

Special Feature In Stitches

Having been told that Mrs Gladys Avery had been researching the history of the ship on which some of her ancestors sailed to New Zealand I decided to go and talk to her. However after chatting for an hour or so I came away with a completely different story to tell!

Embroidering the Truth

Mrs Avery showed me some of the

beautiful embroidery pictures that she has worked. She started embroidery classes many years ago in the company of Janet Sladen (wife of John Hartley's one-time

cowman). Janet decided that it was not the hobby for her and moved on to crewel needlework with Pat Canning, but Gladys continued with her classes, as long as her pictures looked like what they were meant to be - no contemporary designs for her.

The first picture that Gladys stitched was a view of a bay in New Zealand, taken from a calendar. She started by transferring, with carbon paper, the picture to her linen. The picture was gradually built up with colour washes, fine netting and a variety of stitches, giving depth and texture to her work. Pleased with her success and much to the amusement of the rest of the class, Gladys decided to embroider a picture of the *SS Cospatrick*. Her brother-in-law,

who had served in the Navy, found and photographed a picture of the *SS Cospatrick* and she was ready to start. The embroidery was finally completed in 1991; Gladys thought 'Never again!'

A Tale of Two Ships

Most of us know the story of the *Cospatrick* and the memorial on Shipton village green but Gladys has also been

finding out about the *SS British King*, the ship that took three of her great uncles and a great aunt to New Zealand in 1882. This ship, one of the earliest powered by steam, cut the journey time considerably. Gladys is still in touch with this

branch of her family, receiving regular newsletters. She visited them in 1982 just before the 100th anniversary of the family landing in New Zealand.

One of these newsletters contained a photograph of the *SS British King* and Gladys was off on the embroidery trail again! It is hard to believe that these two skilful works of art are completely worked in stitches.

If you would like to see Gladys' work, take a look at the embroidered picture of Shipton village green hanging in the New Beaconsfield Hall. Four members of Shipton WI - Joyce Stewart, Janet Sladen, Vivienne Prentice and Gladys, worked this for a group competition.

Christine Halliday

