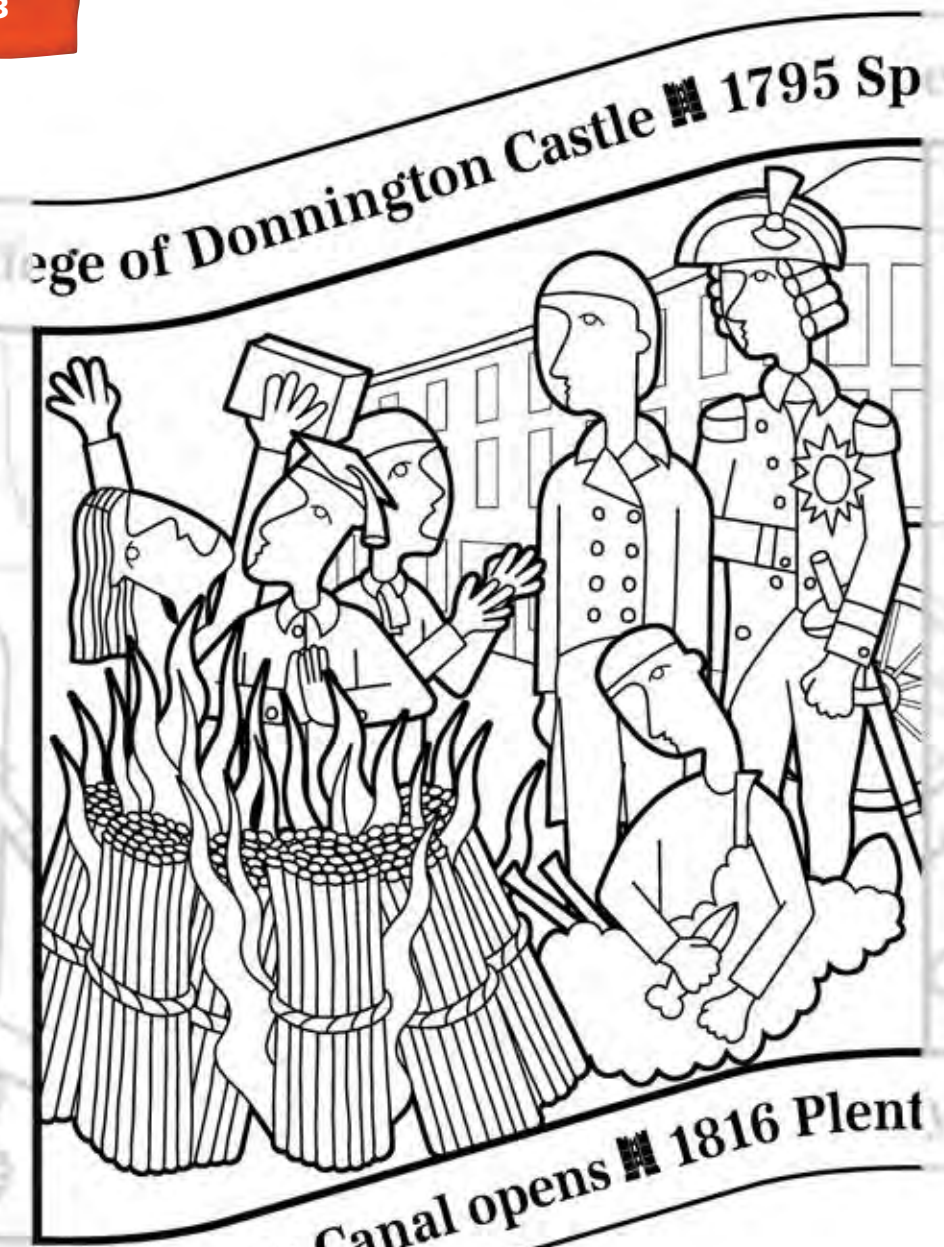
Much of this area is now farmland, with artifacts and skeletons still being turned up during ploughing. At the time of writing, my son goes to Enborne School, on the

very field of the first battle. One of his friends lives in Essex Street, named after the Parliamentary commander, the Earl of Essex. This boy is at an age when some say that young people are vulnerable to visits from unsettled spirits.

It may sound like nonsense, but his father, a very down to earth sort of man, believes that his son has been disturbed by a spirit from this battle. It really is like 'Poltergeist' (the famous horror film): freezing air in a warm room; objects moving around when the room is empty; noises in the middle of a still night.

You can start to understand it if you remember that many of these fallen young men were torn away from their homes to march endlessly up and down the country. They died unfulfilled in vast numbers fighting for Charles or Cromwell, who were essentially as bad as each other, only to be buried in unmarked mass graves over which some money-hungry developer would build houses and shops.





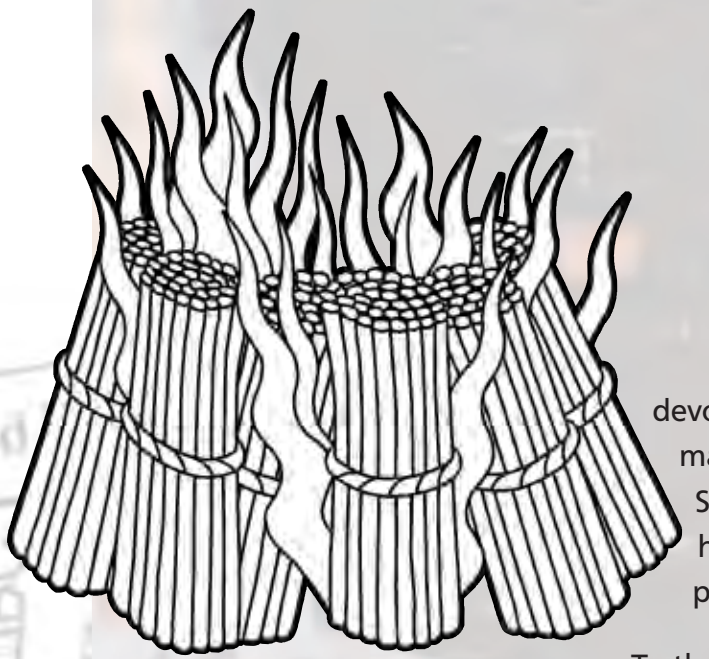
Newbury Martyrs of 1518 & 1556

If you read John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs', it is possible to conclude that burning people at the stake for their religious beliefs was the pastime of choice in 16th century England. Four men were martyred in Newbury, at almost the same spot and less than 40 years apart.

The first was Christopher Shoemaker, burned at the stake for reading aloud from an English translation of the Bible. It was only as late as 1962 when the Pope, after the Second Vatican Council, stated that a mass could be given in a language other than Latin.

John Gwin, Thomas Askew and Julius (Julins) Palmer were convicted and executed together. Not a great deal is known of the first two, but Palmer was immortalised in Reverend Foxe's book after his refusal of an offer of land, money and a wife in exchange for his affirmation of the Catholic doctrine. They were tried and sentenced at St Nicolas' Church by, amongst others, John Winchcombe - Jack of Newbury's son.

In this panel, the three latter martyrs are surrounded by faggots as the flames leap up to their faces. Palmer, a

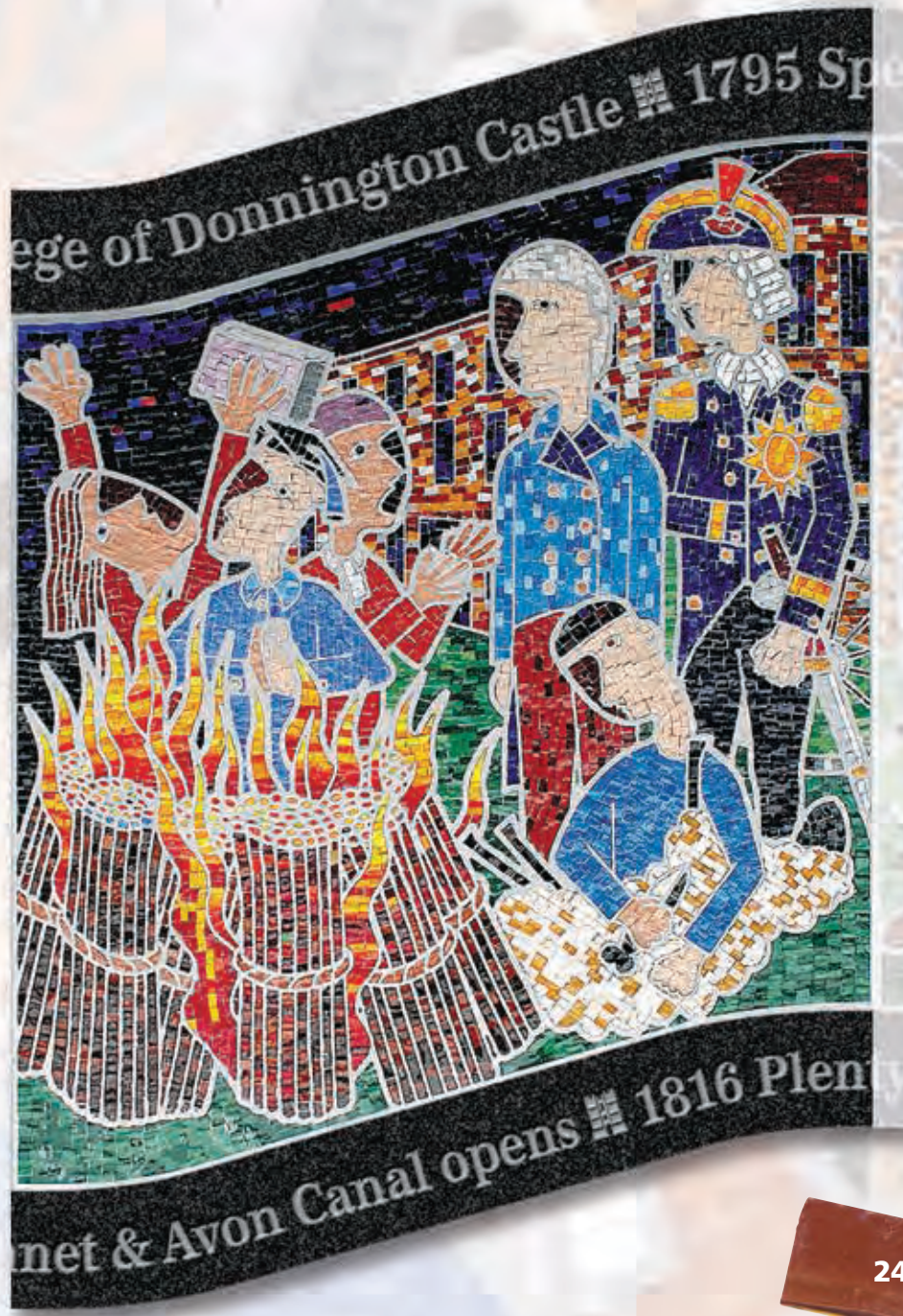


devout Protestant and former master of Reading Grammar School, is said to have raised his face to the heavens and prayed as his life ended.

To the right of the panel stands Sir John Throckmorton who in 1811 wagered 1,000 guineas that a coat could be made in a single day. The sheep were be shorn in the morning and their wool fashioned into a coat to be worn to dinner on the same evening.

On 25th June 1811, the wager began under the direction of John Coxeter and was duly accomplished with an evening celebration during which 120 gallons of strong beer were consumed. The whole episode was an attempt to revive the failing cloth industry and to prove the speed and efficiency of modern machinery. The coat was shown at the 1851 Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace. In 1991 a repeat performance took place, with this coat now on display in Newbury Museum.

Behind Throckmorton and the sheep shearer is Horatio Nelson, a regular visitor to Newbury on his travels between

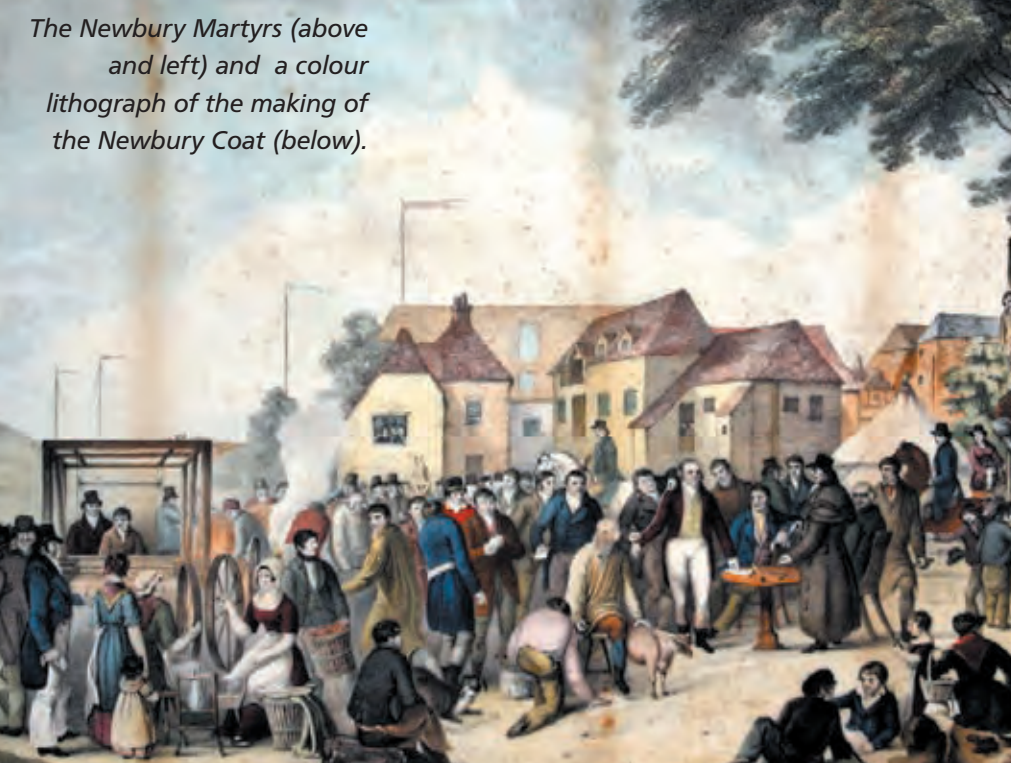


London and Bath. He had family in Shaw-cum-Donnington and was a regular guest at an hotel called the George and Pelican.

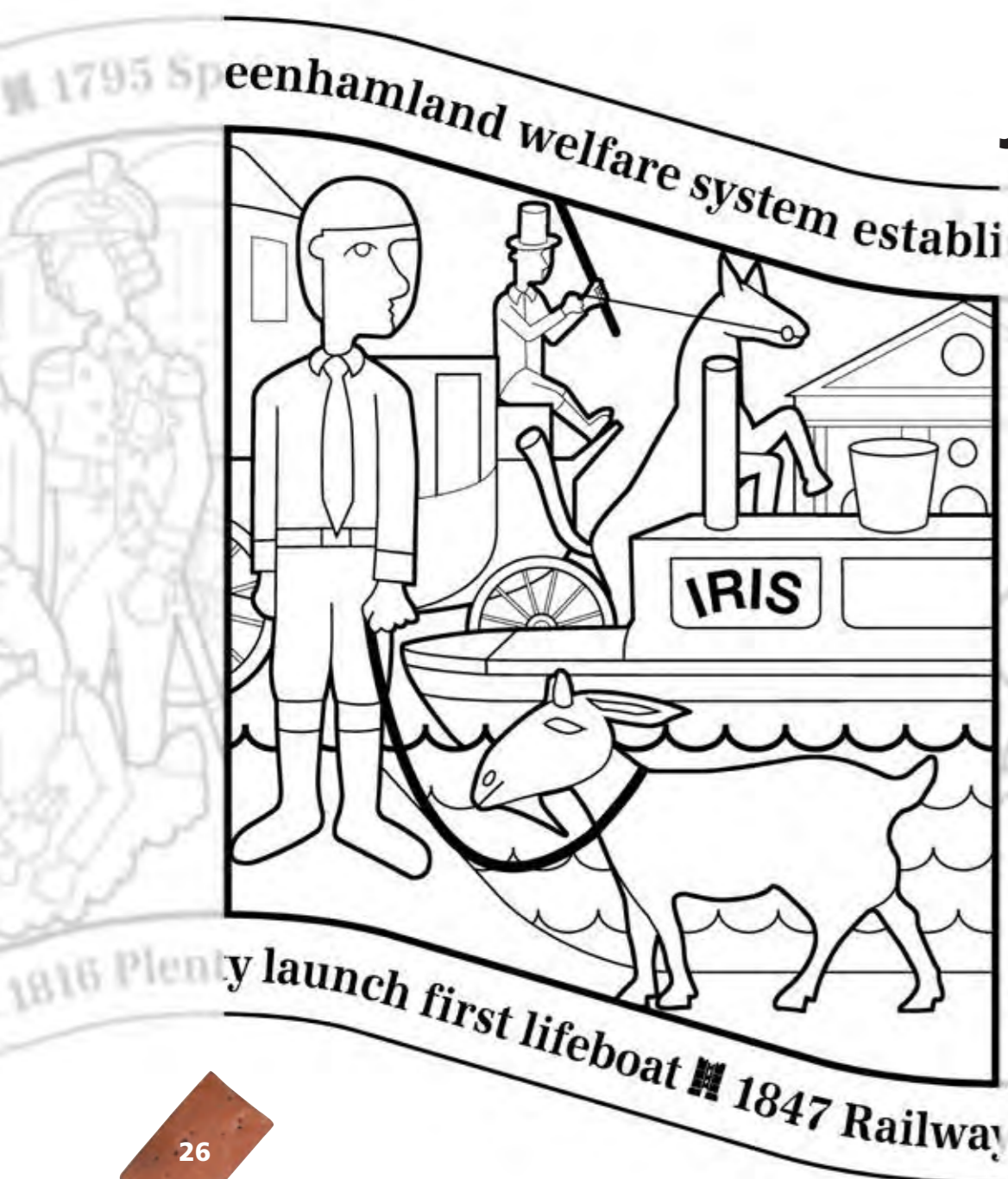
In the background is the aforesaid George and Pelican. This was one of many coaching inns established in Newbury because of its geographical location halfway between Bath and London. The Pelican appears to have been quite a place, with travellers drinking and partying until early morning whilst being 'bled white' by the landlord. One visiting actor, suspecting that guests were systematically overcharged, quipped:

"The famous inn at Speenhamland
That stands below the hill
May well be called the Pelican
From its enormous bill."

Other coaching inns that have survived to the present day in some form include the Chequers, the Bacon Arms and the Cross Keys.



The Newbury Martyrs (above and left) and a colour lithograph of the making of the Newbury Coat (below).



John Gould & the Kennet & Avon Canal

A coach and horses, continued from panel 7, is the backdrop to John Gould. With one of his narrowboats, 'Iris', and his inimitable goat, Gould was the catalyst that led to the regeneration of the Kennet and Avon Canal, and the founder of what is now the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.

The canal is a continuous waterway that links Reading and Bath. The canal joins the River Kennet at Newbury and the River Avon at Bath and is some 27 miles long. It was completed in 1810, quite late in the canal era, but due to the expansion of rail travel never made a profit for its investors. In 1846 it was sold to The Great Western Railway Company who let it fall into disrepair and discouraged its use through high tariffs. For much of its length, the railway line follows the same route as the canal, as railway companies purchased the long strips of land beside the canals to build their line at the least possible cost.

By the 1950s the canal was in a dangerous state of disrepair, and its then owners, the British Transport Commission, were lobbied and eventually sued by John Gould for failing to keep the canal navigable. Gould was awarded a substantial sum in an out-of-court settlement,

Wyn, John Gould's wife, on board their narrowboat Colin with Iris in the foreground.



and this proved to be a turning point in the revival of the canal's fortunes.

From the late 1950s to the 1990s Gould was heavily involved in the restoration of the canal to its present state which includes a line of 29 successive locks, 16 with side ponds, at Caen Hill in Devizes.

His widow, Wyn, placed the final pieces in this panel.



The Racecourse & Glenn Miller



Race meetings had taken place in Newbury as far back as 1740, but it was not until 1904 that plans were made to have a purpose built course in Greenham. The plot of land adjoining the railway was purchased by the Newbury Racecourse Company, whose legal representative was no less than Mr G Gardner Leader (significant if you are familiar with the town). In 1905 the course was opened for its first race meeting.

Today it is the venue for prestigious races such as the Dubai Stakes and Hennessy Gold Cup. Hennessy's sponsorship is the longest of any race, dating back to 1957, and in the drawing the horses are cheered home with a large glass of brandy.

The colours of the competing horses became the Queen Mother's and Lord Carnarvon's and were placed by a former jockey, Stan Mellor, who had raced at Newbury.

Behind, a racegoer holds a paper, commemorating 'pig and paper day'. Thursday is traditionally the day when the first market of the week takes place and the local paper, Newbury Weekly News, is published.



Captain Glenn Miller's plane was lost over the English Channel on 15th December 1944. His remains were never recovered leading some to think that he mistakenly flew into a zone where allied bombers dropped unused ordnance and was downed by friendly fire.

At the back, Glenn Miller plays his trombone. The American Military has a long and strong connection with Newbury, as will be detailed in the next panels. Miller played one of his final dates at the Corn Exchange,

Newbury, before embarking on the fateful flight to France where he was lost in action.

When working on this panel an elderly lady, Florence Marks, visited me at my studio. She had been at that very concert and remembered it well. Fans of 'Big Band' will appreciate just what it means to have met someone who has been to a Glenn Miller concert.

As we moved into the modern era, there are many people who had either 'been there' at moments when history was made, or knew someone who had. It is enriching to think that as I was researching this history, I was beginning to encounter some who had been a part of it. Meeting Florence was like meeting someone who had been to an Elvis concert or knew John Lennon. Her memories offer a priceless and fascinating insight.





The eyes of the world are upon you . . .

The link with the American Military continues in this panel, which portrays the visit of General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force, to elements of 101st Airborne based at Greenham Common. This panel is based on a photograph taken during Eisenhower's visit, when he stopped to chat to Airborne troops preparing to jump into occupied France and spearheading Operation 'Overlord'.

Events that took place in and around Newbury have since been immortalised in 'Band of Brothers', a book by historian Stephen Ambrose and later a series of films produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. Band of Brothers details the fortunes of Easy Company, 506 Parachute Infantry Regiment, based at Aldbourne, and their experiences during the invasion of Europe.

In the panel I took great pains to ensure that the weapons the troops carried - the M1 and Thomson - were correct as well as the uniforms, insignia and C47 Skytrain transport in the background. The number 23 denotes the number of the aircraft in which this soldier and his platoon was due to fly to France.

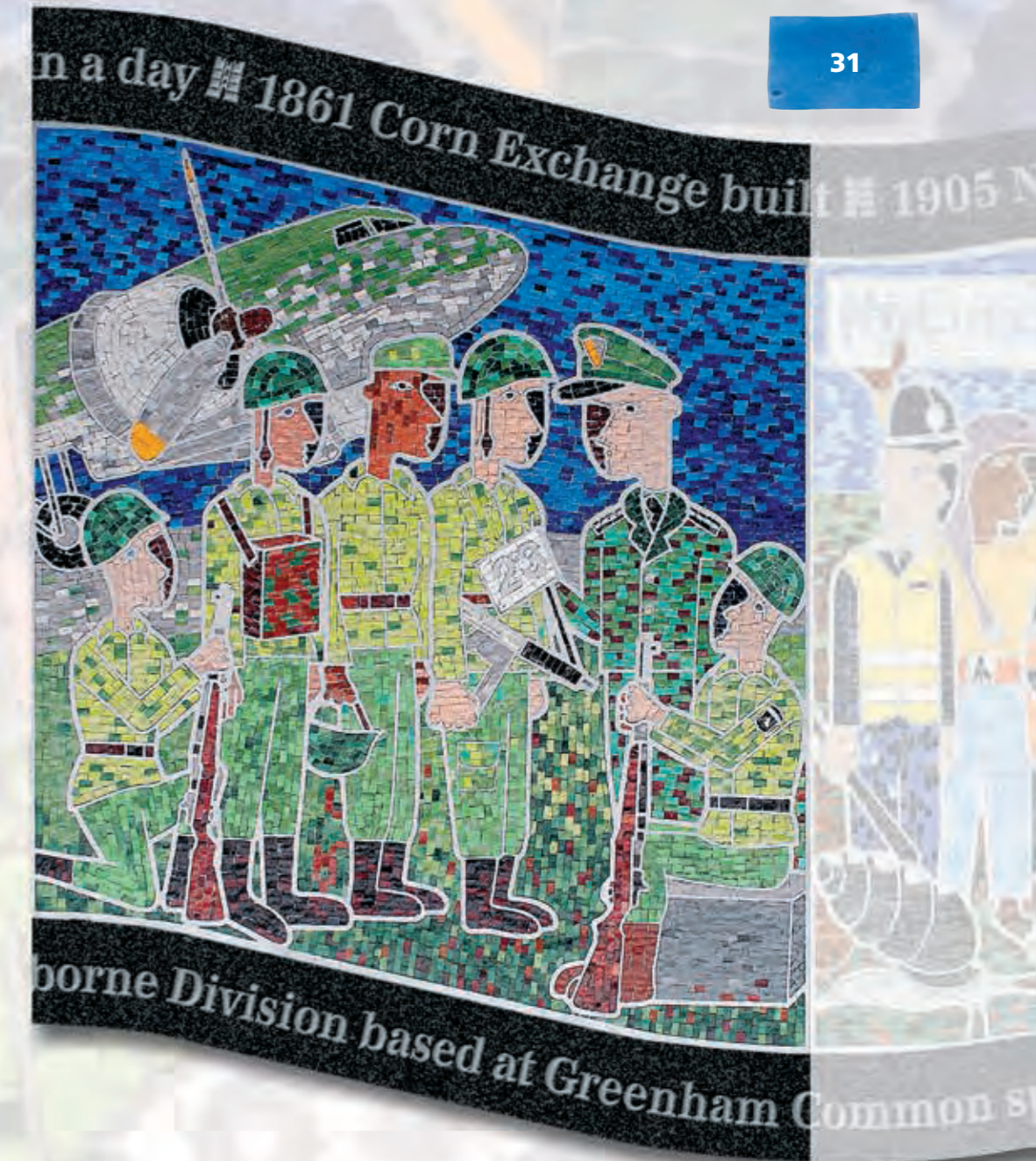


Eisenhower chats to Lt Wallace Strobel (wearing 23) shortly before 101st Airborne undertake their part of the invasion of mainland Europe, 5th June 1944.

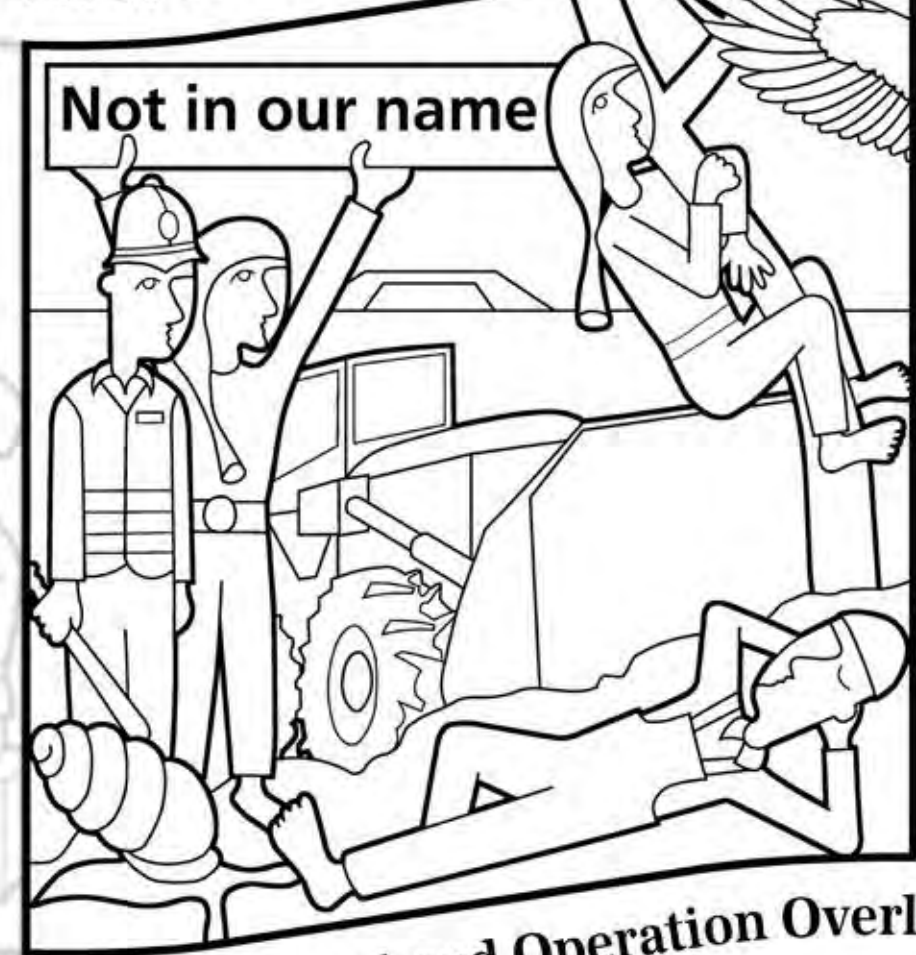


My studio is on the site of the former RAF Greenham Common. Whilst working on the drawing for this panel, the 101st Airborne Association had organised a visit to the site by veterans of the war and post war period to honour those who had fallen. They took refreshments in the restaurant opposite my studio, and some of them wandered in to see what I was doing.

One old chap peered with some interest at the photograph and then the drawing. He explained that he had served at Greenham with the 101st Airborne during WW2 and had taken part in this operation. He then proceeded to name many of the individuals in the photograph, stating who they were and what they did. The man wearing the number 23 is 1st Lt Wallace Strobel of E Company, 502 PIR.



1905 Newbury Racecourse opens



Common spearhead Operation Overlord

Two decades of protest

The base ceased to be of any military importance after the end of WW2 and was closed in 1946. As the cold war became colder and the perceived threat from the East more significant, it reopened. Between 1951 and 1979, it became host to a number of different military aircraft including Stratojets (nuclear capable), B52 Stratofortress, F1-11 fighter bombers (very noisy) and KC135 Air Transports (the loudest in USAF). There was an alleged nuclear accident in 1958 when an airborne Stratojet dropped its fuel tanks on to a stationary one and set off fires that lasted 16 hours; and, again, in 1963 when another Stratojet crashed on landing. All accusations of radioactive contamination were denied and have been ever since.

From 1973 the RAF held their International Air Tattoo at Greenham. I moved to Newbury around that time and can well remember selling programmes at the then biennial event. In 1979 a row developed between the British Government and USAF over the use of Greenham for KC135 Tankers. In the end the tankers were sent to Fairford as they posed a serious accident threat to surrounding areas of importance such as AWE Aldermaston (not to mention Burghfield Common weapons store) and caused excessive



Early days of the Peace Camp outside Yellow Gate at Greenham Common.

noise in areas of concentrated population. The USAF then decided to base

intercontinental ballistic missiles at Greenham which were, in contrast, relatively safe and quiet.

On 5th September 1981 the Welsh group 'Women for life on earth' arrived at Yellow Gate, Greenham Common, to deliver a statement of intent to challenge the deployment of 96 'Cruise' missiles. They were, of course, ignored, and within six months they had established a Women's Peace Camp at Yellow Gate. The camp lasted for over 19 years, and became the focal point of international protest and media interest.

Initially, there was much local hostility towards the Peace Women and they were regularly set upon or verbally abused by townspeople. Rumours abounded about 'vigilante' groups that would go out on a Friday or Saturday night and hurl abuse or some kind of projectile at the protesters. Camp residents were prevented from using bathing facilities at Northcroft Recreation Centre.



In 1982 some 30,000 people made a human chain around the perimeter of Greenham Common at the so called 'Embrace the Base' protest. At a further demonstration in 1983 all nuclear sites in Berkshire (Greenham Common, Aldermaston, Harwell, Burghfield Common) were linked by 70,000 protesters holding hands.

I was there at Greenham on both occasions, not as a protester but as an interested observer. The site was packed with protesters and media on one side, and police and more media on the other. There were dirty children and camp fires and all sorts of weird and wonderful characters in various states of getting covered in mud. The road was completely blocked with cars and vans and I remember that it was very noisy - not with sirens and such like, but with voices, all talking, all at the same time. People were moving around together and against each other like eddies in a stream.

Some years later I had cause to meet residents of both Yellow Gate and Blue Gate (the Peace Campers having split into two groups). Whilst I must state that I did not and probably never shall share the Peace Campers' politics, for what it's worth, I did find that on the many occasions when I met them they were very friendly and polite, and extremely likeable.

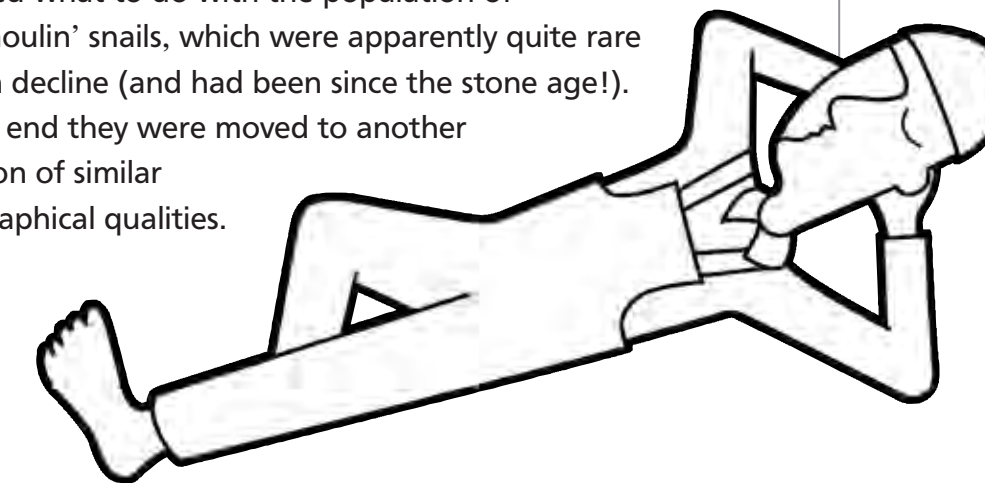
In the drawing, there is a protester holding a sign bearing one of their slogans. She stands next to a policeman and in the distance is one of the silos.

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact, combined with the US investment in ballistic missile submarines, meant that by 1990 the missiles had gone. In 1992 the base was closed.

Protest continues with the saga of the Newbury Bypass, pictured on the right. Although the debate about the bypass had been rumbling on since the 1980s, the 'Third Battle of Newbury' took place in 1996, and protesters remained on the route until well into 1997. Newbury was again the centre of media attention, as contractors worked around protesters chained to the tops of tree, or entombed in tunnels underground, like 'Swampy'. Others lay in front of machinery. Costs spiralled by 60% to £125 million, mainly for security.

Ironically, the airbase again played a controversial role as the runway was dug up to become the hardcore for the road. Questions were raised afresh about whether the concrete had been contaminated by nuclear material.

At one point, construction was halted whilst conservationists decided what to do with the population of 'Desmoulin' snails, which were apparently quite rare and in decline (and had been since the stone age!). In the end they were moved to another location of similar geographical qualities.





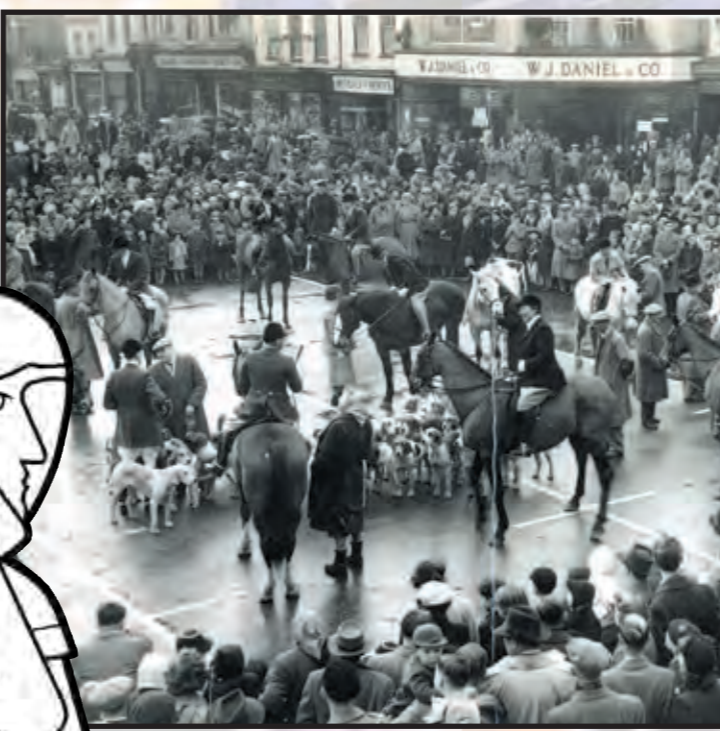
Industry & nature

Greenham Common Trust purchased the former airbase in March 1997. They restored the common and have been developing the brownfield sites ever since. There is much new industry there. Pictured is the English Provender Company, whilst the base water towers (since demolished) still stand in the background. Housing has been purchased and developed by Sovereign Housing Group and Sanctuary Housing, and there are several nature reserves on the common (hence the owl). Commoners have the right to graze cattle, which they exercise. It is also the current home to New Greenham Arts, where my own modest studios are based.

Newbury has also become synonymous with another industry - mobile phones - and Vodafone have their World Headquarters just outside the town. The building of this was a controversy in itself and at one point it looked as though they would relocate due to local and council resistance to their plans.

In the panel, three people talk on their mobile phones highlighting mobile conferencing and '3' facilities. The character on the right is a Muslim in traditional dress. The idea is that, in the aftermath of the Iraq wars and the continuing violence, we should promote and take part in dialogue between the different races and religions, rather than conflict.

Fox hunting has a long tradition in West Berkshire. This is the Hunt on a Boxing Day in the 1950s.



In the foreground is a fox, hinting at the fox-hunting debate which is current and ongoing in West Berkshire. There are many hunts around Newbury, and banning fox-hunting has caused a certain amount of polarisation of opinion within the town and surrounding rural communities. Both sides claim that the legislation is ineffective and that more hunting is now taking place.





Making the mosaic

We invited a total of 20 nursery, primary, junior and secondary schools to participate, and visited them between January and April 2005. Many hundreds of children and young people, as well as teaching staff, parents and carers, gave generously with their time, effort, interest and enthusiasm. I was given a warm welcome at each new venue.

Because each panel was a single item, transporting them around was possible, but not always preferable. In their raw state of machined metal, they weigh about 60kg - 80kg. As the panels progressed they got heavier, with 10kg of resin based cement and more than 20kg of glass. In conclusion, they were heavy! Add to this all of the glass smalti sorted into colours and stored in jars; all tools and equipment; a grinding wheel; all kinds of aprons, gloves, face masks and goggles. All in all we had a large amount of kit. With assistance, the panels and associated items were carted into lifts, manhandled up stairs, lowered on to nursery school tables or worked at on the floor.

Having completed a manual-handling course, I would 'walk the route' first to locate any potential obstacles or problems. On one school visit, whilst walking the route, I was taken up and down stairs, along corridors and alleyways, across the

20 schools were visited in early 2005.



school hall and through the dining area: in fact clear across the whole school site. I became more and more concerned that we would injure ourselves moving the items that we needed. When we finally reached a locked door, my guide turned to me, shrugged and said that he was sorry but we would have to take "the long route"!

In addition, when we were not engaged in school or other visits, we occupied a vacant shop unit, and opened on Thursdays and Saturdays to invite local market goers to participate. This proved to be very popular, particularly on Saturdays, when Mike Rodger, Jonny and I, along with our other helpers, would have queues of willing participants out of the door and down the street.

There were visits from jewellery groups, professional groups and associations, excluded children, retired associations, company staff and on one occasion a bus full of Japanese exchange students.

A trombone player builds Glenn Miller's trombone in panel 9.

Some people visited again and again and became not only accomplished mosaicists, but deeply involved in the build programme, sponsoring and reserving parts of the mosaic that were meaningful to themselves or their loved ones.

A trombone player completed Glenn Miller's trombone on panel 9; an archer completed the longbows on panel 2; a young mother brought her toddler in on many days on the way back from nursery; grandparents brought grandchildren. One family unbeknownst to us even left their children and dog and went shopping! More poignantly, families remembered those loved and lost by laying stars or completing favoured animals or possessions.



Two young mosaicists add their name to the list of participants.





the Newbury Mosaic

In 2005, four thousand people became part of Newbury's biggest ever public art project when they helped to make the Newbury Mosaic.

The mosaic is a visual history depicting Newbury's past events and displaying important dates in the evolution of the town from the Domesday Book in 1086 to the present day.

It includes characters such as Jack of Newbury, Horatio Nelson, John Gould, the Desmoulin Snail, Dwight D Eisenhower and Swampy.