



MISCELLANY

A collection of articles on subjects
relating to textiles and dress

2011

GUEST EDITORIAL

This edition of Miscellany aims to challenge the view of lace as being a traditional textile, now relegated to dressing tables and the edges of underwear. The vast majority of lace we handle now is of little monetary worth: we have lost much of the value lace once held, in terms of both cost and experience.

Lace and the study of lace is relevant, contemporary, stimulating and eye-opening. In particular, we have tried to demonstrate how much can be learnt and inspired by looking at laces held in collections such as those of the Costume and Study Centre, bringing them back to a 'life' that may, or may not, be similar to that when they were made. We have included articles showing how lace engages with social history, art history and the practical experience of making and using it. In addition, a concluding selection of images demonstrates how lace holds a place in contemporary art textiles.

I hope that you enjoy exploring lace in all its different forms and uses and that it encourages you to use our fantastic resource of textiles at the Costume and Study Centre in all manner of ways.

Beth Walsh

CONTENTS

	Page
Inspired by museum objects	4
Armour, lace and laundry	7
A choice from the collection	9
Behind the pictures of the lacemakers	12
A special dress for a special day	14
Contemporary lacemaking	16
C&TA News	18 - 20

CONTRIBUTORS

Joy Evitt Joy has always been passionate about textiles and until recently taught a wide variety of textile topics and practical skills at all levels, including adult education. She found particular interest in the A level course as it covers so many aspects from Creative Textiles to the History of Technology and Costume, thus engaging with the study of textiles in the widest sense. At a practical level, she enjoys making products with beautiful, special and unusual fabrics. She also has a small collection of fascinating old sewing machines. She continues to learn and thoroughly enjoys research and 'loves working with the C&TA'.

Tamara Goulding Always interested in textile crafts, Tamara initially combined exhibiting batik with teaching and a family. She began making needlelace in the late seventies, interpreting her own designs freely using texture and colour. She completed her City and Guilds Parts I & II in Fashion in 2003, incorporating lace on many of her costumes.

Now usually working bobbin lace, Tamara's work often combines free lace with silk paper and other media which complement her designs. She has successfully exhibited and sold her work both here and abroad. In 2010 she gained a BA in Visual Studies at the Norwich University College of the Arts. Her degree led her to research the history of cottage industries, now incorporated into her practical work.

Leslie Sercombe Leslie has been a florist for 20 years and a lace maker for 25. She has also been a volunteer at the Costume & Textile Study Centre, Carrow House for over 10 years, working on the lace collection. Her prime interest now is in researching lace techniques. She has completed both a BA and an MA at the Norwich University College of the Arts, from which she was 'overwhelmed by the will to learn and to learn new skills, all through the need to understand lace technique and its history'. Leslie has built a website incorporating a Virtual Lace Museum showcasing private lace collections that would otherwise never be seen. Also, by featuring artists inspired by lace, she is looking for ways to increase appreciation of lacemaking as art.

Beth Walsh Beth tries to maintain a balance between practical lacemaking and art-historical research. A lacemaker for over twenty years, her work challenges ideas of lace as white and repetitive by using scale and colour to interpret a wide range of sources, from Gainsborough portraits to Venetian architecture. Her work often combines lace with other media and textile techniques such as printing and silk painting.

Beth's academic work has also centred on lace, most particularly its representation in the 17th and 18th centuries. This culminated in a PhD awarded by the University of East Anglia. During her studies she has become fascinated by the complex transference of information that the representation of lace involves in both writing and imagery.

CHAIR'S LETTER

Welcome to Miscellany which features fascinating articles and wonderful images all about lace. We are truly grateful to Beth Walsh who has enthusiastically taken on the role as Guest Editor for this edition. Many thanks Beth, Tamara, Lesley and Joy. Also thanks to Maggie and Pauline for their contribution to the production.

Thanks are also due to everyone who took part in our main event of 2011 - 'Dressing the Decades' at Dragon Hall earlier this year. It was a great success. Dragon Hall were thrilled with both the quality and scale of our displays, and the exhibition attracted over 1,000 visitors – producing a healthy profit for us both. The evening shawl walk presented some challenges in the Great Hall, but it was wonderful to see the shawls on display. As ever, we are indebted to Helen Hoyte, assisted by Vivienne Weeks, for staging the event. It coincided nicely with the publication of Helen's book on the Norwich Shawl, which has been selling well.

We were so sorry that we had to cancel the first Pamela Claburn Memorial lecture in June due to illness. We won't have firm details of the new speaker before Miscellany is printed, but we are working hard to find a new speaker, venue and date and will keep you informed.

The 2012 programme is taking shape – details and a booking form are enclosed. I'm sure members will welcome the return of The History Wardrobe whose last visit 'Undressing Mr Darcy' was such fun. 'Titanic' promises to be just as entertaining. We are always interested to hear from members if they have ideas for new events which we could explore. Do let Barbara Coe know (contact details page 20, Events).

Our committee has been busy throughout the summer working on our collection of costume and textiles and display equipment. Thanks to the generosity of our members, the collection has grown significantly enabling us to stage some wonderful events. We now want to develop its use in new ways e.g. using the resources to illustrate talks and workshops/offering research packs for educational establishments and possibly organising loans from the collection. Such activity could generate income to help us in our key role of supporting the Museum collection of costume and textiles.

In order to launch such services, we have been busy photographing, cataloguing and establishing a database of the collection – to be known in future as **C&TA Resources**. The collection is now housed in new secure storage. We do have some wonderful items with some classy makers' labels – which I'm sure will have wide interest. The photos on page 18 give you a glimpse. We hope to have more to report in our next issue of Noticeboard. Isobel, one of our new committee members is taking a key role in leading this major project – so thanks are due to her. If this project has particular appeal for you, please contact either Isobel or me for more information.

We continue to look for opportunities to support the Museum collection. As you know, we have earmarked £10,000 to provide good roller racking at Shirehall. We have also agreed to fund a project, up to a further £10,000, to establish User Guides to the collection. The objective of the project is to provide more efficient access to the collections by creating bright and eye-catching guides using images, fact boxes and a short piece of text describing each item. Our funding will enable Documentation Officers to analyse, group and build subsets for every element of the collection, eventually making up 26 User Guides. We will tell you more as the Guides become available.

Do continue to check our website to keep up to date with all our activities. Also, do give us your email address if you haven't already done so – again so that we can update you about interesting happenings in the world of costume and textiles.

Thank you for your continued support.

Enjoy Miscellany.

Jeanne Southgate

Inspired by museum objects



Museums, archives and libraries are rich sources of information about the social, historical, economic and cultural life of our society, both as it used to be and as it is today. Their collections and resources have the capacity to provoke wonder and curiosity, and to stimulate questions and discussion. They can inspire creativity, they can provide people with answers, interpretations and experiences, which enrich, make sense of and change their lives.'

Using Museums, Archives and Libraries to Develop a Learning Community (p6), the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries in London 2001

When a baby from a wealthy family was baptized in the 17th century, it was brought into the church in a layette and the baby's godmother carried in a bearing cloth, the quality of which reflected the standing of the family. The baby was stripped of all its clothing and put into the cloth for the service. These high quality cloths were often handed down through the generations and were often used for other purposes, for example, cloaks.

There is one such bearing cloth in the collections at the Costume & Textile Study Centre of the Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service, measuring 175 x 130 cm (top right), that is made from crimson silk velvet, backed with a blue linen and further backed with white habotai silk. There is a narrow (2 cm), woven braid of gold thread around its edges.

In addition it has two rows of bobbin-made lace, using gold and silver threads and incorporating gilt spangles. The detail (middle) shows a wide row with Vandyke edging on both sides. It also has what looks like an insertion lace through the middle, but in fact this width of lace has been made in one process and is not joined. Examination of the enlargement of this central band (below) clearly shows the thread paths indicating this is made in one piece.

The cloth is edged with a narrow row of lace in gold and silver that includes a single Vandyke design.

There is a very similar bearing cloth in the Victoria and Albert Museum, displayed in the British Gallery, which only has one wide row of lace. It is edged with a small gold woven braid and the lace again contains gilt spangles.

I know of one other example of similar lace on red velvet but this time it is on a woman's cloak. The cloak is worn by Jane Lambarde in a portrait of her, dated 1620, which is on display in the entrance of Drapers' Hall in London. The portrait (pictured opposite) shows that the lace is very similar to that on the bearing cloths already mentioned.



Bearing cloth, 1667 for the christening of a member of the Buxton family. NWHCM : 1938.149.10





Single Vandyke edging (left) and detail of section of both laces (below).



As part of the Mayors and Magnates redisplay at Stranger's Hall in 2007, Kathy Terry (Curator of Social History at Stranger's Hall) and Lisa Little (Curatorial Assistant at the Costume & Textile Study Centre) initiated a project to recreate a layette for a baby from the 17th century. The layette would be used to dress a baby doll, which interpreters would use every week. The doll would become the dancing master's child, William, one of only two children known to have been born in the building. Lisa researched baby layettes from the late Middle Ages using the Museum's collections and library. She used her expertise to recreate an exact copy of a layette from within the collections that were known to be of local origin, using fine linen and silk including: shirt, fore head cloth, swaddling bands, pilch, cap, bed/barrow, bib collar, bonnet/biggin and a bearing cloth.



I became involved with the project after seeing the original bearing cloth in all its glory laid on a table at the Study Centre. The lace is so fragile that often when it is unpacked spangles become detached. As a lacemaker I was willing to try to recreate the lace.

Velvet from Italy; lace made in England (above). Reputed to be the cloth given by James II for the christening of a son of the Elliott family born in 1682. On display at the V&A, British Gallery.

With financial support and volunteer labour from Norfolk Lacemakers, Wayland Lacemakers and Garboldisham Lacemakers, I was able to start my research, recreating the pattern, making samples, purchasing gold and silver thread and sourcing the spangles.

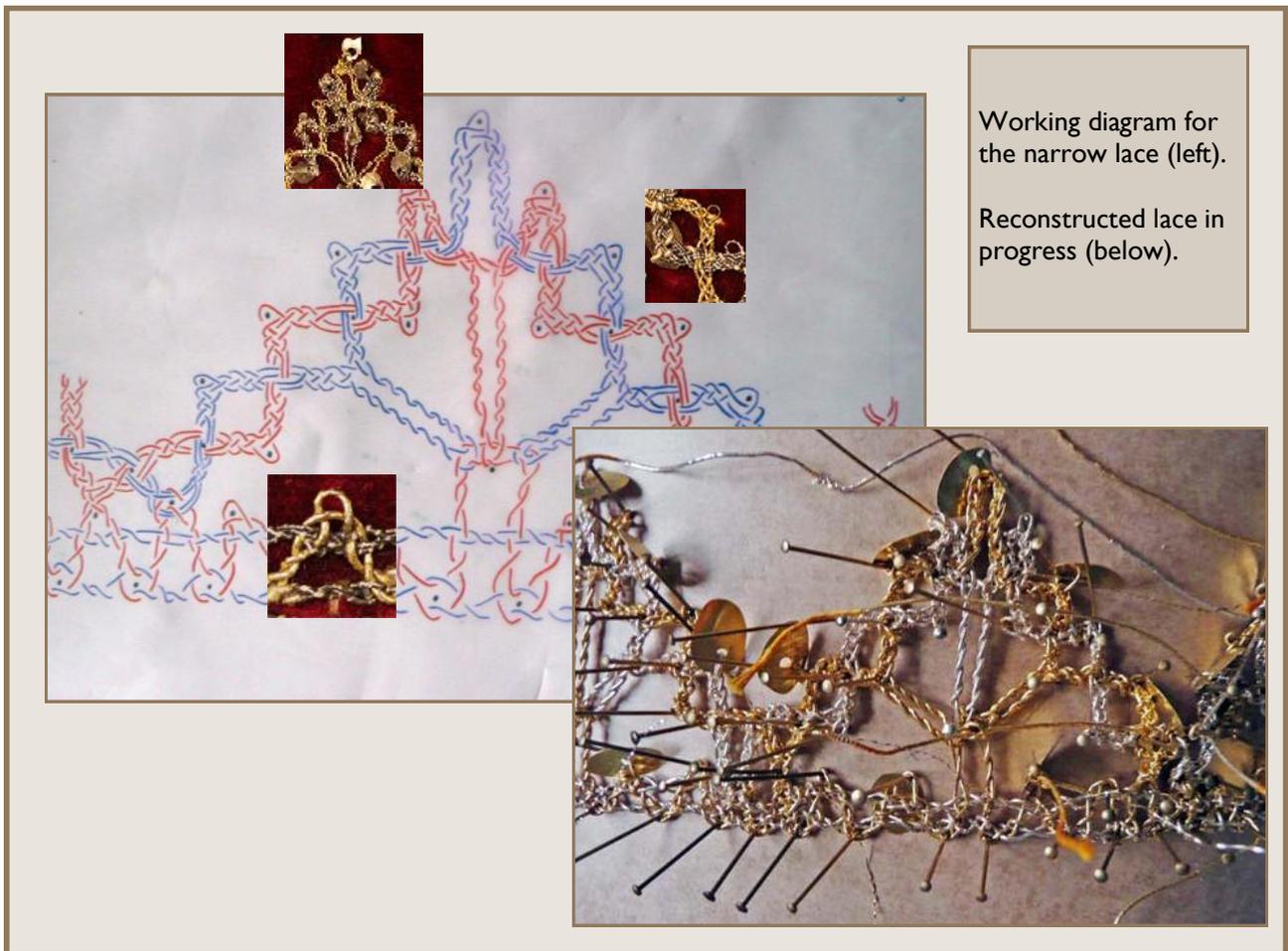
I discovered Bill Barnes from East Sussex who makes gold & silver thread in the traditional manner, with a core of silk fibres bound with fine gold and silver. We chose the finest thread he could make at the time.

The spangles were more difficult to source, as the originals were made of gilt and hand cut. The nearest I came to finding someone who had made these spangles for a heritage reconstruction group, wanted to charge 50p each for brass spangles. We needed thousands. I chose to use brass shim (a thin brass sheet) and decided we would hand cut the spangles ourselves. This proved to be the most time consuming occupation of the project.



Portrait of Jane Lambarde wearing the cloak, attributed to Marcus Gheerhaerts, dated 1620 and a detailed image of the lace. V&A: Lent by Anne Elliott. Museum no. LOAN:

After taking many detailed photographs and using them to redraw the pattern, samples were made to acquire the correct



Working diagram for the narrow lace (left).

Reconstructed lace in progress (below).

dimensions for each pattern repeat. The result has been a true replica of the constructions and design of the original lace. The thread is thicker than on the original bearing cloth, and as a result the reconstructed lace has turned out larger.

While the work was in progress Anne Stimson was researching the Study Centre bearing cloth, trying to find new leads to its heritage. Donated in 1938 by the Buxton family, the museum service had very little information about it. So far she has not been able to shed any light on its original owners. The following is a brief report of Anne's research so far.

"How did the Buxtons come by the bearing cloth?" - an innocent remark I made when the Bearing Cloth Project was introduced to the Norfolk Lacemakers. The answer was, "if you would like to research that, we would be delighted!"

For two years I was like a dog with a bone. It started with many trips to Tuddenham to see the family home, church, surroundings and enlisting the help of a lady in the village researching the Buxton family. Telephone calls and letters followed to Professor Buxton (the present Baronet). He was very enthusiastic about the project but could tell me nothing

about the bearing cloth. Along the way, I have learned a lot about the Buxton family from books, letters held by the Cambridge University Library and communications with the Professor who researched and collated all the Buxton Papers - all to no avail!

Regarding gold and silver lace, I have had communications with the V&A, Salisbury, and Southampton Museums, and with many eminent lacemakers who have a vast knowledge of lace through the ages. Not to mention the many tenuous leads I have pursued with no results. I know that is the nature of research! This research will always be ongoing. I will follow up any lead enthusiastically and will continue to do so until I admit defeat.

A single row of Vandyke edge lace has been completed and sewn on to the replica bearing cloth. It can be seen in Strangers' Hall along with the replica layette.

Plans are in progress to achieve the wider row of lace, which will be added at a later date.

Leslie Sercombe

Armour, lace and laundry



Fig. 1 Sir Godfrey Kneller, James Scott, 1st Duke of Monmouth, 1678.¹

Many portraits of men in the seventeenth century show them wearing armour and valuable lace cravats, an ensemble scarcely credible today (figs. 1 & 2). Yet, in reality, those going into battle seem to have considered it appropriate to wear lace cravats and silk stockings. Even though Thomas Shadwell's Sir Nicholas Dainty is described as

'A most Fantastick, Conceited Beau, of Drolling, Affected Speech; a very Coxcomb, but stout; a most luxurious effeminate Volunteer' in the *Dramatis Personae* of The Volunteers (1693),

his sentiments on being called up for war were related to contemporary reality:

Sir Nicholas Dainty

Damnee, what shall I do? I must make great haste, I shall ne're get my points and laces done up time enough.

Major General Blount

Ounds! What say'st young Fellow, Points and Laces for Camps?

Sir Nich.

Yes, Points and Laces; why I carry two Laundresses on purpose: Damme, would you have a Gentleman go undress'd in a Camp? Do you think I wou'd see a Camp, if there were no dressing? Why, I have two Campaign Suits, one trimmed with *Flanders-Lace*, and the other with rich Point.

M. G. Bl.

Campaign Suits with Lace and Point; ha, ha, ha, go thy ways...²

In what may be considered as outrageous satire, lace is considered appropriate wear for the camp and battlefield, but note that the specific types of lace are differentiated: Flanders (bobbin-lace) and point (needle-lace), each with their own Laundresses. It is also seen as important that the lace is clean and laundered correctly.³ There is also some indication of comparative value: it is the Point that is 'rich' and the Flanders lace that trims. Little of this is made manifest in the script: the deeper meanings rely on the audience's understanding of lace and what it could indicate. Sir Nicholas may be a 'Conceited Beau' but his words had resonance, whether at the level of his own expressed concern for his appearance (perhaps satirising that of the audience?) or of the playwright's condemnation of vanity and conceit.

These points are reinforced in *La Révolte des Passemens*, an anonymous, extended piece of poetry and alternating prose commentary, written in reaction to the events following on from the marriage of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa of Spain, daughter of Philip IV, which took place in June 1660.⁴ The couple entered Paris in great pomp in August of that year. On 27 November 1660, the issuing of a royal edict prohibiting the use of laces and embroidery on the apparel of both men and women of all ranks, prompted the panic and dismay expressed by the poem. In this piece, it is difficult to unravel completely all the uses made of lace but there are clear parallels drawn between the wearing of lace and the actions of the circles in which it is worn and there is a sustained commentary on the managing of contemporary warfare with its ultimate futility. Upset at news of the Edict, laces and embroideries expressed their grievances 'with Points who in their affliction had not even taken the pains to don fresh lawn'⁵ That is, the lack of fresh linen associated with the fine Points would only occur in the most extreme circumstances. Similarly, the Laces boast of their war experiences, much as an old soldier would:

1. Oil on canvas, 133 cm x 106.5 cm, Duke of Buccleuch, Bowhill.

2. Thomas Shadwell, *The Volunteers* (1693) Act I, (lines 247-254, no Scene nos.) p.19.

3. I take 'done up' to mean laundered and starched rather than its current meaning of fastened.

4. anon., 'La Révolte Des Passemens' [sic], trans. Hazel Dunning Sommerhoff. *Recueil [sic] De Pièces En Prose Les Plus Agréables De Ce Temps*. Paris: Charles de Sercy, 1661.

5. 'Que les Points qui dans leur affliction ne prenaient pas seulement la peine de se mettre en linge blanc...' Ibid. p.38 (English) p.4 (French).

How numerous were the laces thenceforth forever boasting of the power of the sword! Further to animate one another, they brought to remembrance the perilous encounters of the past wherein they had seen action. The one Lace of Flanders vaunted of having fought two campaigns under Monsieur the Prince, serving as Cravat, another of having learned the trade under Monsieur de Turenne, still another of having been wounded in the siege of Dunkirk – and if it did not show more it was because it had been dressed by a skilful hand...⁶

Once again the association of war and lace is made clear, but note also that the last lace is carefully mended (having been ‘wounded’) and had been treated with care by such a Laundress as accompanied Sir Nicholas.

It is stressed that it was important that lace worn in battle was not only mended but also clean. Patricia Wardle quotes instructions given for the washing of lace and the elaborate process is worth considering in full as it gives some indication of what skill was demanded of those involved:

To wash Poynt⁷ in ye very best way

Take a Deel-board finely planed, let it bee ye length of your longest Poynt or Lace & as broad; Cover ye Board with cloth round about; let ye cloth bee stretched as stark or straight as can bee. And sowed on to fitt, then sew on your Point or Lace upon that Cloth very strait... then sew over all a Canvass very strait and fitt... The canvas was then soaped all over and beaten with a brush until no more dirt was given off, the whole then being rinsed first with very hot water, then with cold. Then came the impregnation with starch in boiling water, which was sponged on, and once it was dry the canvas was ripped off hastily to raise a Napp and the lace rubbed with paper, after which the stitches holding it were cut and it was plucked off, again hastily.⁸ [Wardle’s use of italics has been maintained here]

The relationship between lace and war was a form of decorum: the lace cravat in particular was a part of the appropriate dress for battle. This may well

link up with the old definition of the nobility as those who fight. Thus lace, with all its meanings of wealth, status and correct attire, is worn by high-ranking officers with their armour in a combination of references to the past and their present. Lace would have been both appropriate and desirable for a nobility that still identified itself strongly with the military and *vice versa*. The importance of its cleanliness and neatness is also a matter of concern.

So, the apparently odd combination of lace and armour is founded in well-established conventions and reality. A close examination of lace in portraiture, therefore, engages with concerns of a society centuries before our own and aids our understanding of it. Seventeenth-century society was much more accustomed to looking at lace, recognising its different qualities and origins, and this keen understanding encouraged its use in art and literature of the time as a way of conveying information. Without close attention, all this meaning is lost on today’s viewer.

Beth Walsh



Fig. 2 Robert Williams after Samuel Cooper, James II as Duke of York, 1680-85

6. Ibid. p.48 (English) p.23 (French).

7. i.e. needlelace

8. Wardle, Patricia, and A. D. Renting, *For Our Royal Person: Master of the Robes Bills of King-Stadholder William III*, Apeldoorn: Palais Het Loo National Museum, 2002, pp.71-2 quoting a recipe book belonging to Margaret Saville (d.1683) in the possession of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.



‘Put on my new lace band, and so neat it is that I am resolved my great expense shall be lace bands, and it will set off anything else the more’.

Samuel Pepys *Diaries* Vol. III p.228, October 19 1662.

A choice from the collection



Fig.1 Amy Malsey, Hollie Point Sampler, linen, dated 1741¹

A question was recently posed to lacemakers: ‘What is the most English lace?’ The general consensus was that it is Hollie Point as other laces made in England are often derived from European laces. So, when asked to choose an item to study from the Costume and Textile Study Centre, I chose, from a vast array of fascinating laces, a sampler of Hollie Point (fig. 1). This was typically perverse, as it was a lace about which I knew very little. I had, in fact, made a couple of samples when I worked on my City and Guilds many years ago and found that it was a deceptively difficult lace to work successfully, even at a much larger scale than the original lace. So, I knew what Hollie Point looked like, approximately when it was made and how it felt to make it. This was the limit of my knowledge.

In this article I examine some of the defining features of the lace and ask questions which arise from such an examination – to some of which I do not have answers. This is typical of the study of lace, a material that was ubiquitous when it was widely made and used but rarely recorded or openly commented on in contemporary written sources. In addition, the study can be taken as a broader example of how textiles can be approached and how they can yield a deeper understanding of the concerns of the society in which they were created.

First, it has to be established that the chosen item was actually Hollie Point as the definition of lace is a minefield of problems. Different types of lace tend to elide into one another rather than having abrupt changes of form and design. This is at least partly due to the value of prestigious, successful laces – they were constantly copied by other lacemaking centres

eager to share in the profits. For example, seventeenth-century Venetian needlelaces were copied by lace designers in France and the Low Countries, both as needle and bobbin laces. As fashions changed, these laces in turn developed other defining features which were again adapted by other makers, often with an eye to production costs.

I use here a definition of Hollie Point that is an amalgam of opinions.² It is a flat lace, made in England, by hand with a needle (i.e. a needlelace) comprising rows of knotted buttonhole stitches (fig.2).

Designs are created by holes left in the otherwise plain clothwork formed by the buttonhole stitches

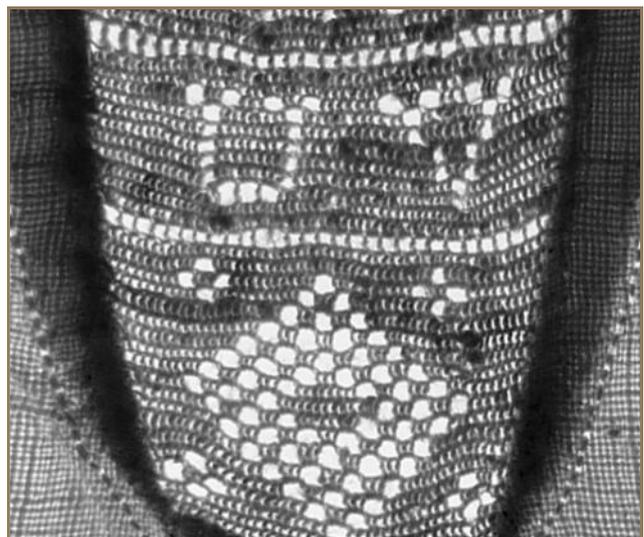


Fig. 2 detail of the Hollie Point sampler on a light-box

1. Costume and Textile Study Centre, Acc. No. NWHCM :1922.135, width 21 cm x depth 10.5 cm
2. Toomer, Heather, and Cynthia Voysey, *Lace: A Guide to Identification of Old Lace Types and Techniques*, London, 1989, p. 57, Levey, Santina M., *Lace: A History*, London & Leeds, 1983, p. 60 and Earnshaw, Patricia, *The Dictionary of Lace*, first published 1980, 2nd edition, Princes Risborough, 1984, used here, p. 80



Fig. 3 A baby bonnet trimmed with bobbin lace, with Hollie Point insertions, English, mid 18th century³

(figs 2 & 3). Earnshaw calls these pinprick designs, Levey 'voided pictorial designs'⁴. It is usually found as insertions in babies' clothes from the early 18th to the early 19th centuries, particularly in caps, in the shoulder seams of shirts and in the bibs and detachable sleeves worn over babies' swaddling bands. Many of the surviving samples are from the second quarter of the 18th century. Levey points out that the name is typically obscure: '...it is likely that the application of the name to the little needle-lace insertions of the 18th century was a matter of 19th century sales talk or arose from the Victorians' passion for giving everything a name.'⁵ That much Hollie Point was probably made domestically is an issue that will be discussed below.

On examination, the sampler fits very well with the definition of Hollie Point: the stitch, the use of voids, the date and the use all agree. This differentiates it from many other pieces of lace which are much harder to categorise by date and/or origin. The scale of the sampler is also typical – and amazing. There are four to five tiny knotted buttonhole stitches per mm; this is finer than the *fêted gros point de Venise* of the late 17th century, famed for its miniscule scale. Just a look at a ruler gives some idea of how fine this work is – made, of course, without artificial light sources.

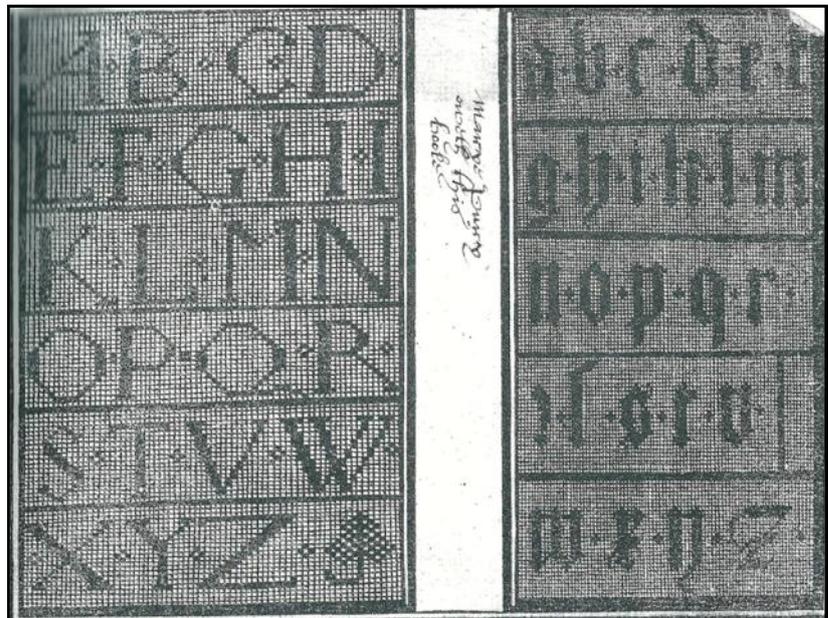
The fineness of the work, in terms of both scale and skill, makes the fact that it was almost certainly made in a domestic

rather than a professional environment even more interesting: it means that equipment, both threads and needles were available to the makers of such samplers. Additionally, there was no practical need for such extreme fineness – it attests to practice, diligence and skill. From Renaissance times, skill with a needle had been part of the accomplishment of a gentlewoman, a sign of the correct use of time and ability and this was combined with a strong religious impetus. So, Edmund Verney writes to his daughter at school in London (c.1685) re her desire to learn to 'Jappan, as you call it':

I approve of it; and so shall I of any thing that is Good and Virtuous, therefore learn in God's name all Good Things, & I will willingly be at the Charge so farr as I am able ..., for I admire all accomplishments that will render you considerable and Lovely in the sight of God & man; & therefore I hope you performe yr Part according to yr word & employ yr time well, & so I pray God blesse you.⁶

The age of Amy Malsey when she made the sampler is not known, only her skill, but the lace fits into the role which fine needlework played at this time. It may also be relevant that, by being made in a domestic environment, the pressures of time against money that existed in professional lacemaking were not applicable here, only the exactness of the work. It should also be noted that the skill extends to the fine hemming of the gussets created in the linen.

Fig 4 Anon., *A Schole-House for the Needle*, page B1



3. By kind permission of Miss Maureen Veal, image taken from a series produced for the "450 Years of lace Exhibition" held by the Allhallows Museum, Honiton, Devon, August - September 2002.
 4. Earnshaw (1980) p. 80, Levey (1983) p. 60
 5. Levey (1983) p. 60
 6. Margaret M. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney family from the Restoration to the Revolution 1660-1696*, Vol. IV., London, 1899 p.221

Designs for pieces such as this were, I think, not directly created for Hollie Point but were adapted by the maker from more general pattern books where the stitches that made up the designs were transformed into the voids of Hollie Point. Books similar to the anonymous *A Schole-House for the Needle*⁷ (fig 4), were widely available in the mid-18th century and the pinprick designs in the sample, including the alphabet, might well have derived from such a source. The insertions are decorated with designs common to the embroideries of the day – crowns, hearts, floral forms and simple geometric designs (fig. 5).

That the sampler includes the name of the worker in the design also takes it into a different environment to that of professionally-made lace (fig. 6).⁸ I have not encountered any surviving examples of lace, however skilled, time-consuming and well-designed, where the name of the ‘professional’ maker is contained in the work. Indeed, one of the factors that emerged from my

research is that lace was appropriated by its user – the maker was not referred to in any of the written references to lace that I found. It was as if the wearer wished to forget the facts of the lace’s making and maker, only wanting to ‘use’ it for their own ends. For example, the origin of the lace (Flanders, Venice etc.) seems only to have been referred to in terms of proving quality and expense rather than engaging with the places themselves – something to do, perhaps with the fact that England was, or had been, at war with the countries concerned and the importation of their lace was banned! The inclusion of names on samplers, therefore, was indicative of a very different type of textile.

A close examination of one small sampler of Hollie Point engages with an eighteenth-century society where understanding and appreciation of lace were both shared and different from our own.



Fig 5. Detail of sampler



Fig. 6 Name in the sampler

Beth Walsh

7. London, 1632 edition, published by Richard Shorleyker. Republished in facsimile, Much Wenlock, 1998
8. Levey (1987) p. 60 notes ‘very many [examples] also bear inscriptions, including dates and names relating to the babies for whom they were made, such as ‘George Dash, 1761’, ‘M.W. 1766’, and ‘Thos. Fry Aged 11 years, Writham Kent’. Such pieces must have been made in close proximity to the family concerned and it is possible that all of them were made domestically.’



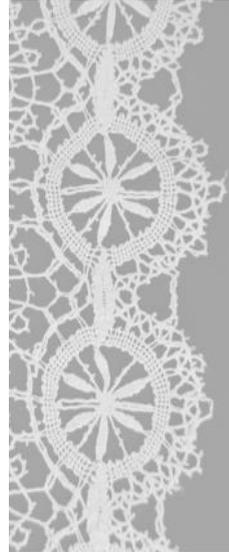
In 1685 Edmund Verney’s mother sends a box of goodies to the new student in Oxford: ‘In yr old Breeches ...you will find yr five Laced-Bands (the sixt you Carried with you) and a new pyre of Laced Cuffles: And yr two Guinnies in yr fobb, and a nre Knife and forke in yr. great Pockett.’ These articles were accompanied by fine foods including 18 Seville oranges, 6 Malaga lemons, sugar (brown and white) raison, ‘good for a Cough’ and 4 Nuttmegs.

Margaret M. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney family from the Restoration to the Revolution 1660-1696*, Vol. IV., London 1899 p.364



Mrs Sawyer 1880

Behind the pictures of the lacemakers



When people think of lacemakers they often conjure up a picture of women working outside their homes in the sun, a very pleasant occupation. This is how lacemakers are often portrayed in photographs and on postcards, but life for the lacemaker was far from idyllic. If we look beyond these pictures of the late 19th and early 20th century and delve into the reports of commissioners of the day a very different story is found.

Lacemaking was mainly a cottage industry. In 1851 it was recorded that there were 10,487 lacemakers in Buckinghamshire, 10,322 in Nottinghamshire, 5,734 in Bedfordshire and 5,478 in Devon. A number were recorded as being between 5 – 9 years old and nearly 2,000 were between 10 – 14 years old.¹ Two factors that the production of lace shares are that it was normally made by women and that it was a cottage industry. At a time when agricultural work was very poorly paid, women's earnings supplemented the men's low wages.² Although lace-making was said to be well paid, in comparison with other occupations women could execute in the home, the pay was still poor in relationship to the hours that they had to work. There were no rich lacemakers only rich lace dealers.

Because of the conditions in which the lacemakers worked, they suffered from various health problems. Many of these started while they were learning lace in the lace schools as children. There were lace schools in all the lace districts in England, most commonly in the Midlands. Probably the first record of the training of children was at Eaton Socon in Bedfordshire in 1596. These were children of families on parish relief; if the children did not attend the lace school the parents could not claim parish relief. Often the teachers of these types of lace school were inmates of the workhouse themselves and although they got paid,

it was a pittance. In 1719 one teacher was paid one shilling a week for her skills.³

During the late eighteenth century, more professional lace schools were started. It was at this time that charities stopped apprenticing girls to the lace trade. Some of the reasons given were, "Their health is frequently injured" and "little attention was paid to moral discipline and restraint", but also "girls who have been brought up to work at the lace schools are generally found unfit for household work."⁴

In 1785, "An essay on the cause and prevention of deformity among the lace-makers of Bucks and North Hants" was reported in the Gentleman's Magazine:

"... much complaint was made of the unhealthy state of the lace-working population and the injury sustained by long sitting in the vitiated air of the cottages."⁵ Similarly, the Children's Employment Commissioners in 1841 quoted that a mother "do think that sitting so long have injured her [daughter's] health" and gave up lacemaking on this account."⁶

The schools were normally situated in the lace mistress's home with poor lighting, heating, ventilation and sanitation. The age range was from five to fifteen, including both boys and girls, and there were twenty to thirty in a class. Unfortunately the children were often punished when mistakes were made - hanging boys from the beams with a rope under their armpits or rubbing a pupil's face in their pins. Obviously there were some lace mistresses that had the children's welfare at heart and taught them to read and know the Bible.

The children worked ten hours a day in winter and twelve hours in summer, when the light was better, including half day on Saturday. Sunday was free for going to church.

"At the local lace school we worked from 6am - 6pm in the summer and 8am - 8pm in the winter. I had to put in 10



Lace runners

1. Mingay, G. E., *Rural life in Victorian England*, Sutton, Gloucestershire, 1976, p. 115.
 2. Bullock, Alice-May, *Lace and Lace Making*, London, 1981, p. 54.
 3. *ibid.* p. 59.

4. *ibid.* p. 59.
 5. Palliser, Mrs Bury, *A History of Lace*, first published London, 1865, here EP Publishing Ltd, 1976 edition, p. 382.
 6. Yallop, H. J., *The History of The Honiton Lace Industry*, Exeter 1992, p. 176.

*pins a minute or 600 an hour. If at the end of the day I was 5 pins behind I had to work for another hour. We often had races to see who would reach the 50th pin; we counted every pin.*⁷

In winter the children were always cold: there was no fire as this would have been detrimental to the whiteness of the lace. The only warmth they could obtain was the use of 'fire pots' which were heated with hot ashes and placed beneath the girls' skirts.⁸ During these dark days a lacemaker's lamp was used to improve the lighting. This was a glass sphere with a small hole in the top, which was filled with water, fixed to a wooden stick. Candles were placed around it. The sphere magnified the candlelight onto the lace pillows.

These conditions had consequences as observed by Cooke of the Devonshire Lacemakers in 1832:

*"The sedentary nature of the employment, and the early age of the poor children confined to it, make a terrible havoc of life and health. The sallow complexion, the rickety frames, and the general appearance of languor and debility, are sad and decisive proofs of the pernicious nature of the employment. The small unwholesome rooms in which numbers of these females, especially during their apprenticeship, are crowded together, are great aggravations of this evil. It is no wonder that the offspring of such mothers in a majority of such instances are a puny feeble and frequently short-lived race."*⁹

The following is a description of East Midlands' working conditions in the eighteenth century:

*"The rooms where these people generally work are small, low, and close, in which they sit together... and the air in these rooms becomes loaded with perspirable matter, and other effluvia, arising from their bodies ... The girls had left for dinner, but the room was offensively close."*¹⁰

There were three main areas of health problems relating to the industry: curvature of the spine, consumption and failure of their eyesight.

Eighteenth century observations on the East Midlands' lacemakers describe "...the frequent sight of deformed and diseased women..." and 'ascribe this situation to the constricted posture involved in lacemaking.'¹¹

*"...the maladies that characterize this craft, the primary one being the gradual weakening of the eyes, leading to complete blindness, a condition caused by excessive number of consecutive hours of work in badly lit rooms..."*¹²

In 1785, the History of Commerce reported that lacemaking:

*"was said to destroy the eyesight ... [lacemakers] were generally almost blind before thirty years of age"*¹³ and that *"...the manufacturer grew rich as a result of the pallor, the rickets, the coughing and the blindness that affected the women he employed."*¹⁴

It also reported on *"... the young working girl who died of tuberculosis ..."*¹⁵

Additionally, a medical observation in 1861 commented: *"... many of the women have a pallid anaemic aspect, and are subject to disturbance of the menstrual functions, and to leucorrhoea ... slight spinal curvature is common, and the chest is almost flat and ill-developed."*¹⁶

Even in the early days of the industrial revolution the girls who were runners (hand finishers of machine lace) in the Nottingham lace factories were not immune from health problems. So, the Commissioners' Report of 1863, "Lace runners in Nottingham", states:

*"...the conditions and long hours often produced curvature of the spine, TB, anaemia, difficult childbirth and a tendency to miscarriage."*¹⁷ The lacemakers *"...were crowded into unventilated apartments and working 15 hours a day in filth, damp and stench"*¹⁸

In 1843 there were some improvements as the Commissioners on the Employment of Children stated the hours they could work. In Devon the pillow was raised so that the children's posture was improved. The mid-nineteenth century brought further improvements and many lace schools closed as they could not conform to the new requirements.

Tamara Goulding



Lung (19 in)



Eyes (22 in)



Spine (19 in)

I felt an empathy with the lacemakers' suffering and wished to show this visually. I produced a triptych on modern lace pillows to represent the three main diseases. I wanted the work to incorporate my own lace, as producing the lace gave me an affinity with earlier lacemakers. I combined my lace with computer printing and images of past lacemakers including pins and bobbins as a feature in the work.

7. Palliser (1865) p. 390.

8. Lowe, D. & Richards J., *The City of Lace*, Nottingham, 1983, p. 12.

9. Yallop (1992) p. 176.

10. *ibid* p. 174.

11. *ibid* p. 176.

12. Montupet J. and Schoeller, G., *Lace The Elegant Web*, New York, 1990, p. 146.

13. Palliser (1865) p. 112.

14. Montupet and Schoeller (1990) p. 147.

15. *ibid*. p. 147.

16. Palliser (1865) p. 382.

17. Lowe & Richards (1983) p. 29.

18. *ibid*. p 30.

A special dress for a special day

I have always enjoyed making special garments from beautiful materials. So when I was asked to make a silk lace wedding dress last year I was delighted.

The style of the dress was to be simple, so that the lace could be shown in its true beauty. The princess line was chosen as it would look elegant and the back panels would enable a small circular train to flow from the dress.

It was obviously essential to make a toile so that we could calculate the amount of material and lace. This was done from a very soft poly-cotton lining fabric as calico would have been too stiff. Designs were finalised but calculations on the amount of lace would be determined by what lace we could find and how it was edged.



We went to the Silk Shop in Soho and had a wonderful time. The fabrics were beautiful. We chose a silk satin-backed crepe for the under-dress. However, there were only a few laces that were 150 cm wide, the width needed for the length of the back, but one of them was superb and draped beautifully. It had small scallops one side and larger on the other selvedge, with a delicate pattern incorporated into that edge. It was a very expensive French Chantilly silk lace. A sheet was spread on the floor and we were allowed to try the backing fabric and the lace draped on the bride to be. Even that was magical because the lace was so beautiful. We needed 5 metres. It came in slightly shorter lengths because of the way it was made so the shop was a little generous. We came home clutching a very small parcel that had cost a great deal of money. This feeling is surely not new - one gown that is on view at Killerton House in Devon from the Regency Period has a family letter about the dress which says that the lace was ordered from Haywards in London

and it cost £500; the equivalent cost today would be £17,000!

It took some courage to cut into the lace but before I did I tried a number of experiments on inexpensive lace to see how I could get the curve at the end of the train. It was not going to be simple. To get the length in the train I was going to have to put a join in just below the shoulder blades on the back ... just in the lace. The only way to get the curves was to slash into the lace, overlap it, hand stitch it with tiny over-sewing or satin stitching depending on the lace pattern, into places where it would not be noticed! Then carefully remove pieces of lace that were not required. Very tiny delicate hand stitching and trimming was essential so that the joins did not show and the lace continued to look good.

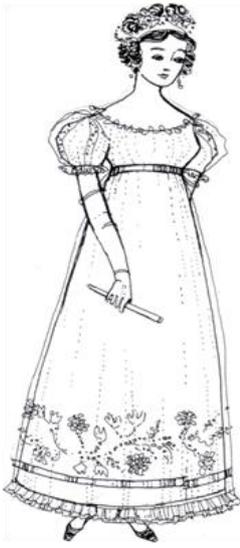
There were four panels in the back and each one took at least 3 hours to stitch after it had all been worked out so that the scallops matched and the joins were invisible. In the end the lace was very kind and forgiving: because of the pattern, the seams and joins disappeared into the lace. Working with the lace took possibly the longest of all the jobs on the dress but it was a pleasure to work on such wonderful fabric. For light relief in between the panels I made 30 buttons covered in satin and lace!

Once the lace had been stitched together I was able to join the panels and finish the dress using a lot of hand stitching that I luckily find very therapeutic! There were several fittings to make sure that all was well and that the lace and the lining had not altered the shape or the drape.

Having completed this dress, I went to the Costume & Textile Study Centre in Carrow House to look at two of their lace wedding dresses from the Regency period, one of my favourite eras. It was truly fascinating to be able to look at and touch (with cotton gloves on) two dresses that were made nearly 200 years ago in lace, muslin and net.

Both were over-dresses from about 1815. One is made from a very sheer woven fabric, possibly leno (the linen equivalent of muslin), with a simple same-colour motif in the design, and the other from net. It seems incredible that that amount of net could have been made by hand and I did wonder if it could have been made by John Heathcoat's incredible bobbin net making machine that was patented in 1809. Each dress





The bodice shaping on the second Regency dress (below) is particularly clever as ribbon is used to stabilise tiny gathers that make the shape for the bust on the bodice of the dress. Each of the ribbons is braided on each side which adds to the beautiful finish on the bodice. Working on such fine fabric requires a great deal of skill so that it is not damaged. The hem, neckline, shoulders and sleeves are finished with net frills and lace.

The delicate sewing on these dresses was very similar to the way in which I had sewn the lace to make the shape required for the train. Each of my panels took several hours of hand sewing and the dress was made over a period of three months. However I am sure the Regency dresses took a lot longer as the whole process, not just the embellishments, were skilfully hand sewn. All the seams, shaping and frills were sewn with care for a special dress for a very special day.

Overdress about 1815-1820. Band of decoration with ruchings of net in flower shapes and trails of pearls on the sleeves and at the hem. NWHCM : 1944.114.1

Joy Evitt

was made using tiny, thin seams that were stitched and then over-sewn to avoid fraying. They both have all the shaping characteristic of the period and drawstring ties to make them fit - but there the similarity ends between the two dresses.

You can see in the illustration (above) that this dress is heavily embellished with appliqué above the hem with three dimensional flowers and leaves. The flowers have individual petals and pearls on wire in the centre of them. This increased the weight of the dress but the effect is stunning. Delicate frills were added to the hemline, sleeve and neckline. The photograph shows the 3D effect created with stitches and fabric as well as the use of pearls to make lines and fill in shapes.



Wedding dress about 1815 - NWHCM : 1975.219.1



From you [a chambermaid] it will be required that you wash and starch very well both Tiffanies, Lawns, Points and Laces, and that you can mend what is amiss in them. That you work Needle-work well, and all sorts of Plain-work, or any other work with the Needle which is used in such houses

Hannah Woolley, 'A Gentlewomans Companion', 1673, pp.209-10

The amount of money spent on lace in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was truly remarkable. To take one comparison:

In the single month of July 1666, Louis XIV bought *point de France* worth 18,491 *livres* at the Royal manufactories. In comparison, the annual salary of Charles le Brun was 11,200 *livres*. A piece of furniture by Andre-Charles Boulle, the most celebrated cabinet-maker of his time, was valued at some 8,000 *livres*, and the portrait of the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, painted by Beaubrun cost only 750 *livres*.



Anne Kraatz, Lace: History and Fashion, London, 1988 p. 50

Contemporary lace artists

Sue McLaggan

Neckpiece for Thor, life-size, linen and metallic threads. Photography by Peter Smith



Sue McLaggan

Wavy Cuff, 9 cm x top diameter 14 cm, bobbin lace, paper, metallic and linen threads. Photography by Peter Smith



Carol Quarini

Collar, 30 cm in diameter, bobbin lace, silk, cotton and gold threads.





Gail Baxter

Earth Bowl, 12 cm by 22 cm diameter, bobbin lace, mixed threads with beads (top left).

Elaine Rowe

Hallstatt Hand Adornment, life-size, bobbin lace, Sylko cotton thread (above right).

Beth Walsh

Doge's View II, 84 cm x 90 cm x 15 cm, bobbin lace (linen thread, emulsion-painted) with hand-painted, image transferred silk (middle left).

Karin Wheals

After the cut 1, 17 cm x 22 cm, bobbin lace in raffia and video tape (bottom left).



C&TA NEWS

C&TA RESOURCES



Victorian walking dress, trimmed with silk rosettes 1880s.



Parasol with printed silk and plain silk trim 1930s.



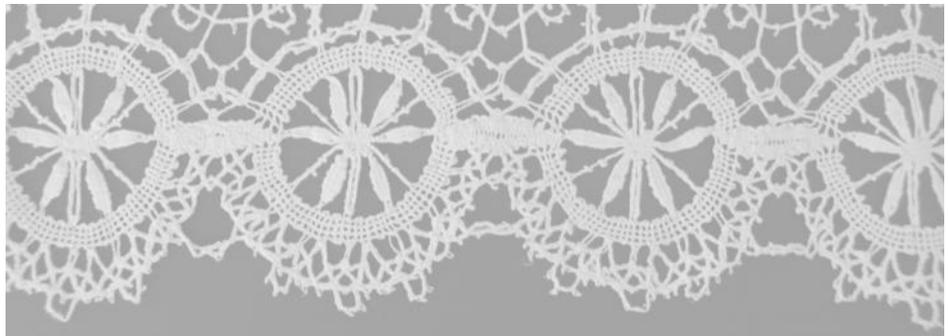
Cream polyester shift dress 1960s "Strohbach".



Feather shawl/ wrap 1930s.

Request for help from Costume & Textile Study Centre at Carrow House

The dress bag and hanger cover project at the Costume & Textile Study Centre is still going strong. There is a faithful dedicated core of people who are working hard. However, we would love to hear from you if you can help. Before the Costume & Textile Study Centre moves location up to the Shirehall, we would ideally like every hanging item to have an individual bag and lovely new hanger cover to ensure its protection during and after the move. If you feel that you could help with either cutting out or stitching then we can provide training and materials for you. You can either work on site as part of the Dress Bag Team or take some home and sew them in your own time. If you think that you would like to help please contact Lisa Little, Curatorial Assistant at The Costume & Textile Study Centre on **01603 223870** or email direct to lisa.little@norfolk.gov.uk.



Progress on move to Shire Hall

The Costume and Textile Study Centre is a hive of purposeful activity as we prepare to decant the collections to the Norwich Castle Study Centre. We have two deadlines to meet, the first is late September when the Library, Resources and Handling Collections will be re-shelved and made available while the staff are preparing to move the rest of the collections. Please contact the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service Reception on 01603 493625 or email museums@norfolk.gov.uk to make an appointment.

The second deadline is after Christmas and will remove 2,500 boxes, 250 rolled textiles, 50 cubic metres of hanging garments and 170 framed textiles. The process of checking each item and making an up to date list of the contents of every box has now started in earnest.

We are able, thanks to generous support from the Costume and Textile Association, to make improvements to the storage of the collections and we are just at the point of making an order for racking to house all the boxes. We are also aiming to create a series of easy to use collection guides to help more people to access more of the stored collections. I will update members about this project in the next Newsletter.

At the Castle Museum we are just planning the installation dates for the second rotation of the costume and textile items in the Arts of Living Gallery, due for completion by Christmas. The central costume case is going to look at historic revivals in dress, with beautiful examples from the early 19th century right through to the 1970's.

Ruth Battersby-Tooke

Angela Houston Textile Award

The Costume and Textile Association has awarded £125 to 5 aspiring fashion and textiles students from Norwich High School and Norwich University College of the Arts who were presented with their cheques by Sarah Houston at the C&TA's 2011 AGM.

The award is in memory of Angela Houston, a former C&TA committee member and Secretary who died in 2005. Angela, who lived in North Walsham before moving to Norwich, was also an accomplished and enthusiastic spinner, weaver and knitter, and active in both planning the Wolterton Hall Textile Fairs, and organising 'Eastern Inspirations', a successful textile competition that drew entries from all over Britain.

After Angela's death, the C&TA decided to make a quilt with the proceeds financing, on the suggestion of her daughter, Sarah, a textile orientated memorial to her. Over 30 people contributed squares and the quilt was raffled at the C&TA Textile Fair at Wolterton Hall in September 2006, raising almost £700. After much reflection and discussion, the C&TA committee decided that the most fitting tribute would be to provide this award in her name.

The award provides a wonderful opportunity for the lucky students to explore ideas and develop a textile project which will be on display at this year's AGM, when one of the students can look forward to winning an extra £200 for most 'outstanding' project. During judging we looked for creativity and inspiration in the ideas put forward, as well as a passion for textiles, whether it was knitting, weaving, fabric manipulation or any one of a number of other different techniques that could be used to create a constructed textile piece - large or small.

The five winners are Chelsy Hu, from Norwich High School, Katherine Whitton, Emily-Rose Debenham, Lucy Wallis and Yasmine Wymer all from Norwich University College of the Arts.



Sarah Houston; Emily Rose Debenham; Grainne Swann (Senior lecturer NUCA); Yasmine Wymer; Katherine Whitton; Helen Jenkins; Chelsy Hu; Kitty Temperley; Lucy Wallis.

Chelsy Hu was an AS level student with comparatively little experience in textiles. However she'd become interested in Victoriana, William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement and enjoyed hand and machine embroidery as well as pattern cutting, and planned to use the award to help purchase more art and textile materials and improve her textile knowledge and experience. Winning the award has given her the confidence to pursue textiles as a future career, as well as adding to her CV and portfolio.

Katherine Whitton was a first year BA (Hons) Textiles student who used drawings and photographs of architecture in Venice and Krakow to inspire ideas for her first introduction to weaving. Katherine was buzzing with ideas with good understanding of textile structures and intended using the award to visit Moorish architecture in Spain and to develop her knowledge of woven textiles further. She was pleased to have won the award as it has made her feel more confident about her work as well as the prize helping her with her future textile work.

Emily – Rose Debenham was a second year BA (Hons) Textiles student designer weaving 'Chanel' style tweeds and lightweight silks for high end fashion garments. She enjoyed using luxury fibres including alpaca from a farm in Norfolk and intended using the award to visit London to view existing luxury fabrics and garments and to research the use of natural dyes on other luxury yarns such as cashmere, mohair and merino, all produced in Britain. She said that it was an honour to receive the award and that she was really proud to be promoting British textiles for the future.

Lucy Wallis was a third year BA (Hons) student using nylon filament yarns sometimes combined with paper or copper wire and a domestic or industrial double bed knitting machine to create knitted structures for inside or outside. Her work inspired by Andy Goldsworthy and Antony Gormley reflected the juxtaposition of built and natural environments. Lucy intended using the award to fund material expenses for her proposed project 'Around the River Wensum' enabling her to experiment with a greater variety of yarns and to a larger scale than otherwise possible. She said that she was really happy about receiving the C&TA Angela Houston Award as the funding would allow her to develop her textile work further in preparation for the NUCA degree show.

Yasmine Wymer was a third year BA (Hons) Textiles student who was creating unique and experimental woven fabrics for menswear which were inspired by historical military uniforms. She enjoys using retro reflective or stainless steel mix yarns with luxury silks and wools to weave beautifully designed and technically challenging fabrics. Yasmine intended using the award to enable her to visit military archives and manufacturers such as 'Hand & Lock' in London, as well as funding some of the more unusual and expensive materials used in her work. Yasmine said 'I'm so pleased I've won the award. It is exciting to bring my innovative approach to the traditional craft to the attention of others and to be commended for this in the process. I hope that the award will help me to develop a further use of technical yarns to produce even more exciting work and to inspire other young talented individuals to get involved with constructed textiles.'

Helen Jenkins

BOOK ON NORWICH SHAWLS

The story of the NORWICH SHAWL

by Helen Hoyte

ISBN 978-0-9559320-2-1 £8.95

Publisher: Nick Williams

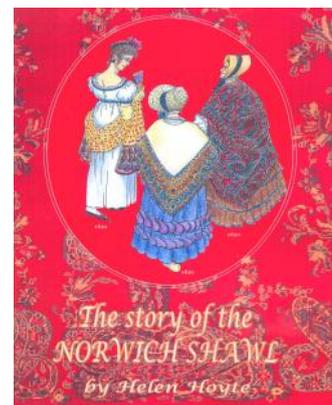
When I inherited a fine old Edinburgh shawl it sparked an interest and a desire to see the collection of Norwich shawls, then kept at Strangers' Hall Museum.

Having been a textile designer, I was immediately captivated by the beauty of the designs and as I researched the shawls, I became more amazed at the skill and craftsmanship of the old Norwich weavers and printers. Added to the shawls fascination, was the realisation that fashionable shawl-wearing had been for many decades of important social significance. My interest has since become my passion!

This book is not intended for textile specialists. It is for the general public, in the hope that the story of the magnificent shawls will stimulate interest and awaken a pride in this branch of the great bygone Norwich Textile Industry.

Helen Hoyte

Copies are on sale at Jarrolds, the City Book Shop, Norwich or direct from Helen on 01603 623495.



GUEST EDITORS

We would love to hear from any member who feels they could guest edit a future edition of Miscellany. Anyone who has a comprehensive knowledge of a costume or textile area, with access to like minded contributors, who would like to share their knowledge with C&TA members, please contact us. Email Pauline White at ctacostume@gmail.com, Maggie Johnson at mstb.johnson@btinternet.com or telephone 01603 505666.

We will be happy to steer you through the process.

New City and Guilds Embroidery Courses

After a gap of several years, City and Guilds courses in hand embroidery and machine embroidery are available in Norwich and are now offered through the Embroiderers' Guild. The Norwich Branch is organising both Level 1 courses which take place at the United Reform Church Hall, Ipswich Road, Norwich. Both courses last six months, with 30 hours tuition and a further 10 hours private study. The total cost per course is £180 for Embroiderers' Guild members (£205 for non-members). The Hand Embroidery course is taught by Sue Leonard and the Machine Embroidery course by Sheila Ford, both of whom are experienced embroiderers and teachers. The first courses are already up and running, and there are waiting lists for the next groups of students. The next courses will probably involve a combination of evening and Saturday sessions to enable those with weekday commitments to join.

For more information contact Gill Riordan, tel. 01508 494750, e-mail gillriordan@yahoo.co.uk

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