Rachel's Tat

Conference Paper by Eleanor Knowles Dugan
Presented to the American Quilt Study Group, Lowell, MA, 2007

As the curator opened the box and folded back the tissue, I couldn't help a gasp of delight. There lay an exquisitely stitched ivory silk quilt, the fragile surface fabric missing in many places, with a few ghostly fibers trapped under the quilting threads. Below the silk was a layer of what looked like fine beige chambray. The date "1703" was stitched in the center.

I was eager to lift the quilt out of the storage case and looked around. "Do you have some gloves?" I asked curator Gillian Newbery.

"You don't need any," she said. She smiled and pointed to a hand-lettered tag: "Please touch." This was my introduction to the remarkable quilt collection of an even more remarkable woman, Rachel Beatrice Kay-Shuttleworth.[1]

If we were shooting a documentary about her, we could start with this scene. A tall, elegant woman is lovingly stroking an exquisitely quilted and appliquéd 1701 Queen Anne skirt panel. Then she picks up a large pair of shears and chops it into three pieces!

This was a heart-stopping sacrilege that Rachel performed over and over throughout her life because she was possessed by an obsession even greater than her love of fine needlework: she wanted to educate future generations. The unfortunate garment in this particular case offered examples of three different needlework techniques, and so, logically, it had to be divided among her separate teaching folders.[2]

Rachel handmade these large cardboard books, using exquisite French knots to attach each sample to a 4'5" x 2'6" cardboard page. She then wrote a full description underneath. These folders were the visual aids used in her extensive and lifelong teaching and can still be seen in her "working collection" at Gawthorpe Hall, Burnley, Lancashire, in northern England.

Imagine a beautiful, red-haired, six-foot-tall, English Eleanor Roosevelt, a passionate and skilled needlewoman and social activist with boundless

energy and masses of charm, charisma, and organizing ability. This was Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth, a Lancashire lady who single-handedly amassed one of the largest and most extensive textile collections in Britain and possibly the world.

Starting in childhood, Rachel avidly acquired examples of historical needlework that eventually spilled out of every nook and cranny wherever she was living. Her family referred to the results of this odd obsession as "Rachel's tat." ("Tat," the Hindi word for burlap, became British slang for a rag or something tasteless or poorly made, in other words "rubbish.") Despite her family's original perception, Rachel's fabulous collection is now valued at £6.5 million or nearly $10 million.

Rachel's Textile Collection

When Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth died in 1967 at the age of eighty-one, she had collected an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 items. (At one point during her lifetime, the entire collection had to be moved from an upper story of her home because its weight was causing structural damage!)[33]

A portrait of eighteen-year-old Rachel, painted in 1904 by American miniaturist Mabel Lee Hankey.

Today, the collection numbers about 28,000 items. "It is a treasure-house of work produced over many centuries in many countries," writes U.K. quilt expert Celia Eddy, "including embroideries, costumes, samplers, lace, beadwork, and important examples of British patchwork and quilting…amassed with the specific intention of establishing a 'hands on' teaching and study resource."[4]

Amazingly, although Rachel was a child of privilege, the legend is that she never spent a penny on her treasures. Her personality and charm were so powerful that friends and strangers delighted in sending her rare examples of textiles, embroideries, and costumes from around the globe. No one could resist giving her things. "Some people, by their vivid awareness, act as magnets to beautiful and interesting things, and she was such a one," commented Frances Kay, Rachel's niece and a great supporter of the collection.[5]

It is hard to know today if Rachel had any criteria (or diplomatic method) for rejecting a textile gift. The quality of the items in the collection is uniformly high, their value immeasurably increased by her precise cataloging, labeling, and chronicling of each piece so that it and its history could be immediately available for teaching or research purposes. Undoubtedly, she shared specifics about the types of items she wanted to meet her teaching needs and to fill out different areas of the collection, and those who knew her or knew of her took great pleasure in locating examples.

The 2006 inventory of the Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth collection includes seventy-seven quilts and nineteen quilted objects, the latter including one quilt block, partial quilt tops, and several items of quilted clothing—a total of ninety-six items dating from 1700. (See analysis of the quilt holdings, *Addenda A*, and details and photos of eight of the quilts, *Addenda B*.) In addition, there are many fabrics of special interest to quilters, including samples of toiles and printed and glazed cottons. Some are scraps from garments, while others are mill samples. "At the moment," reports staff member Mike Millward, who is currently creating a master computer database of the collection, "it is difficult to be precise, but I would think there are hundreds, possibly thousands [of fabric samples]."[6]

Linda Parry of the Victoria and Albert Museum, which has an extensive textile collection, said that one of the particular strengths of the Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth collection is the patchwork and quilts.[7]

The collection also includes a library of 6,000 books and pamphlets on all facets of needlework, supervised by librarian Lorna Rogerson, who is also a Trustee of the collection.

Rachel's Teaching

Rachel's childhood education profoundly affected her later teaching methods. She was born to a noted Lancashire family on February 17, 1886 at Gawthorpe Hall, the 300-year-old family home near Preston. Although she had two older sisters, she was especially close to her two younger brothers.

Like all daughters of "good families" at the time, she could hardly be sent off to the local school house, and so was educated by governesses and tutors, their efforts amended by Rachel's own unique interests and limitations. Reportedly, one music teacher struck Rachel's hands with a stick whenever she hit a wrong note on the piano. Later, Rachel politely told another teacher, "I'm sorry, Monsieur, but I am not going to learn the piano." She had decided that education must be pleasurable as well as useful.

Rachel was hardly an intellectual, but her educational philosophy was already so clear by the time she was sent away to boarding school at age fifteen, that she found herself lecturing her instructors.

> *Sewing was taught to the younger children…but as the girls advanced, more emphasis was put upon academic subjects. Rachel felt that this was wrong and courageously told [the headmistress] of her opinion. She made out a reasoned case for her objection, saying that education should be a matter of coordination of mind, hand, and eye, and that for her, at any rate, mental effort and*

> *success in academic subjects could only be attained if time were allotted for needlework and other handicrafts. It is interesting that this theory of education, now very generally held, was independently arrived at by this young girl.*[8]

The headmistress relented and allowed Rachel to develop her skills to such an extent that Rachel was teaching younger students before she left. Her varied educational experiences, positive and negative, helped form her surprisingly modern views on the best teaching methods.

After graduation, Rachel and a friend were sent to Paris to study art. Her father, Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth,[9] insisted that Rachel paint from plaster casts, rather than live models, but she managed to hang about her friend's life classes, eagerly soaking up the teachers' and students' comments. She also attended every lecture she could at the Louvre, acquiring a broad knowledge of art history.[10]

Like all aristocratic young ladies, Rachel "came out." She was presented at court in 1902, the first year of the short but merry reign of Edward VII. A striking beauty with masses of red-gold hair and keen blue eyes, she adored flirting and dancing.[11] Her lively social schedule was balanced with what were called "good works." The traditional privileges of her position brought traditional responsibilities for public service. She embraced them vigorously, helping her mother and sisters with committee work and ministering to the poor in their area. Her family had a tradition of involvement in both education and social issues. Her paternal grandfather, Sir James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth (1804-1877), while still Dr. James Kay, wrote "The moral and physical condition of the working-class employed in the cotton manufacture in Manchester, 1932," which was cited by Friedrich Engels in *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. In 1942, he married Lady Janet Shuttleworth and assumed her name and coat of arms by special royal license.[12]

She also gave her first lectures on art history at the National Gallery and enjoyed them immensely, a forerunner of her lifetime dedication to teaching.[13] (Her grandfather had been a cofounder of England's first training college for school teachers in 1839. He strongly influenced the system of national school education in both Britain and the United States today which includes public inspections, trained teachers, and funding at both the local and state levels.)[14]

The elderly Rachel with students at Gawthorpe Hall.

Rachel's career as a teacher grew out of both her love of needlework and her social and civic activism. Even when she was quite young, she relished discussing political issues and the social consequences of the Industrial Revolution with the Liberal politicians who were frequent guests at Gawthorpe Hall. Although most workers still labored 70 hours a week, Rachel recognized that the mechanization of the Industrial Age could eventually create more time for leisure and education. "Rachel recognized that personality develops through expression, and that, without opportunity for creative work, personality must suffer," noted her biographer, Canon G.A. Williams.[15]

This became her guiding principle. Soon she was teaching embroidery and needle arts to women and girls, including farm women and factory workers from the nearby Lancashire textile mills. Rachel reasoned that no matter how desperately poor a woman might be, if she could embroider a flower on her apron or on a cloth covering a window, her quality of life would be improved. There might be no food in the house, no sanitation or running water, but the act of creating beauty would give the woman a sense of control.

Rachel's extensive travels—to France, Holland, Germany, Italy, the United States, and North Africa—allowed her to bring back examples of exquisite textiles from around the world that became "visual aids" for her classes. Her

ability to excite, educate, and inspire is illustrated by the profile by a local journalist, Sally Price, written in the mid-1950s:

> *The most stimulating Lancastrian I have met for a long time in my travels around the county is undoubtedly the Hon. Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth, M.B.E., J.P.*[16]

> *I am a novice in the use of a needle, know far too little about architecture, and have an amateur's assessment of line, design, and colour. Yet, when I have been in her company for a while, embroidery, laces, ceramics, and fabrics come alive. They have stories, historical and geographical backgrounds. She can provide a link through a scrap of lace between the woman who wore it in North Africa, its origin in the days of the Crusades, and the English babies whose christening bonnets it trimmed….If I should seek information about a period or a piece of craftsmanship, she can turn to 10,000 neatly written cards indexing and cross-indexing her collection of treasures and books.*[17]

Celia Eddy, noted British quilt designer, historian and activist, writes about Rachel:

> *Her interest went far beyond the purely practical, since she firmly believed that a knowledge and love of needlecrafts could enrich all our lives. She loved nothing more than to spread her treasures before her visitors and tell the stories behind them. She would show them, for example, a piece of gold and yellow damask which had been tossed out of a window when people ransacked the Tuilleries during the French Revolution, or a bonnet of gold passementerie and brocade which had been worn by Queen Louise of Prussia when she and her husband, King Frederic William III, fled from Napoleon. Through the beauty and variety of textile art and craft, she wanted to waken in people an awareness of the relationship between history and handicrafts.*[18]

When World War I broke out, Rachel threw herself into war relief, organizing crafts workrooms for women who had lost their livelihood with the closing of the textile mills or whose families had lost their breadwinners to the military. Rachel created a source of income and a sense of purpose for these women during a very dark time. Simultaneously, a pattern evolved that would continue throughout her life. She would perceive a need and create an organization to fill it. She would inspire others with its mission, staff it, then hand over day-to-day operation to others she had trained, before moving on to new work.

Rachel's technique in launching a new project was to work out the initial details and then collect a team together. She would fire it with her enthusiasm, but when the project, whatever it was, hit the public eye, it appeared to be a joint effort and she merely a member of the Committee. She was fond of saying: "It isn't important who does the job; the important thing is that the job be well done."[19]

Following World War I and throughout the 1920s, British unemployment grew steadily until it reached near-catastrophic levels, with a resulting profound effect on the individual spirit. Revolution, like the one that had just taken place in Russia, was a distinct possibility. "[Rachel's] profound conviction that personality must shrink and suffer without any outlet for creative expression was confirmed by the effect of unemployment on the human lives around her. She believed that, unless something was done, these people would become unemployable."[20]

Her solution was to form craft clubs where the unemployed could learn skills like needlework, "woolcraft," basketwork, leatherwork, carpentry, and fine arts. As classrooms, she secured schoolrooms, chapels, and army huts. She drove all over the country, recruiting teachers and persuading local authorities to provide the necessary funds. Once the program was in place, she recognized the need for craft shows to publicize and validate the students' work.

So many communities took up her project that Rachel soon realized their efforts were overlapping in some areas while other regions were neglected. She invited the various representatives to Gawthorpe Hall for a planning meeting that evolved into the supervisory Lancashire Community Council, in which she took an active part.[21]

That Rachel never produced a formal book or article about her teaching methods is confirmed by Lorna Rogerson, Gawthorpe's archivist and librarian.[22] Those still alive who were instructed by Rachel remember her as a dedicated and compelling teacher who engaged students of all ages and abilities, but they are unable to recall any specific teaching techniques other than her hands-on use of historical examples.

Rachel *did* leave us her annotated teaching folders and "thousands of notes, labels, and other documents which give a flavour of her views and methods," reports staff member Mike Millward "However," he says, "these [documents] are not [yet] catalogued or well organised. We do treat Rachel's [handwritten] labels with a great deal of respect, and one day someone with lots of time might do some serious work [editing them]."[23]

Rachel's Public Service

Any of the three major facets of Rachel's life—as collector, educator, or social activist—would earn her a place in the history books. Combined with her dedication and people skills, they made her a dazzling force.

Rachel's social activism extended to many issues affecting women and children, as well as juvenile justice and care for the mentally ill in the prison system. A list of her achievements would take a small volume, but just one example involves infant mortality. In nearby Padiham, Rachel discovered the cruel and terrible poverty that many families still endured. Cottages were built into the sides of hills, with water continually oozing down the interior clay walls. One in five children (20%) died before the age of two. Rachel confronted and cajoled local and national authorities into setting up an Infant Welfare Centre. Within five years, despite the deprivations of World War I, the infant mortality rate in the area had dropped to 8%, still appallingly high by modern standards, but a huge improvement.[24]

When the Boy Scouts was founded in 1909, Rachel campaigned for a girls' equivalent. Many feared that such activities might be dangerous to girls' health and morality, making them tomboyish and (horrors!) independent. However, the Girl Guides movement ("Guides" being considered a less proactive term than "Scout") was soon formed with the approval of Boy Scouts founder Sir Robert Baden-Powell, under the direction of his sister Agnes. Rachel became the Girl Guides County Commissioner for North East Lancashire in 1915, enthusiastically filling this post for thirty-one years. Her influence with the Guide leaders she had trained and the many Guides she had personally taught was prodigious. In the 1930s, when the National Coal Board proposed "open-caste mining" (strip mining) within sight of her Gawthorpe Hall home, Rachel told them, "I will get every Girl Guide in Lancashire to lie down in front of your diggers." The company knew she could and would, and they cancelled their plans.[25]

Even with her hectic public schedule, Rachel personally nursed her invalid father for many years. She often drove through the night from wherever she had been meeting or lecturing so that she could care for him when he awoke in the morning. For transportation, she tore about the countryside in a funny little black car, terrifying any unfortunate passengers. To feed herself on the road, she sometimes hard-boiled eggs on the car's radiator. If the eggs cracked, she could be seen driving along with streams of egg white decorating her hood like "a mobile meringue."[26]

Despite many suitors in her youth, the fun-loving Rachel chose not to marry. Her jam-packed life was divided among family and community duties, teaching, lecturing, travel, and the private pleasures of creating exquisite

needlework. Today, Rachel would undoubtedly be a political leader or CEO of a major corporation. Given her times, she worked in other ways.

For example, in the late 1930s, the British government signed agreements with Hitler and hoped for "peace in our time." Rachel felt that war was inevitable and that Germany might soon be bombing British cities. Using her extensive Girl Guide connections, she organized a large network of reception centers and rural homes, each pre-inspected and approved, where evacuees could be housed. In eight months, she drove 2,200 miles, inspiring and recruiting volunteers. When the bombs started falling, her efficient preparations worked perfectly.[27] Thus, she repeated her lifetime pattern of seeing a need, conceiving a way to address it, recruiting and staffing an efficient organization, then moving on to a new project.

Rachel and Gawthorpe Hall

In Rachel's time, gender was more or less destiny. The ancient European custom of primogeniture dictated that all family property would be inherited by the eldest son. For centuries, this practice had the desired result of keeping large estates together, but it could also exact a cruel cost on the other children. Such lack of control over a major aspect of one's life may seem strange to modern American women. Legal restraints on the family property meant that Rachel voluntarily spent much of her life being totally responsible for maintaining the aging Gawthorpe Hall, its lands, and the welfare of its tenants, without ever "owning" it. Despite investing enormous energy and care into keeping up the 17th-century estate, she knew and accepted that she could be asked to leave at any moment.

Gawthorpe Hall, the ancestral Kay-Shuttleworth home in Lancashire, now houses Rachel's textile collection which is available to the public by appointment.

Both of Rachel's beloved younger brothers served in "The Great War" of 1914–1919, now called World War I. Both were killed. Rachel then managed the estate for her invalid father, who died in 1939. At that point, the estate passed to a nephew, already serving in World War II. He, in turn, asked Rachel to "carry on." He, and then the next heir, his younger brother, both died early in the war. A third nephew inherited the title. Away in military service, he also asked Rachel to act as caretaker. This fourth Lord Shuttleworth in a four year period was then gravely wounded and nearly died. Happily, he recovered and took over managing the estate. At age sixty, Rachel was finally "free."[28]

She had long envisioned founding a Crafts House for teaching and promoting fine needlework, and her next major project was to find a suitable location. She, her library, and her growing collection of "tat" moved into a small house in a nearby village.[29]

When the new Lord Shuttleworth married in 1949 and a few years later decided to leave Gawthorpe Hall for a less uncomfortable dwelling, Rachel arranged to move herself and her collection back in. She occupied a small apartment, first on the main floor and then on the top floor, using the rest of the building for storage, teaching, and display. Handsome display cases were built to house frequently changed displays highlighting different themes and aspects of the collection.

> *Almost at once, she set about using [Gawthorpe Hall] as the college she envisaged, and an "Education Committee" was assembled. The University [of Manchester], the W.E.A. [Workers' Education Association, still active], the Local Authority, the County Council, as well as interested individuals were recruited and courses of lectures and day conferences were arranged….she set about treating the Hall as though [her] Adult Centre was a fact.…The long Gallery made an excellent Exhibition Hall, and Rachel would mount a fine display to interest and instruct visitors or students who came to Gawthorpe.*
>
> *Courtaulds [the prestigious Courtauld Institute of Art in London] realized the value of these exhibitions and soon they were regularly sending students to study at Gawthorpe as an aid to their textile designing. If they wished to see the work of one special period or country, Rachel would get out the appropriate examples for them.…This was no Museum collection, but a teaching medium. Each piece was important from some particular angle for the specialist.*
>
> *School children engaged on a form project, student teachers doing their theses, play producers requiring help with period costume, embroideresses studying church embroidery, all were welcome.*

> *Rachel was a born teacher and loved it. It was exhausting. Students visibly wilted after several hours of work, but Rachel never flagged. She seemed to be made of iron. She had to make Gawthorpe known, and showing parties around the house seemed a good way of doing it. Advertising circulars were sent to Mothers' Unions, Women's Institutes, Townswomen's Guilds, and similar bodies all over the north of England.* [30]

Eventually, the National Trust, a preservation organization, agreed to accept Gawthorpe Hall as a gift if a tenant could be found who could repair and maintain it while paying a small rent.

Rachel decided to apply her organizational talents yet again and persuaded her nephew to appoint her as caretaker of Gawthorpe. Guided by the Education Committee, Gawthorpe Foundation began offering formal lectures and classes. Rachel's extraordinary vision and personality stimulated contributions, both to maintain the property and to expand the textile collection into a major national resource. "It is a testament to her contacts and her reputation," says Charles Kay-Shuttleworth, the current Lord Shuttleworth, "that the collection at Gawthorpe has tripled in size since her death. I still meet people who tell me of their childhood memories of going to Gawthorpe and being taught elementary embroidery by my Great Aunt."[31]

In her final years, Rachel was tireless and indomitable. While her mother had probably never brushed or combed her own hair, Rachel, in her seventies, thought nothing of clambering up on the roof of Gawthorpe Hall to patch a leak. She took to wearing traditional wooden Lancashire clogs to protect her feet from the cold stone floors in the unheated manor. "You could always hear her coming to answer the door," recalls Curator Gillian Newbery. "If anyone knocked and asked to see her 'bedspreads,' out would come 596 things. Every item was there to be touched, inspected, learned from."[32]

The same could be said for the life of Rachel Beatrice Kay-Shuttleworth! "What I believe a study of the lives of such people does convey," says Celia Eddy, "is a strong message about the power which the energy and imagination of individuals has to inspire and excite those who follow. Social and political context are important, but quirky individualism can also be potent."[33]

Rachel died on April 20, 1967 at age eighty-one. Two days earlier, she had supervised a committee meeting from her sick bed.[34] Those who have carried on her work show similar vigor and determination, despite a constant struggle for funding. It has not been easy, but this "working collection" of quilts and thousands of other textile items still survives and is open to the public during the summer. "[We] are determined to find a way to raise the necessary funds to make the collection accessible to students on a permanent basis," says the current Lord Shuttleworth. "That was always Rachel's wish."[35]

In 2003, the Gawthorpe Hall collection received a £50,000 grant from the National Heritage to create a catalog of the collection, currently numbered at 28,000 items.[36] In conjunction, a fundraising CD-ROM for PCs featuring thirty-two quilts from the collection was created. (There is also an "adopt a quilt" program to purchase acid-free storage boxes and pay for professional photography of each quilt. Donors receive a photo of their "adopted" quilt.)[37]

※※※

Addenda A

Analysis of Quilts Currently in the Gawthorpe Hall Collection

Here is a breakdown of the 2006 index of quilts and quilted items in the Gawthorpe Hall collection, based on data supplied by Mike Millward. While some of the quilts represent several types of construction, the approximate breakdown of both quilts and quilted objects is:

Piecework – 61

Whole cloth – 13

Appliqué – 7

At least five quilts feature embroidery as the major design feature (not including crazy quilts). One quilt has inked Bible verses as its decorative element. There are nineteen quilts that are predominantly hexagons, ten log cabin quilts, and eight crazy quilts.

Construction dates of quilts and quilted objects break down as follows. (Note: when a range of dates is given by the inventory, I have selected the median date for purposes of this analysis.)

2	First half 18th C
1	Second half 18th C
5	First quarter 19th C
10	Second quarter 19th C
13	Third quarter 19th C
22	Fourth quarter 19th C
11	First quarter 20th C
11	Second quarter 20th C
4	Third quarter 20th C
1	Fourth quarter 20th C
16	No information available
96	TOTAL

The author will gladly send any interested reader a twenty-seven-page doc file or printout of the 2006 index of quilts and quilted objects on request. Contact her at duganek@aol.com.

Addenda B

Eight Quilts from the Gawthorpe Hall Collection

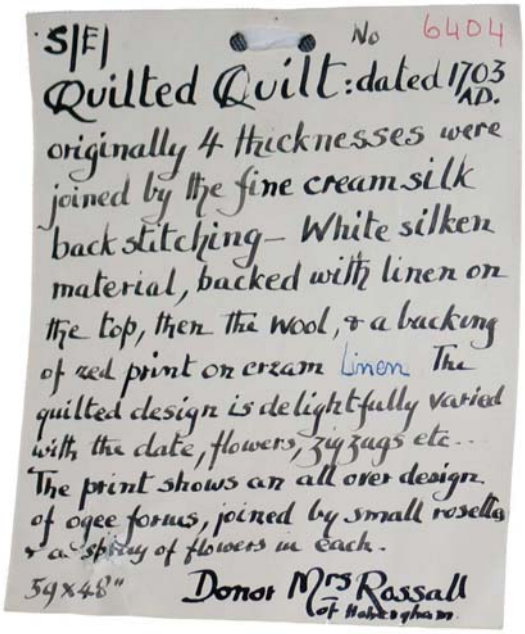
The following quilts have been selected as a representative sampling of the Collection's quilt holdings. All were collected by Rachel during her lifetime, and all are featured among the thirty-two quilts on a CD-ROM issued by the Gawthorpe Hall archive. (Librarian Lorna Rogerson estimates that at least three-quarters of the quilts are "post-Rachel."[38]

Each quilt is introduced by the author, followed by verbatim information from Rachel's handwritten tags and then from the official Collection notes and curator's comments as stated in the database. NOTE: A boxed word or words like this indicate Rachel corrected whatever she originally wrote by painting over the word/s and then rewriting the entry. Parentheses are reproduced from the original texts. Corrections and commentary by the author in these sections are enclosed in brackets.

※※※

The Special Quilt, 1703. 59" x 48" (141cm x 117cm). The oldest quilt in the collection. Exquisite quilting on white silk, now friable and mostly disintegrated, which is backed with linen. Wool filling and print cotton backing. (The small size may indicate it was for a child or christening.)

Rachel's handwritten tag: Quilted Quilt: dated 1703 A.D. Originally 4 thicknesses were joined by the fine cream silk back stitching—White silken material, backed with linen on the top, then the wool & a backing of red print on cream linen. The quilted design is delightfully varied with the date, flowers, zigzags, etc. The print shows an all over design of ogee forms, joined by small rosettes & a sprig of flowers in each. 59 x 48" Donor Mrs. Rossal of Habersham.


S|F| No 6404
Quilted Quilt: dated 1703 AD.
originally 4 thicknesses were joined by the fine cream silk back stitching— White silken material, backed with linen on the top, then the wool, & a backing of red print on cream Linen. The quilted design is delightfully varied with the date, flowers, zigzags etc.. The print shows an all over design of ogee forms, joined by small rosettes & a sprig of flowers in each.
59x48" Donor Mrs Rossall of Habersham

Rachel's handwritten tag for the Special Quilt, 1703.

Collection notes: Four thicknesses, cream poplin silk, backed with cream linen, carded wool for quilting, and a final backing of cream linen with a red floral print; this is a repeat trellis pattern enclosing individual sprays of flowers. The quilting itself is in backstitch using fine cream linen thread and the design of daisies, zigzags and checks is worked around a central circle with the date

1703. The two layers of silk have perished, revealing the woollen interlining; however, the actual quilting stitches have remained intact, making the overall design clearly visible.

Curator Newbery's additional comments: This must have been created by someone with extraordinary artistic ability and sewing proficiency. It is referred to as "the special quilt" because of its age and its design.

The Special Quilt, 1703.

※※※

Basket and Oak Leaves, 1780. 83" x 108" (211cm x 274cm). Broiderie perse center on a cream ground, framed by pieced hexagons.

Rachel's handwritten tag: Bedspread (Patchwork & appliqué & pieced). A beautiful large bedspread, late 18th century? with border of hexagons pieced-work & central designs appliqué from cut-out chintz (sometimes sold for the purpose). The rich colors suggest 18th-century printed cotton. (Don[or] Mrs. Carlisle.)

Collection notes: Central basket of tulips, sweet peas, heartsease, iris, and convolvulus—above which is draped a ribboned lace effect appliqué, and below a garland of oak leaves and acorns. Surrounding this is a deep border of applied circles of sawn off triangles, then edged with triangles of hexagons applied to plain white cotton base. These are all edged with narrow strips of fabric of brown pattern of flowers within the border.

Basket and Oak Leaves, 1780.

Curator Newbery's additional comments: The pink ribbon above the basket itself is made from woven strips of material that the curator has never seen on any other quilt (and she tells me that she's seen more quilts than I've had hot dinners. ED.) [sic]

※※※

Quilt from Old Provence, 1800. 88" x 53" (197.5cm x 134.6cm). Block-printed cotton, closely quilted.

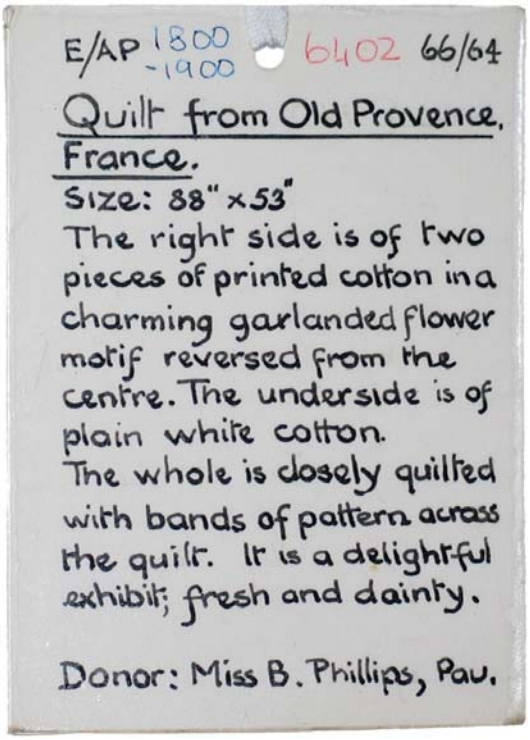
Rachel's handwritten tag: 1800–1900. Quilt from Old Provence, France. Size 88" x 53". The right side is of two pieces of printed cotton in a charming garlanded flower motif reversed from the centre. The underside is of plain white cotton. The whole is closely quilted with bands of pattern across the quilt. It is a delightful exhibit; fresh and dainty. Donor: Miss B. Phillips, Pau.

Quilt from Old Provence, 1800.

Collection notes: …the top fabric is in two halves, joined down the centre and reversible on one side so that the motif appears upside-down on one half. The quilting is in running stitch, worked in separate blocks across the quilt. They are in varying widths in simple horizontal or vertical lines, in diamond or feather patterns.

Curator Newbery's additional comments: I like to imagine that the maker of this quilt originally made two cot [crib] quilts for twins and when they grew up, she sewed them together. Personally though, I would have made it so the pattern flowed in one direction.

※※※

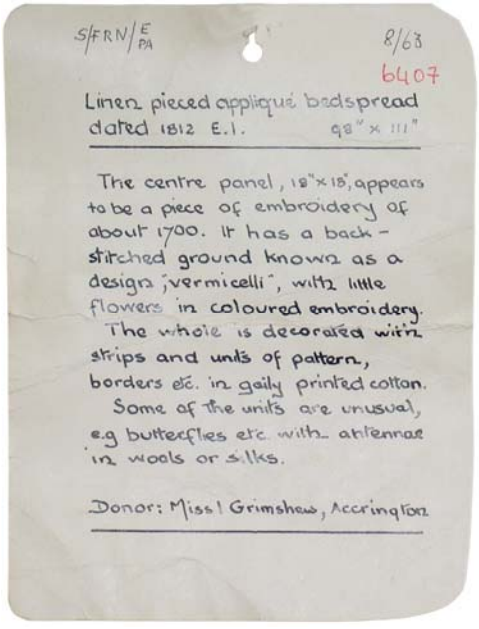


Rachel's handwritten tag for the Quilt from Provence, 1800.

Hoverfly, 1812.

Hover Fly, 1812. 98" x 111" (249cm x 282cm). Pieced and appliquéd on linen.

Rachel's handwritten tag: Line pieced appliqué bedspread dated 1812 E.I. 98" x 111" — The centre panel, 18" x 18", appears to be a piece of embroidery from about 1700. It has a back-stitched ground known as a design, "vermicelli", with little flowers in coloured embroidery. The whole is decorated with strips and units of pattern, borders, etc. in gaily printed cotton. Some of the units are unusual, e.g. butterflies etc. with antennae in wools or silks. Donor: Miss I. Grimshaw, Accrington.


S/FRN/E PA 8/63
6407
Linen pieced appliqué bedspread
dated 1812 E.I. 98" x 111"
The centre panel, 18"x18", appears to be a piece of embroidery of about 1700. It has a back-stitched ground known as a design "vermicelli", with little flowers in coloured embroidery.
The whole is decorated with strips and units of pattern, borders etc. in gaily printed cotton.
Some of the units are unusual, e.g butterflies etc with antennae in wools or silks.
Donor: Miss I Grimshaw, Accrington

Rachel's handwritten tag for Hoverfly, 1812.

Collection notes: Panel is framed by little lappets of printed cotton, carefully edged with tape. Many units of pattern randomly applied surround the centre piece, including rosettes of hexagons in varying sizes, daisy motifs,

hover flies, and little butterflies.…Among these are the maker's initials, "EJ", and the year the cover was made, 1812. A printed border band separates these from a further array of hover flies inwardly facing and enclosed by a final pieced border of varying chintzes.

Curator Newbery's additional comments: One of the hover fly wings has "37 Oxford Street" printed on it, so probably from a flour bag or sugar sack.

※※※

Ruins in a Chinese Landscape, 1825.

Ruins in a Chinese Landscape, 1825. 108" x 108" [or 107.5" x 114" if the given measurement of 273cm x 289cm is correct.] The largest quilt in collection, it has broiderie perse appliqué and embroidery on white linen.

Rachel's handwritten tag: Bedspread of white linen with superb appliqués. These [chintzes] were printed for the purpose and usually date 1820–30. The border is formed of branches, floral & arboreal. Each appears to be separately printed, but they overlap slightly round the foot of both sides. Some have a good deal of added embroidery to enrich the effect—either transforming roses to moss roses, or adding a little more color. Near the foot, below the centre is a large landscape, pieced together with classical pillars, ruined castles & an ecclesiastical building & Chinese Pagoda with 2 bridges—figures fishing, etc. Donor Wm. Charles Penwilliam. Netted lace edges on three sides.

Collection notes:…could perhaps be dated from around 1770 when printed designs of a classical or Chinese nature were extremely popular. However, the floral prints which edge the cover are similar to those produced specially for the purpose of appliqué, around 1829–1830. Motifs would be carefully cut out and applied to a new ground, a technique known as "embroidery perse." This particular bedcover has added embroidery to enrich the effect, either transforming roses to moss roses or adding a little more colour. A netted lace edges the bedcover on three sides.

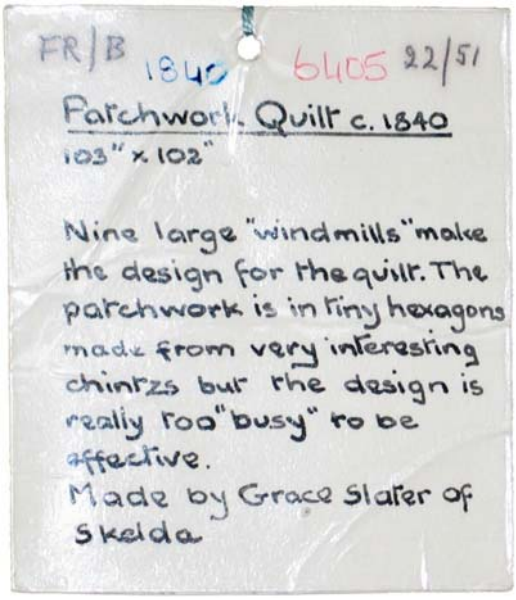
Curator Newbery's additional comments: This is the collection's largest quilt which makes it really difficult to show, but the broiderie perse is exquisite.

※※※

Dresden Plate and Windmill, 1840. 103" x 102" (261cm x 259cm). A blizzard of chintz prints arranged in traditional designs.

Rachel's handwritten tag: Patchwork quilt, c. 1840. …Nine large "windmills" make the design for the quilt. The patchwork is in tiny hexagons made from very interesting chintzs but the design is really too "busy" to be effective. Made by Grace Slater of Skelda.

Collection notes: A complicated mixed patchwork quilt made from a wide variety of chintzes in rust brown and reds. The design is comprised of 9 "windmill" shapes with marigold petal centres; the spaces between the windmills are filled with hexagons. A border of pieced triangles frame the design. The whole is lined with calico and interlined with wadding [batting]. The quilting itself is in running stitch and forms a diamond pattern. The maker's name is inscribed in ink on the calico lining.



Rachel's handwritten tag for Dresden Plate, 1840.

Curator Newbery's additional comments: Rachel's label, to my mind, is rude—I would be happy if during my lifetime I had made this one quilt. [NOTE: Celia Eddy adds, "Perhaps we look at things from a different perspective nowadays, because [curator] Gillian [Newbery] and I both think it is sumptuous!][39]

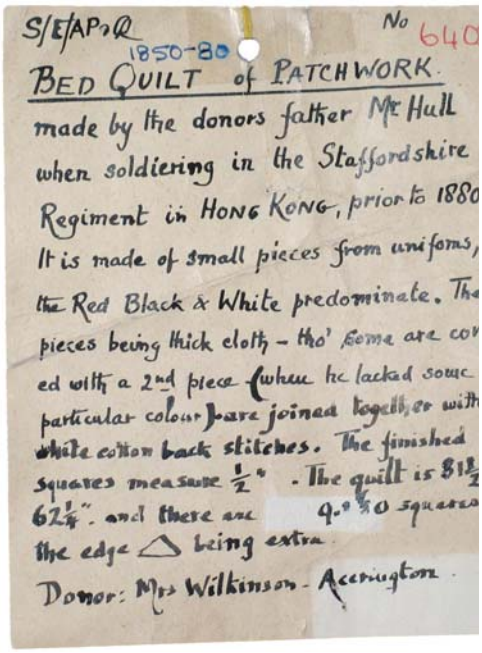
Dresden Plate, 1840.

※※※

The Soldier's Quilt, 1865.

The Soldier's Quilt, 1865. 81" x 62" (207cm x 158cm). Uniform scraps cut into more than 9,000 half-inch squares by a soldier. Quilting was a common 19th-century therapy for military men recuperating from wounds and illnesses.

Rachel's handwritten tag: 1850-80 Bed Quilt of Patchwork made by donor[']s father Mr. [Sgt. John] Hull when soldiering in the Staffordshire Regiment in Hong Kong, prior to 1880. It is made of small pieces from uniforms, the Red Black, & White predominate. The pieces being thick cloth – tho' some are covered with a 2nd piece (where he lacked some particular color) are joined together with white cotton back stitches. The finished squares measure 1/2"…and there are 9,350 squares [elsewhere "9485 squares"], the edge △ being extra. Donor, Mrs. Wilkinson - Accrington.


S/E/AP?Q No 640
1850-80
BED QUILT of PATCHWORK.
made by the donors father Mr Hull
when soldiering in the Staffordshire
Regiment in HONG KONG, prior to 1880
It is made of small pieces from uniforms,
the Red Black & White predominate. The
pieces being thick cloth – tho' some are co
ed with a 2nd piece (where he lacked some
particular colour) are joined togeth, or with
white cotton back stitches. The finished
squares measure ½". The quilt is 81½
62¼". and there are 9.?50 squares
the edge △ being extra.
Donor: Mrs Wilkinson - Accrington.

Rachel's handwritten tag for the Soldier's Quilt, 1865.

Collection notes: …NOTE: The quilt was actually made by donor's brother. It is made from tiny squares of deceased officers' uniforms—red, black, and white with some khaki green, grey, royal blue…edged by 372 tiny triangles.

Curator Newbery's additional comments: We think that this was made of dead officers' uniforms because a lot of these colors were available only in officers' uniforms, and a living officer would never have let someone cut up his uniform. We have been told [the creator, Hull,] made it while in hospital.

※※※

Shocking Chenille, 1901. 44" x 57.5" (112cm x 151cm). Crazy patchwork silk with chenille center, feather stitched in twisted silks.

Rachel's handwritten tag: Crazy patchwork cover. 1901. Don[or] Miss E. Chaston, Herts [Hertfordshire]. Shocking chenille crazy patchwork cover of fine silk, some printed, but mainly plain jap silk & satin—in a multitude of very bright colours— mostly pink & purple. Feather stitch in twisted silks and, in the center, chenille. The year "1901" embroidered on one patch & on another "Oct. 7". Little stars & speckles are worked all over. Calico ground & machine edged.

Collection notes: …there is a central arrangement of five pink rectangles, one in the centre and four surrounding, over which is worked a large cross in feather stitch using chenille thread.…Calico has been used as a ground fabric for the patches and the edges are hemmed by machine.

Curator Newbery's additional comments: This quilt hits you in the eye. A wonderful jumble of cheerful fabrics.

Shocking Chenille, 1901.

Notes

Biographical material was obtained primarily from the profile written by Canon G.A. Williams, with corrections and additions made by Rachel's great nephew Charles Kay-Shuttleworth, the current Lord Shuttleworth, and by retired collection curator Gillian Newbery. All photos were supplied by the Gawthorpe Hall archive.

---

[1] Interview with Gillian Newbery, then Collection Curator of the Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth archive at Gawthorpe Hall, November 2001.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Celia Eddy, "Cherish the Past, Adorn the Present, Create for the Future: Patchworks and Quilts in the Gawthorpe Hall Textile Collections," *The Quilter*, No. 67, Summer 1996, page 31.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Frances Kay, Appendix I to *Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth: A Memoir*, by Canon G.A. Williams (Kendal, Lancashire: Titus, Wilson and Son, 1969, reprinted 1974, 1980), 37.

[6] E-mail, Mike Millward to author, May 10, 2006.

[7] Eddy, 31.

[8] Williams, Canon G.A., *Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth: A Memoir* (Kendal, Lancashire: Titus, Wilson and Son, 1969, reprinted 1974, 1980), 4.

[9] Ughtred James Kay-Shuttleworth, First Baron Shuttleworth (1844–1939) was a British Liberal Party Member of Parliament who held office briefly in 1886 as Under-Secretary of State for India and then as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. From 1892–95, he was Parliamentary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty.

[10] Williams, 4.

[11] Williams, 7.

[12] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition.

[13] Williams, 7–8.

[14] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition.

[15] Williams, 7.

[16] In the New Year's Honors of 1949, Rachel was made an M.B.E. (Member of the British Empire). In 1934, she was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the County of Lancashire, and she also served on the local Probation Committee and Juvenile Panel. [Williams, 18] She sought changes in the justice and prison systems to identify and treat the mentally ill. [Williams, 23] When her father died in December 1939 at age 95 [Williams, 21], she was freed of her daily nursing duties and was able to take on even *more* activities with political, social, and religious organizations.

[17] Price, Sally, "The Ancestral Home with a Future," magazine unknown, c. 1954. The article contains nine photos of Gawthorpe Hall, exterior and interior, and a charming photo of Rachel at work on a bedspread with 100 elaborately embroidered feather motifs.

[18] Eddy, 31.

[19] Williams, 10.

[20] Williams, 17.

[21] Williams, 18.

[22] Although she wrote no books or articles on teaching, Rachel *did* write a series of articles for *Embroidery*, the Embroiderers' Guild's quarterly magazine, on classifications and techniques of lace making. "Her practical method of grouping lace into comprehensible categories enables the most inexperienced person to determine enough about the subject to enjoy and appreciate lace, not only as an art but as a fascinating aspect of history." [Williams, 26.] Rachel had spent several years classifying and indexing the guild's huge collection, aided by several volunteers.

[23] E-mail, Mike Millward to author, May 5, 2006.

[24] Williams, 10.

[25] Newbery Interview. *See also* Williams, 32.

[26] Williams, 15.

[27] Williams, 20.

[28] Williams, 24.

[29] Williams, 15 & 17.

[30] Williams, 29–30.

[31] Letter, Sir Charles Kay-Shuttleworth to author, April 29, 2002.

[32] Newbery Interview.

[33] E-mail, Celia Eddy to author, October 10, 2006.

[34] Williams, 36.

[35] Letter, Kay-Shuttleworth.

[36] E-mail, Mike Millward to author, May 4, 2006.

[37] The CD-ROM containing photos and background on thirty-two quilts is U.S. $20 including postage. Adopting a quilt is U.S. $75, and the donor receives both a photo of the quilt and a copy of the CD-ROM. Contact RBKS Collection, c/o RBKS Secretary to the Trustees, Gawthorpe Hall, Padiham, Burnley, Lancs BB12 8UA, England.

[38] E-mail, Millward, May 10, 2006.

[39] Eddy, 32.