Needle/Work: Approaches to contextualising and interpreting the 19th century embroidery and plain sewing of Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum

Joanna Teague

A thesis submitted to The University of Gloucestershire in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Masters by Research in the School of Creative Arts.

April 2024

Word Count: 32,914

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except were indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed …….

DOI: 10.46289/DUKL5839

Abstract

In the 1830's to 1850's the girls at Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum produced a distinctive style of small samplers and pincushions as a culmination of the needlework education they received. The consistency of the style and high quality of needlework across the samplers reveals both the strictness of training and the high level of skill the girls were expected to achieve. As the work is anonymous and there is little in the historic record of how or why they were produced, I used a mix of creative and historical methods to contextualise the work within 19th century education. Samplers and similar educational needlework have previously been studied through stylistic and biographical methods and this study aims to research their production using re-making, curation and material culture, combined with telling a cultural biography of the sewn objects to comprehend the context of production, the objects themselves and the experiences of the young girls who made them. This includes researching the historic record in combination with material culture and practice-led embroidery methods to produce an historical account that centres on the experience of the orphan and the needlework they produced. The historical account was used as the basis for an exhibition of interventions at the Holst Victorian House Museum July to February 2023-24. This research demonstrates that it is possible to create contextualised historical narrative of working class sewing in a training institution that aimed to produced ladies' maids. This research utilises curation, re-making and imagination to tell these stories which ultimately produces narratives that appreciates the skills that these girls acquired and the conditions which produced them.

Dedication

This work is dedicated Mary Gillett, Emma Bruton, Harriet Phillips and all the other girls who trained at the Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum in the 19th century. They have kept me company throughout my research, and it has been an honour to get to know their lives through the needlework.

Table of contents

Acknowledgments

The exhibition and interventions at the Holst Victorian House Museum were in collaboration with the current curator of the museum, Laura Kinnear, to leverage her knowledge of the house, its displays and what is appropriate for the historic/cultural space. Her support and encouragement from the outset were invaluable.

My thanks to Stef Distante who photographed and edited work for the Museum Interventions and Joe Bray whose photography was included in the museum handling packs.

I had amazing support from Jane Daw at the Gloucester Family History Society and showed me the pleasure and pain of researching an individual in the 19th century.

List of artefacts

In this research I have used the extant needlework Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum plus images of samplers I have found online. It is useful to identify these with an artefact number to understand where I have been able to access this needlework. Some I have been able to physically access, others have been found in museums, collection searches, auction sites and private collectors. In the cases of those I have been able to visit, it is my own photo of the object taken during an archive visit. In others where it is not possible to visit, it is taken form the website, or sent to me by the owner.

The orphanage produced multiple items with the same or similar design and so I have mostly used one example of the style, rather than list multiple examples of the same style. It would not be possible to itemise all extant needlework form the orphanage as much of it is in private collections.

I have assigned names by a distinctive element such as verse or phrases, or the location of the sampler. This is my own categorisation.

Artefact A The Acrostic or “I live to die” Sampler at The Victorian House Museum, Cheltenham. Glos.

Artefact B The Acrostic or “I live to die” Sampler at The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum. Accession number 150.73

Artefact C Sir Matthew Hale Sampler at the Wilson Art Gallery and Museum. Cheltenham (red writing) Accession number 1958.55

Artefact D Sir Matthew Hale Sampler at the Wilson Art Gallery and Museum. Cheltenham. (black writing) Accession number 1938_55.

Artefact E The Hymn Sampler in a private collection.

Artefact F May the Blessings Sampler in a private collection.

Artefact G Puzzle Sampler in a private collection.

Artefact H Jane Frost Sampler in a private collection.

Artefact I When my Father and my Mother forsake me in a private collection.

Artefact J Alphabet Sampler at The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham, Glos.

Artefact K Cooper Hewitt Sampler. Accession no 2008-31-10 Object ID 18727651 Available at The Cooper Hewitt Museum http://cprhw.tt/o/2DZ5x/ (accessed 5/2/24)

Artefact L The Harper Sampler at the Met**.** Accession Number: 57.122.320 Available at https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/228247 (accessed 6/3/24)

Artefact M Pincushion at The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham, Glos. Accession number 1964_112

Artefact N Victoria Pincushion in a private collection.

List of figures

All images are the author's own unless stated otherwise.

Preface

In the centre of Cheltenham is a small museum in a modest 19th century house. It was once the home of Gustav Holst and aims to recreate the middle-class Victorian childhood home of the composer with a display of items from the 19th century. On visiting, you climb to the top of the house to see the nursery, there on the wall, as you might expect in a nursery, is a small, embroidered sampler. The area of the stitching is less than 15cm squared.

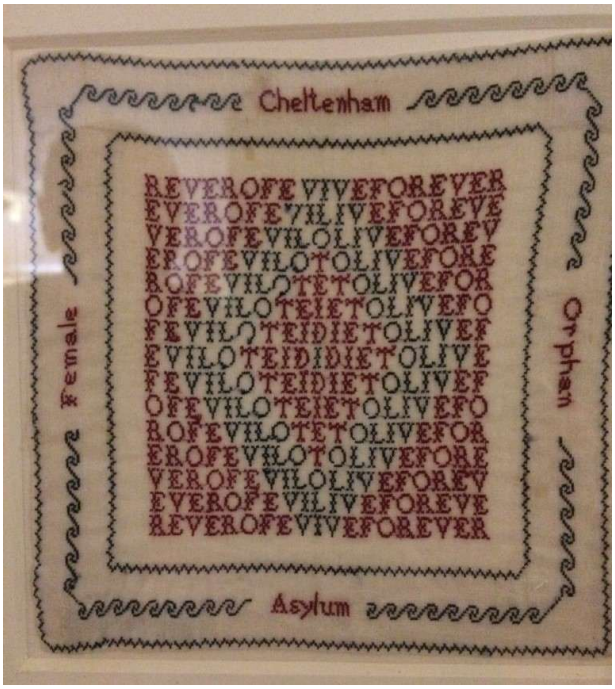


Figure 1- Artefact A - Acrostic Sampler at The Holst Victorian House Museum.

As a maker and embroiderer, any needlework immediately attracts my interest and here is a sampler whose image appears as a tangled knot of letters. It does not conform to usual expectations, there is no maker's name, no date, no alphabet. The words around the outside read "Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum" and at its centre is an acrostic, a type of word puzzle or composition that arranges letters in rows and columns, stitched in black and red. With careful reading its text becomes clearer. It reads "I die to live forever."

A typically Victorian Christian moral.

As an embroiderer I am intrigued by the piece in figure 1. It is neat, exquisite work, of a scale rarely seen in samplers. I want to know more about the girl who made it, the institution she was part of. The design is impactful, did the stitcher choose the design? Why is it so small? What part did it play in her life?

It is one small piece of embroidery in one small museum. Whenever I find historic needlework, I am intrigued to know more, but it is rare to find a narrative that uses the maker and their context as a theme. It is common in textile history to find a narrative focused on how it was made and the aesthetic beauty of the pieces. More recently there has been research on who has made these works, such as an exhibition in 2017 at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge which included biographical details. I would like to find a wider narrative of the sampler by exploring why the needlework looks as it does. Societal, environmental, and personal values have impacted on the maker to choose those threads, cloth and design. When I see a piece of historic needlework, I want to experience a greater connection with the embroiderer, to validate their work and know why it looks as it does. Needlework is a common artefact used to decorate a space yet the ubiquity of 19th century samplers in museums has caused them to be overlooked. Similarly, when an old petticoat or christening gown is draped across a bed in an historic home, it represents the labour of the women who made it but with little information on the maker. This unknown maker has produced something that few people could stitch today. Would it be possible to build an historical narrative that focused on artefact and maker? As a maker and historian, is it possible to combine methods to understand the needlework better? My research investigates how we can produce narratives for these items and makers, how one artefact can lead to a better understanding of how and why it was made and lead to the people who made it.

Introduction

What is a sampler?

An historic sampler is an embroidery that usually has the alphabet, name, date, some small motifs, most commonly being stitched in small cross stitch. Usually made by young women, often representing a rite of passage, the sampler is an example of a girl's skills and education. Once a girl learnt to stitch letters, she was able to mark laundry and household linens. The sampler itself would not have been enough to teach needlework, there were many other tasks to be completed, such as the making of pockets and sewing a shirt, but the sampler is the most easily recognized remnants of those skills.

Samplers often included moral verses and rhymes, to instil good virtue or remind the stitcher of the shortness of life and the need to live in a Christian way. In the UK and the US, Ring (1993 p. xv) considers that for middle- and upper-class girls, producing needlework was a form of conspicuous consumption, proof that the household was able to produce "ladies of leisure". The sampler was a framed representation that a daughter had been bought up well, a rite of passage to be completed before entering the marriage market. Alternatively for the working class, needlework was a means to provide for your family and create items that made life more comfortable. At the end of the 19th century the cloth used for samplers becomes rougher and stitches larger, motifs are minimal or have even gone completely as they become entirely school-based exercises focused on a display of literacy. Many women and girls were materially creative, so the needlework they produced are tangible links with women who have led an otherwise mostly unrecorded life. Today they are valued both decoratively and historically.

The needlework of Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum (CFOA) is striking in appearance. The regularity of the design across the extant pieces indicates institutionalised production. The repeated nature of the designs, produced by different stitchers, suggest a school exercise that goes beyond the usual expectations, such as learning to stitch laundry marking letters. Research quickly reveals that at the time of the production of the needlework, girls in the orphanage were daughters of the working classes. Their families were publicans, glaziers, decorators etc. In the 1840s these girls would need to learn a trade, now as orphans,

disconnected from their family trades, they were taught a trade within the orphanage, that of needlework. These samplers are an unusual surviving example of needlework that can be assigned to the training of the working classes.

Throughout this essay I have mainly used the term *girls* when discussing the lives and wider context of the female orphans. The orphans were generally between the ages of 7 and 16 and *girls* reminds us of their youth and vulnerability.

Aims and Objectives of the research.

My aim is to centre an historical account of the orphanage on the girls who lived there and the needlework that they produced. I will research how I can interpret the needlework based on the values and attitudes that impacted their production.

The initial research revealed the work of local historian Shorey Duckworth (1999a), who documented the history of the CFOA using archival methods. Shorey Duckworth's work provides a thorough chronology of the orphanage. However, it superficially investigates the values of the institution, the needlework it produced and the girls who went there. My research aimed to investigate formulating narrative accounts of the orphanage, using documents in the archival record and combining them with other object focused methods. The needlework will be a source of information through which a material culture approach can be used to investigate its form. As an embroiderer and maker, I am aware that the process of making holds knowledge, so by investigating the artefact and the qualitative experience of stitching the needlework, I reveal knowledge which contributes to the wider narrative of needlework and evaluates how effective they are as methods to produce an historical account. I take a broadly feminist approach highlighting working-class women's place in the 19th century middle-class home with a focus on working-class labour.

The research intends to advance understanding of the nature of the needlework produced at CFOA through the exploration of three key questions:

Who made the samplers?

How were the samplers made?

Why do the samplers look as they do?

In formulating a historical account, I have used White's (1984) famous research to understand issues in narrative production. As White explains, historical narrative is an "artificial "construct. He establishes that a narrative must be used to connect the "facts" and/or the chronology to create an informed narrative. The historical account that I produce does not explain every aspect of the history of the orphanage, but it does explain why the needlework looks as it does. As a maker, I have foregrounded the orphans as makers, placing them at the centre of the narrative. This involved examining both class values and educational contexts dominant at the time, centred on the orphans' experiences. As members of the working-class in Cheltenham their lives are greatly underrepresented in a town known for its heritage as a 19th century middle-class holiday resort. There are no first-hand accounts of orphanage life. Remaining records do not record their lives, their thoughts or feelings about their education and the work they were trained to do. Orphanage records reflect the cultural aims of the Victorian society that produced them, simply to record the work of the institution. The needlework produced are artefacts giving a tangible link to otherwise unrecorded lives, they connect the girls directly to the orphanage and my research explores how these can be used to add to the narrative account.

Methods

In researching the orphanage and its 19th century needlework through the investigations of the artefacts, I aim to elevate the lives of those who produced the needlework. A genealogical approach offers limited value as whilst some names and personal histories were traceable, this revealed little about their experience at the orphanage, their work as a lady's maid, or their later lives. Instead, as an artist, these hand-made objects, the needlework produced by the orphans has been stimulating and thought provoking in their design, materiality, and context. My research brought new knowledge to previously unexamined artefacts. In this way, the girls as makers are brought to light by the research.

When we connect with an object, we can lose a sense of the time between the production of the object and ourselves. Mercier (2020 p144) notes in her book on

material culture: “Objects are highly experiential, but being with things is not simply a subjective process – there are a series of deductions and analyses one can draw from the object itself.” For me, needlework is evocative, creating tangible connections to the maker. I agree with Dolan and Holloway (2016 p155) when they discuss the emotional quality of needlework: “their association with women’s domestic work across the social spectrum has made them a key means of preserving and accessing female histories.”

The techniques used on the orphanage needlework were straightforward making it easy to comprehend how they were made. More recent historical textile investigations have centred on biographical details of the makers, where it has been possible to find them.[1] Researching the needlework, I identified how the dominant values at the time of its production impacted the design. To only consider the inherent design of the object misses the contextual knowledge that the object offers. As Turkle (2007 p5), in her book *Evocative Object* notes, it is more familiar to consider objects as useful or with aesthetic value. She writes “We are on less familiar ground when we consider objects … as provocation to thought.”

Archival Research

To understand who made the needlework will require a study of the orphanage with investigation and re-examination of the archive record. It is hard to define archival research as a methodology, as it does not have distinct disciplines that encompass a way of producing knowledge. It relies on other methods to define its use. Archival research populates an historical account through the lens of the theoretical framework. Previous research such as Shorey Duckworth (1999a) on the orphanage focusses on chronological development of the institution. She takes a Reconstructionist approach, using the archive record to “reconstruct” what she believes is the correct narrative. There is little analysis of hegemony or class relations and values. When examining these documents, my focus was on how they reflect middle-class values of the time. Needlework, has until recently, been sidelined as an academic subject. Historically, needlework produced by the working class was not valued beyond the domestic sphere, as such it is not included in the archives

[1] Such as Sampled Live An exhibition of Samplers at The Fitzwilliam Museum in 2017 and Betty Ring’s book- Girlhood Embroidery.

beyond references to it in economic terms. By revisiting the archival record and combining it with an investigation of the orphanage needlework, I have produced a deeper study on the orphanage and the training the girls received whilst there.

Practice led Research.

Practice led research is ideally suited as a method to understand how the needlework was made. As artist and maker, I am drawn to methods including the manual and haptic It is exciting to use my own artistic practice as inquiry. The reproduction of needlework contributed to an understanding of the experience of the orphans and how the artefacts were produced. I used a practice led approach to produce an item of needlework in the style of the orphanage. As defined by Candy (2006 p1), a researcher in arts and creative practice, "If the research *leads* primarily to new understanding about practice, it is practice led." This practice led approach allowed me to investigate the artefact through the craft of making. The act of making is powerful, channelling explicit and implicit knowledge from extensive training and practice into an activity that intelligently transforms experience into knowledge. In his work on craft, Adamson (2022 p7) defines craft as "a way of thinking through practices of all kinds". Much research into textiles focuses on the quantitative such as the techniques of production. As textile historian Harris says "textile research methods actively work against engaging seriously with human sensation. Strict adherence to scientific rigour and objective reason, while playing a valuable role in forwarding technical knowledge of textiles, implicitly block other approaches" (Harris 2020 p212). This form of practice led research has gained strength through recent projects such as Columbia University's' "Making and Knowing" Project.[2]

Arts-based practice led research has a variety of methodological tools enabling discovery beyond the quantitative knowledge of the artefacts. Leavey suggests in her book on arts-based research there are "tools [that] adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined" (Leavy 2020, p4).

In making an example of needlework, it is useful to consider the language, is it a reconstruction, a re-creation, a re-enactment, it could be a remake, a replica, or a

[2] More information at https://www.makingandknowing.org/

reproduction (Malcom Davies 2023).[3] These meanings define the actions, as a step away from the original object and each contributes subtly different meanings. I have used the term “re-make” to describe the process of recreating a piece of needlework. It is a new version of the needlework, one that I have made that uses modern materials and tools but is systematically based on pictorial, artefactual and documentary evidence (Malcolm Davies 2023). This remaking is an embodied experience that acknowledges the value of emotional qualities within the research process. In the embodied experience I have understood more what it means to make this type of sampler acting as my own research subject. As historian Dyer (2024 p4) states “recreation methods recentre attention on the validity of the maker’s hand”. The experience of the maker is not available through archival sources; this could be a way to access it. By re-enacting, using my body in an embodied investigation, I accessed a phenomenological form of artefact investigation. It is a qualitive method to understand the nature of the needlework the girls produced. It is impossible to create an authentic experience; Gapps (2009 p345) in researching historical re-enactment recognizes that it is unattainable and textile historian Davidson (2019 p345) agrees that “my making body cannot be regulated and experienced in the same way as making bodies in history”. However, by remaking a needlework object some qualitative questions can be answered, such as, how does it feel to sit for extended periods to sew? How do body and mind react to the task? Through autoethnography, I can explore the making of samplers as a hand sewn enquiry, noting subjective experiences and practical considerations, such as the time and labour required to complete tasks.

As the stitching is based on tacit knowledge, the written word may not fully describe the processes. By video recording while I stitch, I can see the body in action and describe my thoughts as I stitch. This allows me to replay the process, to analyse what is produced through that embodied process. In re-making an item of 19th century needlework, I have considered what quality of new knowledge will be created. Social scientist Haraway (1988 p 585) argues for a move towards/back to a more varied system of knowledge acquisition. She advocates for “a practice of

[3] See Appendix 1 for the definition of these words.

objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformations of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing." In researching an historic artefact in practice led research there must be an understanding of how the knowledge can be sought and then applied. Harris (2020 p226) makes clear that textiles are defined by the relationship they have with our senses, and here the artefact has some agency in the production of the narrative. White (1984 p3) proposes that "facts plus narrative" create a "history". In using my knowledge as a maker to produce a narrative for this object, I need also to be aware of the limitations of this approach.

Auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography is a method of research that builds on a narrative led by the "self". It is dependent on my physical skills as a stitcher and my reflexivity as a researcher. Each researcher would bring a different set of skills at varying levels, and it is this that provides great variance in auto-ethnography, The autoethnographic researcher Chang (2008 p52) states, "an individual narrative will bring a new aspect that will enhance cultural understanding of self and of others". My experience of stitching is not universal. The skills I have developed over time will bring a unique understanding of the work produced by the orphanage. It is through the personal experience that connections can be made with wider society, the aim to identify patterns of cultural experience. In this research it will be used to build a layered account. To use auto-ethnography as an effective research method, it must retain a reflective focus. According to Adams (2015) reflection is used to identify and examine the convergences between ourselves and society. In this research the focus will be on myself as stitcher to see I can reflect the girls who stitched the work to produce a better understanding of the nature of the work they produced. It will allow me to access some of the emotions and feelings that are embedded in the object through the physical making. It will allow me to understand the practical aspects of the time taken to produce an item of needlework. Using an auto-ethnographical approach will not lead to value free research, rather as Ellis (2011 p274) states I will need to acknowledge the values I bring to the research. This then could raise issues of reliability of the research which could challenge the plausibility. Ellis (2011 p282) sees that validity comes when "the story is coherent", that it has been well represented by the experiences of the researcher. It is not possible to recreate the

circumstances of the production of the needlework and so auto-ethnography as a method is an appropriate way to creatively access a narrative of the maker.

Curation as a method for research

As part of my research, I curated an exhibition at the Holst Victorian House Museum (HVH). The exhibition's aim was to take visitors beyond the needlework as decorative object, with its fine needlewoman-ship, towards an artefact that has complex narratives. This method was a strong opportunity to communicate and develop the knowledge into a visual, stimulating experience.

Many factors affected the form of the exhibition. HVH aims to recreate the domestic life of staff and owners. As a 19th century house, available display space is limited. It is not a neutral "white cube" for artefacts and contextual narrative. The exhibition took the form of interventions that interacted with existing displays. The word "intervention," defined as adding, removing, or moving displayed items with the intention of altering the existing narratives proposed by the rooms.

Interpretation and presentation are mutually defining with each affecting the other. It is here that the interdisciplinary nature of my research impacted greatly and brought new perspectives. As a maker, my understanding of the object created a lens through which I saw it. Then producing a display, I materialised the knowledge and values. Mason (2006 p18) cites the sociologist Hall's (1997) notion of "cultural maps", which are a shared knowledge and understanding about our environment that is produced when we materialise knowledge.

Museums are cultural interfaces where a wide variety of people visit providing an opportunity to investigate ideas. When working effectively the museum is a space where encounters will be mutually beneficial, critical consumers can bring their own knowledge and expectations. Visitors construct their own meanings, which may differ greatly and conflict with the intended display. In this way power lies with the visitor and engages them as active participants. The ways in which museum displays produce these shared cultural maps are in the "poetics" and the "politics" as defined by Liddchi (2013). The "poetics" are the production of meaning through the arrangement of artefacts, the aesthetics of the space. The "politics" are the overt and

covert messages that the exhibition relays to the public. This was significant in the interpretations and displays that I produced. The interpretations were not ideologically inert but reflected my own cultural values and assumptions. Connection between viewer and artefact is varied based on each person's cultural values and knowledge. It is necessary to bring in knowledge from beyond the object to understand it. Mercier states:

> being with things using object analysis and assemblage ... is not only significant due to the investigative-analytical experience itself, but also because it is an effective way for non-specialists to understand objects and people in relation with all kinds of objects. Being with a thing, in other words, continues to be a powerful way of understanding material cultures (2020 p144).

Material Culture

In this research the needlework artefacts are crucial, they are the only objects that have a direct connection to the orphans. To understand why they were made and how this has affected their appearance I have used object-based methods to examine the orphanage needlework.

Material culture studies an object beyond its aesthetics, its conscious design, using an object to inform the viewer of its role within the society that made it, to look at the conscious and sub-conscious values embedded within it. It reveals some of today's societal values from the culture in which we read it. Studying an object is to consider how its aesthetic nature bears a relationship to its associated cultural value. To study an object, through material culture, is to study the community that produced it, the values, ideas and attitudes of the community. Prown says "the existence of a man-made object is concrete evidence of the presences of a human intelligence operating at the time of the fabrication" (Prown 2001 p70). It is the theory that all objects have been designed, considered, manipulated, and manufactured, directly or indirectly, and reflect either consciously or unconsciously the values and the beliefs of the culture that made the object. His process uses three parts, description, deduction and speculation to draw conclusions on the nature of society that produced the artefact. The textile historians Mida and Kim (Mida and Kim 2018) have further

modified this to support the material culture of clothing using a process of observation, reflection and interpretation.

Interpreting objects is a form of meaning-making and invites consideration of the plausibility of meaning. An object cannot “tell” a truth or a lie, it is inert. It is impossible to produce a “value free” reading of an object as all interpretations will have a bias or be “inherently political.” To mitigate this the process from which the information is drawn and produced must be carefully examined and made visible. Objects have many possible narratives and so can be understood to have many meanings. Objects can be examined through many and varied lenses. I agree with Macdonald (2006, p3), that once objects have been assigned “values” this will be transmitted to the viewer who may not have the “knowledge” to challenge them. There may be competing meanings attached to objects, and those meanings will change over time and the context in which the item is placed. This is the plural and polysemous nature of history.

Cultural Biography

Another useful method for investigating the how and why the artifacts look as they do came in writing a cultural biography of the orphanage needlework, examining first its production and then the “life” of the object. The anthropologist Kopytoff (2014) developed the idea of a cultural biography that focused on an analogy of people and things. He suggests including who made the object, what status it held at the time of production and then asks what has the object’s “career” been? (2014 p66). He goes on to ask if there are “periods” or “ages" in the object's history, and what are the cultural markers of the artefacts? Cultural biographies consider how the object’s usefulness changes over time, and how the object comes to the end of its usefulness, as Drazin suggested on his work on cultural biographies (2020 p61). This would include elements of the economic biography and the value of the object. The context is important, and the anthropologist Appadurai (2014) reinforces the need to look at the social and political circumstances of the exchanges that happen when an artefact is a commodity. He writes:

> follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven

> things … it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context. (2014 p5)

Drazin (2020 p61) recalls this as the need to “follow the things” and goes on further to state that the object biography “describes uses, identities, experiences, and relationships that different phases of its life enable.” The object will have crossed social and physical boundaries as it is moved around. Kopytoff (2014) recognizes that artefacts cannot be recognized at just one point in their life. The archaeologists Marshall and Gosden (1999) identify that artefacts accumulate several histories and some of these histories will impact on our understanding of the object. By understanding the values at production, the research repositions the needlework from decorative object to an important social history artefact.

The production of a narrative

There are no records of the decisions made in producing the needlework, there is no first-hand account that recalls how they were made. The production of the samplers is a task undertaken by orphans instructed by a teacher. There will be reasons and choices behind the actions that formed these samplers. To pursue the question of why they look as they do, I have chosen material culture and practice led research to explain the cultural structure, values and process that formed the samplers. White (1984, p1-34) suggests you cannot produce a narrative without elements of “fiction”. To include fiction feels experimental, without objectivity, and yet with gaps in the archival record alternative ways must be used to construct a narrative. As a maker, those methods incorporate creativity, a creativity that is grounded in the available records, in the chronology and extant artefacts. The plausibility of techniques must always be considered. The techniques used are clear to the reader, allowing for their own judgement. The narrative I have constructed from these methods is not neutral, influenced by the historical framework I have used. I have been reflexive and critical in constructing the historical account, including the description of processes and structures. The imaginative step is grounded in my skills as a maker and drawn from my creativity. Once I accepted that the narrative was flawed, it felt like an invitation to develop creative techniques that explored new ways to develop a narrative. It was exciting to use methods that build on other knowledge types, while also considering plausibility.

Plausibility should be seen as a sliding scale rather than a binary correct/incorrect. It is usual to restrict the construction of the account to the examination of documents. An examination of artefacts has contributed to the narrative using a material culture approach, revealing values at production. Practice led research produced a narrative, grounded in my own experience. Historians can only investigate figures and actions that leave a trace in the present. The needlework contains traces of the lives of the girls who stitched them and the teachers who instructed them, to investigate their construction has been a form of re-enacting that placed myself in the making process of the producer.

The discourse which comes from the material culture understanding of the artefact and the experience of remaking is central to my understanding of the institution that produced the sampler. The inclusion of material culture speculation and practice led research may stretch the validity of the narrative but White (1984 p3) identifies that the narrative is a representation with the dissertation being the narrative plus considered opinion. It is a logical demonstration of history. Hopefully, the clarity of the methods outlined enables the reader to form their own opinion of how it was "found." Jenkins and Munslow (2004 p10), in their research on how historical narratives are formed, might call this approach Constructivism, using "empiricism plus concepts". It is the application of a theory or a concept to understand the events of the past with modern constructed theory. This theoretical framework in which I investigated the sources impacted on the form of the narrative. The narrative and language used produced a form of historical fiction in which I display evidence of the theory and "prove" my understanding of it.

The production of the needlework is an event that is not recorded within documents but is a valid action occurring within the institution. It is important to understand this action to understand the institution. Without its contribution to the narrative, this research will lack the voice of the participants. It is no less valid than understanding the nature of the Annual General Meetings or the annual accounts. My connection is with these items of needlework as a "made" item, my inclusion of them into the narrative is an important part of the research. It could be that this remaking blurs the distinction between fact and fiction. I will test the plausibility of the narrative in the conclusion.

I am aware of the Deconstructionist approach which allows the historian to comprehend that there is no single understanding of the narrative, that the actions and events of the past are built into a narrative and defined by the language used. Whilst there is no true and complete narrative, I can still produce an historical narrative (Jenkins and Munslow 2004 p 13). I know that an event has taken place, but I cannot fully know it or describe it. As there is no logical consequence between an object and its historical value, I have questioned how to integrate the non-recorded event, production of the needlework, into the narrative of the orphanage. To achieve that, I have produced a chronological narrative of the orphanage, but have used the curated exhibition and cultural biography to bring to life aspects of the girls' training and making of the samplers.

The context of the samplers:

CFOA as philanthropic institution.

Figure 2 Detail of Artefact K The Cooper Hewitt Sampler Cooper Hewitt available at http://cprhw.tt/o/2DZ5x/.

The date of the inauguration of the orphanage is proudly stitched onto many of the pincushions and samplers, as 19th May 1806 as can be seen in figure 2. It names Queen Charlotte as patron. It was established as a School of Industry, funded by charitable middle-class philanthropy. The archival research gives a clear image of the benevolent philanthropy and how the orphanage established itself as middle class social and cultural influence and control over the working-class girls.

From the outset the dominance of the middle classes through education and training would influence the lives of the working-class children who entered the institution. The school was established to train working-class girls for domestic service, improving their lives through appropriate work. This would be done:

> by early impressing their minds with just sense of the importance of both their present as well as their future happiness and to place them more effectively above the necessity of being tempted to swerve from rectitude, by enabling them in various ways to earn an honest livelihood. (Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor vol 6 p102)

The report argues that places such as Schools of Industry are ideally placed to remove working-class children from the unhealthy condition of places such as factories and they could become places of moral and religious education for children. The Report for The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comfort of

the Poor was published in 1814, produced by Sir Thomas Bernard, a wealthy philanthropist and social reformer who was involved in the Foundling Hospital. The article on the orphanage is by Mrs Williams, who may have been the first governess of the school and clearly indicates the nature of the values of the institution just 3 years after its establishment. This aim of the institution was to establish the values, norms, ideas, behaviour and expectations of the middle class onto the girls in the orphanage. This influence was supported by middle class subscribers and early records of the orphanage, such as John Browne's Guide to Cheltenham in 1807 lists more than 40 subscribers, each contributing one guinea a year (Browne 1807 p42)**.** These subscriptions raised money for the school and the status of those subscribers was a considerable influence on the success of the institution. The subscribers included local and visiting wealthy patrons from the middle and upper classes. It included the Prince of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and Lady Sherborne (Griffiths 1826) and so adding the confirmation of "respectable" wealthy patronage to the institution.

Figure 3 Hand coloured print of the Old School of Industry building.

In the early 19th century, there is no universal state education. Working-class children could only access education through informal methods. It could be through establishments such as Dame schools, a day care ran by women locally charging a small fee, which had flexible hours and no preconditions such as a uniform. These informal working-class solutions were easily able to respond to local circumstances such as parents' working times, but the education provided was rudimentary at best,

a basic education around reading and practical skills such as sewing and domestic skills and tasks. Some education could be found at Sunday School, but this focused on a strong moral education and not secular skills, using religion to establish the values and norms of middle-class society onto working class children. Cheltenham is no different than elsewhere as the historians Delamont and Duffin (2013 p134) have found that throughout the 19th century the working class struggled to be allowed to be educated and not to work. This included children as well as adults.

In the first part of the 19th century, Cheltenham was a rapidly expanding town. It had grown from around 3000 people in 1801 to approximately 35,000 in 1851, a 10-fold increase in 50 years (Victoria County History 1899 p177). This rapid growth bought the necessity to resolve issues of poverty locally. It may well have been a chance for the philanthropic middle and upper classes to explore some innovative ideas on how to resolve some of the "modern" issues that they saw.

The attitude to the early School of Industry also aimed to resolve a labour shortage as much as to relieve issues of poverty. As an institution the orphanage predated the establishing of National Schools, which started a few years later in 1811 when the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge started to run schools for working-class children. In 1827 the first infant schools were established in Cheltenham (Lee 1834 p157) however, working-class children were expected to work to support a family or trade as soon as they were of an age at which they could be useful. It is not until the Factory Act of 1833 (National Archives Factory Act 1833) that children under the age of nine are prohibited from working.

From its initial stages the School of Industry's focus was on a useful education to train girls for specific tasks. It also ensured the establishment of good morals as defined by those who ran the institution. As Purvis (1989 p85) notes the schools were "not only to socialise poor children into "appropriate" conduct and to teach industrious habits and skills by which they could earn a living" but also to preserve, rather than change the existing hierarchy. The training undertaken by the girls in the early years of the School of Industry are recorded in reports by the Society for Bettering the Condition (Soc for Bettering the Condition 1814 p102). It states that the orphanage had 3 classes, the First class had 12 girls called Fund Girls, they were the children of the "most deserving parishioners" from "among those who had the

best characters at Sunday school". The girls would be admitted every 3 years and would be nominated by the Patroness. This establishes from the earliest times that entries to the School of Industry were through a selection process by someone of the middle class. The girls were 10-12 years old and would be provided clothing, an indicator of the lack of their own appropriate clothing, and the desire of the middle class to provide what was considered suitable clothing by the middle classes. The girls were expected to stay 3 years, and leaving the First class they would be considered old enough to work in domestic service.

The Second class was made of girls that were paid for by their parents at two pence per week, the 12 girls in this class were aged 8-9 and allowed to stay for 3 years. They could move into the First class, if there was space, for another 3 years, but this was strictly on merit and the number of rewards a girl had received in the preceding year. The Third class was for girls nominated by subscribers. Each subscriber would pay a guinea a year and could then send one girl for one year. The requirement being that they could read before they were admitted.

The Third-class girls were taught "knitting,- spinning flax, hemp and jersey,- plaitting whole straw for baskets, -cutting out and making clothing for the poor,-and washing, ironing, baking, milking and house-hold work" (Soc for Bettering the Condition 1814 pp103-4). The report states that these skills would allow them to work in farmhouses as under housemaids and kitchen maids for large families or upper maids in small families (Soc for Bettering the Condition 1814 p104). The inclusion of making clothing for the poor shows the nature of needlework and skills that were taught to girls from an early age. It appears that the clothing was sold directly by the School of Industry, the report states that those "who receive parish relief, or neglect attendance on church, are precluded from the purchase of cheap clothing" (Soc for Bettering the Condition 1814 p105). This is an indicator of the middle-class belief that those who required parish relief were beyond help. There were conditions attached to the institution from the start. The report goes on to state that the girls in the Upper class had a small library for Sunday evenings, so there were opportunities for the girls to read regularly from a restricted selection of books. The desire to control all aspects of the girl's life is clear. The end of the report states that "The school also gives under certain circumstances a stated price for work to say girls or young women who apply for it and might perhaps for want of employment fall victim to idleness and

vice" (Soc for Bettering the Condition of the Poor p106) indicating opportunities for other girls and young women to benefit from the institution. It clearly links idleness and the lack of employment to vice.

The dominant class and moral values of the institution were clearly embedded in its inception. The Curriculum of the School of Industry reflected the wider national values of how the working-class poor were to be treated. The original name "School of Industry" reinforces the desire of the people who ran the institution to provide a vocational training that instructed the girls to become "good" domestic staff. The historian Purvis (1989 p86) cites this orphanage and its aim, using the 19th century pamphlet, "Hints to Philanthropists or, a Collective View of Practical means for Improving the Condition of the Poor and Labouring classes of Society" by William Davis (of the Provident Institution in Bath) published in 1821. This booklet reveals the attitudes expected of philanthropists and a series of case studies which include Cheltenham School of Industry for Girls. On the wider aspect of philanthropy Davis writes "It seeks not to exalt itself by oppressing the poor, but endeavours to make them [the poor] virtuous and happy according to their circumstances" (Davis pIV). He cites the plan for training in Cheltenham as having been "attended to with the best effects" (Davis p149) in producing servants of all work.

He went on to describe the school participants.

> When we consider the uncultivated soil from which servant girls in general are taken; the ignorance in which they are brought up; the contamination to which they are liable, during their youth, from bad examples set them by their parents, and their street associates; and the very little of anything good which they can possibly learn at home; we think the sooner they are rescued from such scenes of ignorance and vice, and placed where they may be exercised in plain, useful, and virtuous habits, to fit them for under servants, the better for themselves and for society in general. (Davis p149)

In 1825 G A Williams in his New Guide to Cheltenham describes the School of Industry and it lists the training that the girls received. There is no mention of the formal teaching of literacy or numeracy. The focus was on the skills needed for domestic service, those that the middle class required for domestic servants. The entry in the Guide also gives a price list for the work completed at the school, thus

attesting to the tradition of needlework at the school which had started not long after its establishment. Williams further comments, expressing the values repeated in Davis (1821) that those who have been helped by the institution have “by which means some have been saved from falling victims to vice and others have reclaimed from their dissolute ways” (Williams 1830 p82). The report does not give an age at which the girls entered the School of Industry but does refer to them as “children.” The prevailing attitude is that it will provide a level of education that is appropriate to the circumstances of the girls as defined by their birth and/or family status. It reports that “For this purpose, as early impressions and habits greatly influence our future happiness and conduct through life, everything around them is suited to the humble sphere in which they are intended to move as servants, wives and daughters” (Williams 1830 p83). There is no expectation that this is to improve the opportunities for the orphans, it will ensure they fulfil a role to which they are destined. This is reinforced further with “They will find nothing under the roof they inhabit that can raise in their minds a wish above the level of their fathers [sic] home” (Williams 1830 p83). Thus, the role of the school is to reinforce the current order of the classes which it is believed by many will lead to a contented life through work for the girls. In Davis’ book on Hints to Philanthropists, a page note explicitly states on the School of Industry at Cheltenham, “Writing is not taught, because experience has shewn [sic] it to be the source of the very evil, for counteracting of which Cheltenham School was planned” (Davis 1821 p11). As an institution it wanted to avoid parents seeing their child's capabilities and attaching any idea of scholarship to the education their child will receive “which, in their opinion, entitles their children to services of less labour, and higher wages” (Davis 1821 p11). He writes “It is lamentably obvious that even the ability to read, when unaccompanied with moral and religious instruction, has often proved an evil, instead of a good, to female servants, who thereby get access to novels, and other mischievous publications, by which their morals become corrupt” (Davis 1821 p11). The underlying need to train young women for a life in service is further made clear from the entry on Asylum: “it is an incontrovertible fact, that the miseries and depravity of most women originate in want of employment” (Davis 1821 p15). This reflects Ardener (1975 pxii) who argues that within anthropological studies, hegemony has long determined women's lives. This has hindered how the orphanage has previously been perceived, it has been examined under the model of which it was formed, that of middle-class values superseding the

needs of the working class. The working class can appear inarticulate when trying to express themselves through the medium/idiom of the middle classes, the children may appear inarticulate when presenting themselves to the adult world, and here it is both as girls and of the working class that the voices and opinions, have been lost.

It is clear the values and organisation of the School of Industry and the later Orphanage are formulated to perpetuate the labour relations between the working classes and the middle and upper class. It was also seen as dangerous for women to deviate from the acceptable categories and domestic ideals that had been defined for them (Delamont and Duffin 2013 p16). Again, the formulation of the Institution ensured that the role of girls and women continued well established roles in the domestic sphere.

In the 1820's the name changed to The Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum, though it often still retains the phrase, "former School of Industry", It is not clear why this change in name occurred. It may have been a response to the establishment of other schools for working-class children locally.

The Annual Report of 1837 aims to clarify the status of the abilities of the girls. It states that the girls are "strictly taught and confirmed (under the immediate direction of the Ladies' Committee) in the habits of submission, industry, and frugality, to qualify them for any situation where hard family work may be required of them" (1837 Annual Report p27).

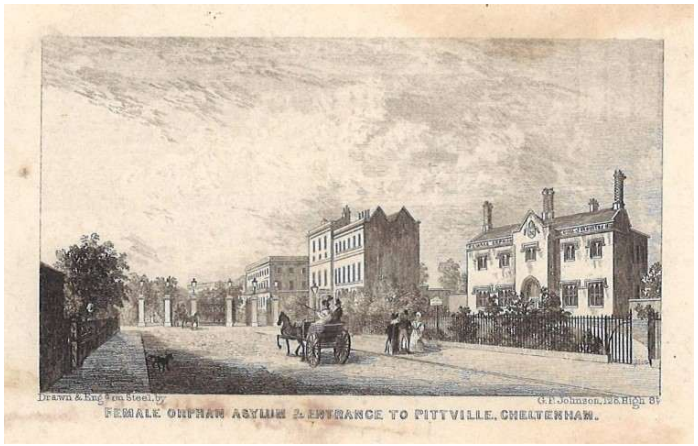


Figure 4 Female Orphan Asylum and Entrance to Pittville Cheltenham. Cheltenham Local History Centre CE.S.PH35.1(2022)

In 1834 the Orphanage moved into a new bespoke building as seen in figure 4. It was constructed following a fundraising campaign that replaced an earlier poorly

constructed building. The money was raised through a variety of events and donations from subscribers and donors. As an orphanage, rather than a School of Industry, the curriculum developed and it now contained a short religious service at the beginning and end of each day, there was also to be an hour of reading and spelling practice each evening (Shorey Duckworth 1999a p7). This would have been easier to teach in low light levels, as opposed to the needlework education that the girls received during the day which needed good light to work. There would be rote learning of the catechism, hymns, the Sermon on the Mount, and other texts. The earlier comments by Davies (1821) on the appropriate nature of reading material for the school is now defined, to only allow books from those published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (Lee 1831 p172). Rote learning would be examined in the final year at school, thus formalising the curriculum alongside the girls training to become domestic staff.

There would now be 24 girls in the Orphanage, each wearing a uniform of brown serge gowns, straw bonnets, capes, black worsted stockings, black shoes, mittens, white tippets, check bibs and Duffield cloaks (Shorey Duckworth 1999a p 6). Elements of hegemony are present here in the control of what the orphans wear and the appropriate nature of the clothing, both in terms of the cloth used and the style of dress, which copies the simple style expected by domestic servants.

The management of the Orphanage was organised by two committees. Lee (1834 p172) lists the regulations that the institution will be run by. There will be two committees to run the orphanage, the Committee of Superintendence, an all-male committee, and the Committee of Management, an all-female committee. The role of the Superintendence committee ensured issues raised at the Annual meetings were put into effect, the settling of the monthly accounts, and any other matters relating to the institution. The Management committee dealt with the domestic, the provision of clothing and finding suitable positions for girls leaving the asylum. They also had the right to remove a child who has an “infectious disorder” or “behaves ill.” Charitable and philanthropic activities were a common way for middle-class women to make friends and socialise as found by the historians Davidoff and Hall (2013 p391). It was an opportunity for middle-class women to get involved beyond the domestic sphere of their own homes and into an organisation. Davidoff and Hall (2013 p392) cite the 19th century writer John Agnell James’ views that servants were the equals of

children and so it was appropriate for women to oversee them. Here at the orphanage, it is acceptable for middle-class women to be on the Management Committee to run the domestic concerns of the orphanage. The training that the girls would undertake is in the service of others, it is not as a business, therefore, it retains working-class girls in the domestic sphere and the middle-class women on the committee stay within the domestic sphere, perpetuating both class and gender conformity. This is supported by Delamont and Duffin's (2013 p71) view, that Victorian society avoided competition between men and women, by having two separate committees, the women could deal with the domestic and the men could deal with the public and financial.

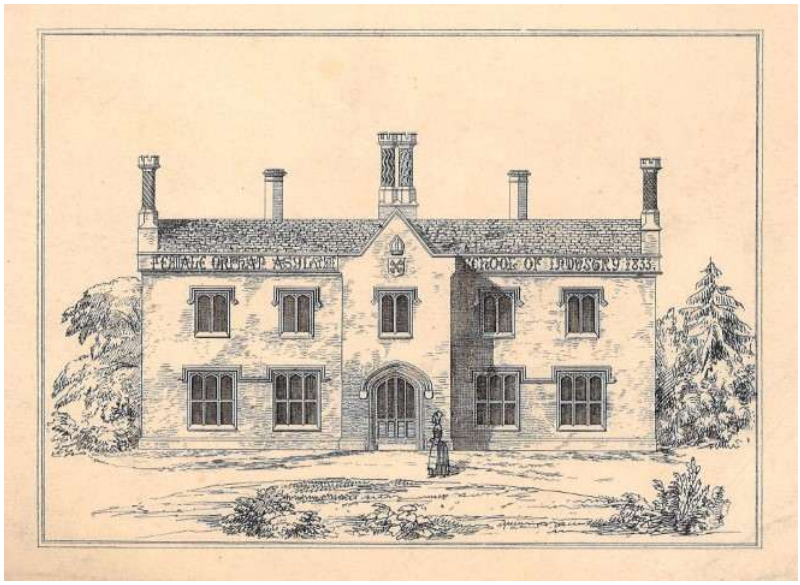


Figure 5 Female Orphan Asylum School of Industry 1833. Cheltenham Local History Centre CE.S.PH35.3 (2023)

As the Asylum developed through the 1820s and 30s its systems of organisation became more sophisticated. A set of conditions that pre-selected girls from nominations by sponsors was used in conjunction with a voting system which allowed subscribers to vote in the election to choose which girls deserved a place.

The Cheltenham Journal of 30th November 1829 states that:

> for so long as the profession of the institution is adhered to, the middling order of society is materially benefitted [sic] and the little inmates of the house kept free from contamination: as the introduction of one child who has vicious and bad examples before her too often extends its effects to others in spite of the most rigid discipline and order.

It was no longer a place of refuge for all, the management of the institution would now define who could enter. The backgrounds of the girls were all thoroughly checked, and importantly, they used the status of the supporter to establish the suitability of the candidates. It goes on to report that Lady Sherbourn will nominate an orphan and “we have no doubt that from Her Ladyships [sic] well known benevolent charter and strict investigation that the selection will be from very honest parents and entitle the child to the support of every subscriber.” (Cheltenham Journal 30th November 1829)

The clarification over the status of the families is further defined in the Cheltenham Journal of 10th May 1830, which stresses that it would now only take girls from “honest and respectable families”. During this period of refinement of regulations, which established the acceptable societal nature of the girls who entered, the conditions and regulations would have reduced the number of girls able to enter. To be selected each candidate, their family, and their supporter, would have to complete a strict set of procedures before they could enter onto the ballot. These are stated in the regulation of the Asylum, the report of 1851 (Cheltenham Local Studies Library 1851)

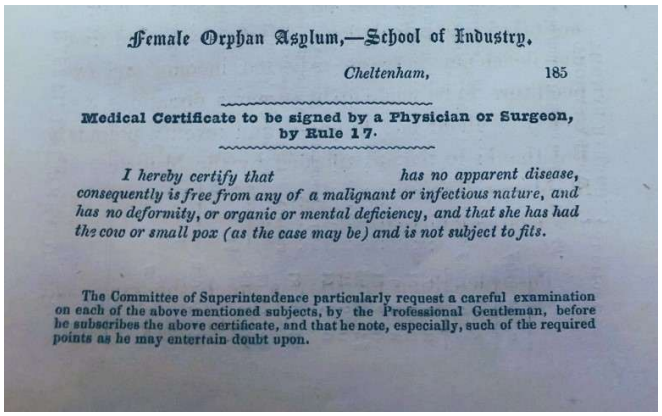
Initially a child would need to be sponsored by a subscriber.

Rule XVII states

> To prevent the admission of improper objects, the legitimacy of birth of every candidate, and the marriage and death of the parent of parents must be proved to the satisfaction of the Committee of superintendence; and a medical certificate be produced to show that the child has had the cow or small pox- that she is free from any malignant or infectious disorder, and is not subject to fits, or any other organic disease; and PREVIOUSLY TO THE ADMISSION OF ANY SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE into the Institution she must be examined by the House Surgeon or Physician, and if found not to be in perfect health, she must be removed immediately by the subscriber who recommended her, free of all expense to the Charity. (Cheltenham Local Studies Library 1851 p14)

The use in the first line of the word “objects” dehumanizes the children that would not be accepted into the orphanage. The issue of clean health was of high importance. It

is not clear whether this is to ensure the orphanage is not struck by disease or if it is a reassurance to the committees that the girl comes from a “clean respectable” home. The annual report includes a slip/certificate which could be signed to indicate that the child has been checked for infectious diseases as can be seen in figure 6.



Female Orphan Asylum,—School of Industry.

Cheltenham, 185

Medical Certificate to be signed by a Physician or Surgeon, by Rule 17.

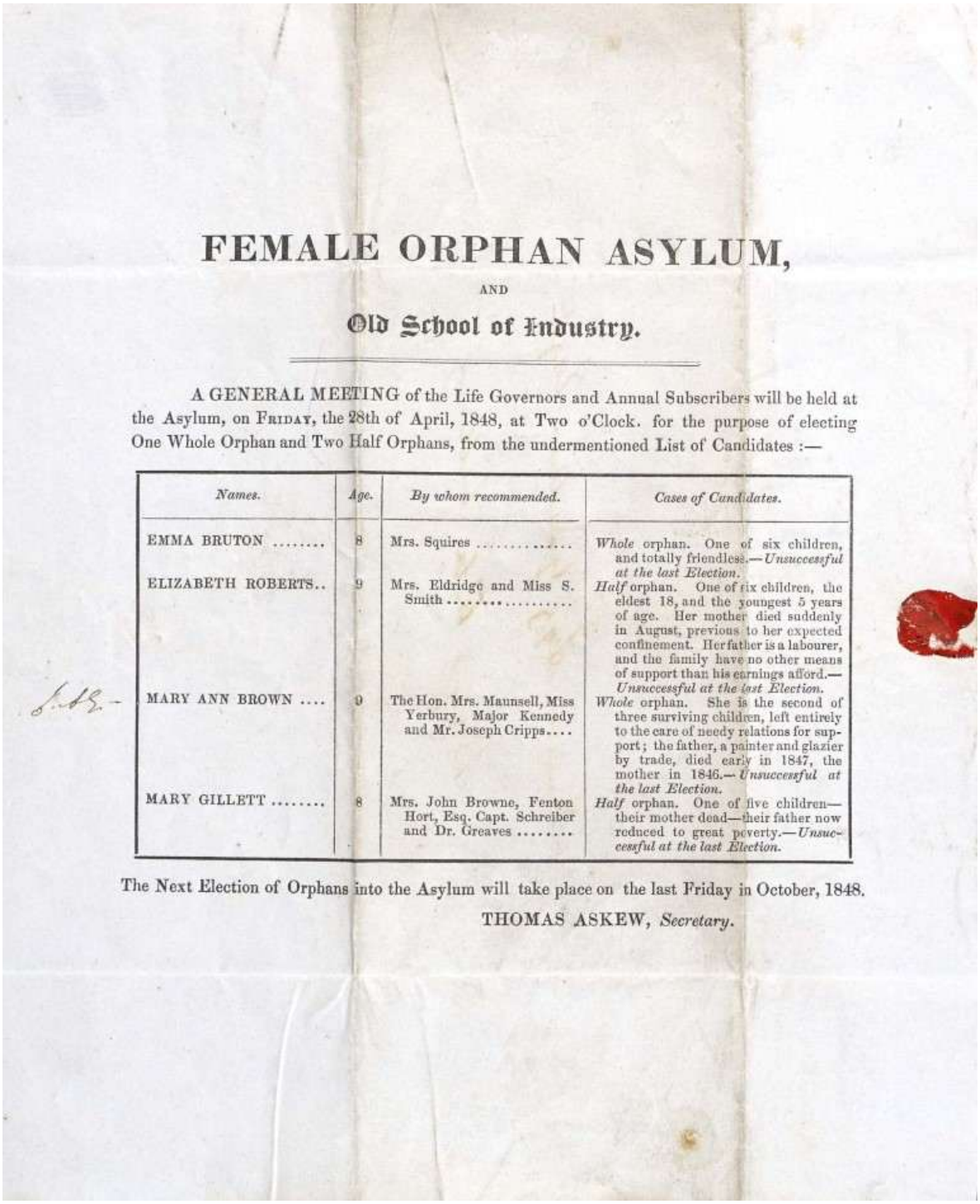
I hereby certify that has no apparent disease, consequently is free from any of a malignant or infectious nature, and has no deformity, or organic or mental deficiency, and that she has had the cow or small pox (as the case may be) and is not subject to fits.

The Committee of Superintendence particularly request a careful examination on each of the above mentioned subjects, by the Professional Gentleman, before he subscribes the above certificate, and that he note, especially, such of the required points as he may entertain doubt upon.

Figure 6 Medical Certificate from 1851 Annual Report Cheltenham Local Studies Library.

The stipulations over who is an acceptable candidate for the ballot continues with Rule XXVIII which will not allow children whose parents have accepted Poor Relief under the New Poor Law Act of 1834.

The girls were not always local to Gloucestershire, here again the impact of Cheltenham as a holiday resort can be seen with girls coming from around the country to the Asylum. Census reports of 1851 record the birthplace of the girls and shows wide range from around Britain. It feels quite emotive to understand that girls who had been recently bereaved, as young as 7 were brought to a town they did not know, to an orphanage with people they had not met. It must have produced a deep sense of homesickness and anxiety; however high the status of the orphanage was. Elections were held twice a year, in April and October, and were well publicised in the local papers with the names of the girls that would appear on the ballot paper, and later after the election the selections would be reported. It is quite common to see girls who were unsuccessful, competing again to secure a place. Two of the ballot papers have survived giving a glimpse into the format of the papers.



FEMALE ORPHAN ASYLUM,

AND

Old School of Industry.

A GENERAL MEETING of the Life Governors and Annual Subscribers will be held at the Asylum, on Friday, the 28th of April, 1848, at Two o'Clock. for the purpose of electing One Whole Orphan and Two Half Orphans, from the undermentioned List of Candidates :—

Names.	*Age.*	*By whom recommended.*	*Cases of Candidates.*
EMMA BRUTON	8	Mrs. Squires	*Whole* orphan. One of six children, and totally friendless.—*Unsuccessful at the last Election.*
ELIZABETH ROBERTS..	9	Mrs. Eldridge and Miss S. Smith	*Half* orphan. One of six children, the eldest 18, and the youngest 5 years of age. Her mother died suddenly in August, previous to her expected confinement. Her father is a labourer, and the family have no other means of support than his earnings afford.—*Unsuccessful at the last Election.*
MARY ANN BROWN	9	The Hon. Mrs. Maunsell, Miss Yerbury, Major Kennedy and Mr. Joseph Cripps....	*Whole* orphan. She is the second of three surviving children, left entirely to the care of needy relations for support; the father, a painter and glazier by trade, died early in 1847, the mother in 1846.—*Unsuccessful at the last Election.*
MARY GILLETT	8	Mrs. John Browne, Fenton Hort, Esq. Capt. Schreiber and Dr. Greaves	*Half* orphan. One of five children—their mother dead—their father now reduced to great poverty.—*Unsuccessful at the last Election.*

The Next Election of Orphans into the Asylum will take place on the last Friday in October, 1848.

THOMAS ASKEW, *Secretary.*

Figure 7 1848 Ballot paper. Glos Archive D1950/Z5 (2023)

As can be seen in figure 7 with each nomination there are short descriptions of the candidates, to provide context and elicit sympathy. The brief biography gives an idea of what life experience was appropriate to have had to be accepted onto the ballot. Some supporters and sponsors may have used a type of visiting card that showed

who they would support, and this may have been circulated during social visiting to gain support among friends.

Figure 8 1847 Candidate card- Emma Turner, successful in gaining a place to the orphanage and her name is included in the 1851 Annual Report. Hiscock (2023)

One example of a candidate is Mary Gillet, she first appeared on the 1847 ballot paper. The daughter of a local publican and was born in 1839. Her mother died in 1844, leaving Mary, her three older sisters and a younger brother. The older sisters now aged 11 and 14 were old enough to enter service quickly, her younger brother appears to have stayed with his father. Mary is described on the ballot paper as “One of five, their mother dead. Their father now reduced to great poverty” (Glos Heritage Hub CW/63G360/CE 1847). She did not receive enough votes at her first ballot of 1847. She then appears again in the ballot of 1848, with a further addition to her description is that she was “unsuccessful at the last election”, this time she received enough votes to enter the orphanage. Her life story goes on with her becoming a lady's maid and later a teacher.[4] The addition of the note “Unsuccessful at the last Election” may have elicited more sympathy, but in the mind of the subscriber could represent a determination to improve life which was considered an admirable attitude by the middle class.

The focus on the respectability of the girls can be read as an indicator of the role the girls were being trained for, to become domestic servants, that of lady’s maids

[4] See Appendix 2

specifically. This is a move away from the earlier expectations of the girls in the School of Industry, that of under maids. The role of lady's maid is to be a personal attendant to the lady of the house. It is a role in which you are in the intimate space of the lady of the house, dealing with her clothing and some personal tasks. Isabella Beeton in the 1861 edition of her “Book of Household Management” which advises middle class women how to manage their domestic staff states-

> the lady's-maid should prepare for dressing her mistress, arranging her dressing room, toilet table and linen, according to her mistress’s wishes and habits. The details of dressing we need not touch upon, -every lady has her own mode of doing so: but the maid should move about quietly, perform any offices about her mistress’s person, as lacing stays, gently, and adjust them smoothly. (Beeton 1861 p945)

To run a middle-class home to the standards required there needed to be a certain level of support by domestic staff, and they were an integral part of middle-class life. In researching the nature of domestic service Gorham (2013 p9) suggests there would typically be 2 or 3 servants within the home. Cheltenham was a resort town, it would have needed domestic staff that were prepared to work in the lodgings of visitors, to work with a variety of people who would change on a regular basis. The orphanage prepared the girls for these tasks, both the knowledge to complete them and the values to do them appropriately to middle-class expectations. It was generally believed by the middle classes that specific training was needed to inculcate the correct attitudes, values and behaviours. There was little belief that the working classes already had these attitudes. The preface to a sewing manual from 1838 states

> No one who has been a frequent visitor in the homes of the poor, is aware of the extravagance and waste usual among women of a humble class, arising from their total ignorance in matters of cutting out and needle-work, nor how much instruction they want on those points, even to the making of a petticoat and a pinafore. The same ignorance and unskilfulness, and the same consequent waste of laborious and scanty earnings is common among our female household servants: who, by putting out their clothes to dress makers. (A Lady 1975 pV)

The restrictions on suitable candidates who could enter the orphanage at age 7 would define the qualities of the girls who left the orphanage to enter work aged 16. This emphasis on the values of the girls (and their families) on entry is an indicator of what values would be most desirable for those of the lady's maids they would become on completion of their training. Those girls that were to work in middle-class households would not have experienced extreme poverty or neglect. It was only prepared to support those whose life, and whose parents' lives, had remained within the morals and values as defined by that of the orphanage and its' middle-class management. It was not willing to support girls who they considered to be already irredeemable through their association with extreme poverty.

There had been reports of issues with the wider behaviour of girls locally. In the Cheltenham Journal of 4th November 1844, a letter was published that claimed that "young girls scarcely arrived at the age of puberty, dragged before the bench to answer for drunkenness, swearing and disorderly conduct." Even if orphans, these girls would not have been allowed to be included on the ballot.

These middle-class values were personified by the Rev Francis Close. He was the Rector of St Mary's Parish Church from 1826 and was evangelical in his approach to Christianity. He became the Chair of the Orphanage around 1839 and remains involved until at least 1852. He influenced the nature of the values taught with heavy emphasis on religious and moral education. Bryan (1952) gives an overview of Close's influence on the town. He was known locally for his determination to raise the morals of a town based on both the health-giving benefits of the local water, but he also campaigned against the popular local races. He established new churches and schools for working-class children in the area inspired by reading "Infant Education or remarks on the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor" published in 1825 by Wilderspin. His motivation seems in line with Wilderspin's, that education would prevent vice.

In some of Close's comments on infant education, he displays his values on education. In 1832 he declared

> We assume that these little infants are sinners, and we deal with them as such; we tell them of a saviour and of God's love in sending him into the world to die for sinners. We teach them the necessity of being "born again", that

> they may become God's dear children by adoption and grace and walk in newness of life. (Close 1832 cited in Trafford 1997 p 28)

His religious values reflect wider society and indicate middle class values and opinions. In the Cheltenham Chronicle of 31st January 1839, he is concerned with the "class of persons from whom the orphans were selected" that the subscribers could "increase the appliances so as to improve the character of the education."

He goes on to express that it might be possible to reward some of the cleverest children through further training to teach. He felt very strongly that children should not come to the orphanage from the workhouse "there was another class who he thought were far more to be pitied." The day to day running of the Orphanage was conducted by the women's Committee of Management and it would have been unlikely that Rev Close would have concerned himself with the training curriculum for girls to become domestic staff.

His influence was felt in the approval of the books that were to be available at the orphanage, which would comply with rule XXIII.

> No books are admitted into the Asylum, but such as are published by the Society for the promotion of Christian Knowledge; and when any are required, the Committee of Management reports it to the Committee of Superintendence, in order that the Chaplain may select such as he thinks proper. (Cheltenham Local Studies Library 1851 p15)

It was from these books, and from bible study, that the verses the girls were to embroider would be most likely taken. The verses would epitomise the values and behaviours expected by the middle classes, an opportunity to consciously or sub-consciously, represent the values of the orphanage. They would be carefully chosen by the teacher in charge of needlework as there appears to have been little agency by the girls in how the work was created. The verses stitched onto the samplers are an expression of Christian values and expectations. These were reinforced throughout the time at the orphanage, and the annual report of 1851 states that also upon leaving the girls would be given a Bible, Prayer book, a Companion to the Altar, and a Book of Sermons (1851 Annual Report p15). The desire to produce pious girls with a strong understanding of Christianity is central to the values of the orphanage.

The School of Industry had been established to ensure that every participant would fully understand her place within society as a pious working woman. The curriculum ensures that it is appropriate to their expectations as defined by the middle-class ruling authority of the school. The girls have been limited by the needs of the middle-class institution and what it considered appropriate, the need for Lady's Maids, with an advanced knowledge of needlework and plain sewing. It was viewed as an entirely suitable form of training for the girls. It was accepted that this would be the future for many working-class girls and needlework was an appropriate trade and skill from which working class women could earn their living. The feminist historian Parker (2019) in her seminal work on embroidery focuses on embroidery as a middle-class task for those who did not need to work and would be supported by family. The pieces here are working class training exercises, but the general attitude of needlework as a feminine attribute was shared across the classes. Women were expected to uphold morality, and piety (Davidoff and Hall 2013). The AGM report in the Cheltenham Examiner of 31st January 1844 reports that the orphans were "bought up in strict habits of industry and virtue".

The working-class girls in CFOA are put into a situation where they are defined by the middle class, they cannot redefine themselves or the society they are part of because of their circumstances and the belief by the middle and upper classes in having authority over the working classes. The orphanage worked within the cultural environment of Cheltenham to contribute to the stability of the class system and maintain middle- and upper-class society. It did this by destabilizing the working-class society through removing children, training them, and providing the middle class with the domestic staff they required.

The physical wellbeing of the girls as well as the curriculum and training, was also important to all. The Committees were invested in ensuring that the girls were well cared for, a form of investment in the girls' futures. They were to become domestic staff and their training must be appropriate, money had been invested, and in some ways these girls became a form of investment, with their future labour and appropriate behaviour being the return on charitable work of the orphanage. The members of the committee were also invested morally, the orphanage reflected the values of those who ran it. In terms of the girls' health, they appear to have been well

looked after, with a physician, surgeon, chemist, and surgeon dentist appointed each year.

As a charity the orphanage was well supported locally. The accounts show a surplus each year, where other local workhouses do not (Shorey Duckworth 1999a p13). This may have been in part due to the royal patronage that helped to portray the charity as an appropriate form of philanthropy and to the nature of the utilitarian training the girls were undertaking. The details of royal patronage are included in the samplers and pincushions signifying the status and history of the institution to those that saw it. The patronage had started with Queen Charlotte. In 1842 the royal patronage was extended when examples of the needlework were presented to Queen Victoria and she paid £10 into the orphanage funds, as reported in the Cheltenham Journal on 23rd January 1843. The names of other high-status, individuals such as Lord and Lady Sherbourne, were also listed to further signal the status of those that supported the orphanage.

Not all welfare institutions fared so well. In 1843 there were three national schools in Cheltenham, and Platts and Hainton (1954 p54) state that with 1037 children in total in all 3, the schools were in debt to £250. In the 1837 Annual Report the Asylum was shown to have £508 5s 6d in savings which is approximately £47,000 today (Bank of England 2024).

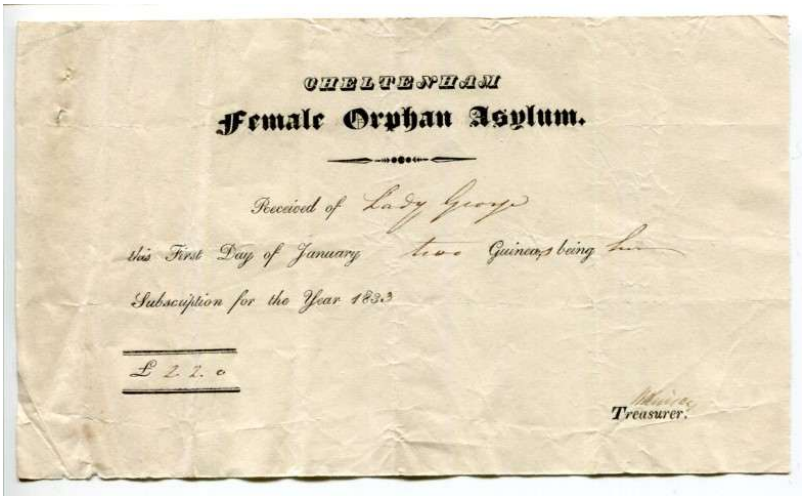

CHELTENHAM
Female Orphan Asylum.
Received of Lady George
this First Day of January two Guineas being
Subscription for the Year 1843
£ 2 2 0
Treasurer.

Figure 9 Receipt for Two Guineas from Lady George.

Annual subscribers would each pay one guinea a year which would then entitle them to one vote in each ballot. A life governor would pay a minimum payment of ten

guineas. If a subscriber contributed more, they were entitled to more votes in the ballot, the more money given, the more influence it gave. In 1851 Mrs Hinckes of Tettenhall Wood (Near Wolverhampton) gave £100 (£11,500 Bank of England 2024) and received 12 votes (Cheltenham Local History Library 1851 p17). Money also came in from legacies and bequests such as that from Henry Bromfield in 1837 who left £100 (over £9000 Bank of England 2024). Further finance came through other fundraising schemes. On 20th April 1835 there was the publication of a booklet entitled “Pompeii- a didactic tale” by the Reverand Stephen Middleton (Middleton 1838).

A notice in the Cheltenham Journal of 6th September 1830 reports that a ball will be organised in aid of the asylum under the patronage of Princess Esterhazy, an indicator of the status of the charity and its use by minor nobility as a form of philanthropy. An example of the tickets can be seen here in figure 10.

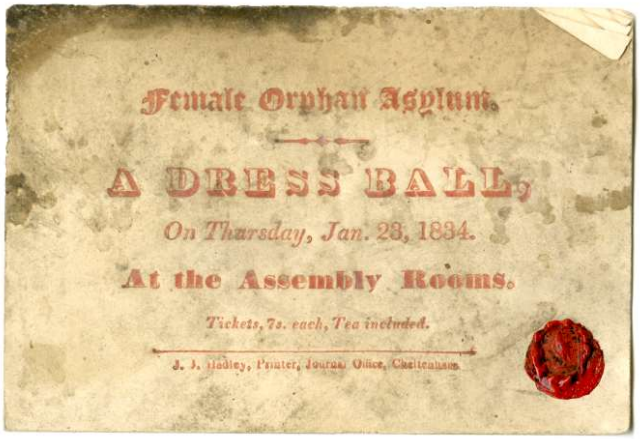
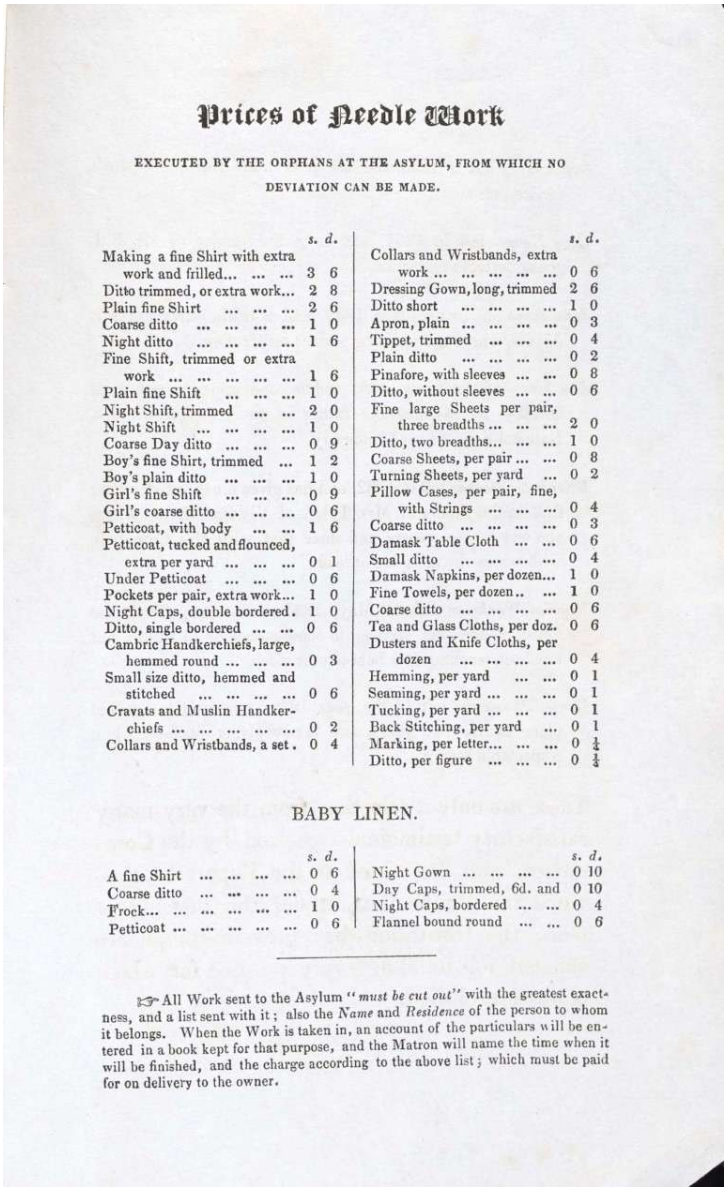


Figure 10 Ticket for A Dress Ball. January 3rd, 1834, The Wilson 1992.363

Money was also raised by the production of needlework as indicated by the price lists within the annual reports. The girls worked this needlework as part of their curriculum and each of the Annual Reports has a price list displaying the prices charged for the work. For example, “Making a fine shirt” cost 3s and 6d, whereas a plain shirt would be 2s and 8d.



Prices of Needle Work

EXECUTED BY THE ORPHANS AT THE ASYLUM, FROM WHICH NO DEVIATION CAN BE MADE.

	s.	d.
Making a fine Shirt with extra work and frilled...	3	6
Ditto trimmed, or extra work...	2	8
Plain fine Shirt	2	6
Coarse ditto	1	0
Night ditto	1	6
Fine Shift, trimmed or extra work	1	6
Plain fine Shift	1	0
Night Shift, trimmed	2	0
Night Shift	1	0
Coarse Day ditto	0	9
Boy's fine Shirt, trimmed ...	1	2
Boy's plain ditto	1	0
Girl's fine Shift	0	9
Girl's coarse ditto	0	6
Petticoat, with body	1	6
Petticoat, tucked and flounced, extra per yard	0	1
Under Petticoat	0	6
Pockets per pair, extra work...	1	0
Night Caps, double bordered.	1	0
Ditto, single bordered	0	6
Cambric Handkerchiefs, large, hemmed round	0	3
Small size ditto, hemmed and stitched	0	6
Cravats and Muslin Handkerchiefs	0	2
Collars and Wristbands, a set.	0	4

	s.	d.
Collars and Wristbands, extra work	0	6
Dressing Gown, long, trimmed	2	6
Ditto short	1	0
Apron, plain	0	3
Tippet, trimmed	0	4
Plain ditto	0	2
Pinafore, with sleeves	0	8
Ditto, without sleeves	0	6
Fine large Sheets per pair, three breadths	2	0
Ditto, two breadths...	1	0
Coarse Sheets, per pair	0	8
Turning Sheets, per yard ...	0	2
Pillow Cases, per pair, fine, with Strings	0	4
Coarse ditto	0	3
Damask Table Cloth	0	6
Small ditto	0	4
Damask Napkins, per dozen...	1	0
Fine Towels, per dozen.. ...	1	0
Coarse ditto	0	6
Tea and Glass Cloths, per doz.	0	6
Dusters and Knife Cloths, per dozen	0	4
Hemming, per yard	0	1
Seaming, per yard	0	1
Tucking, per yard	0	1
Back Stitching, per yard ...	0	1
Marking, per letter...	0	¼
Ditto, per figure	0	¼

BABY LINEN.

	s.	d.
A fine Shirt	0	6
Coarse ditto	0	4
Frock...	1	0
Petticoat	0	6

	s.	d.
Night Gown	0	10
Day Caps, trimmed, 6d. and	0	10
Night Caps, bordered	0	4
Flannel bound round	0	6

☞ All Work sent to the Asylum "*must be cut out*" with the greatest exactness, and a list sent with it; also the *Name* and *Residence* of the person to whom it belongs. When the Work is taken in, an account of the particulars will be entered in a book kept for that purpose, and the Matron will name the time when it will be finished, and the charge according to the above list; which must be paid for on delivery to the owner.

Figure 11 Price list of needlework taken from the 1837 Annual Report D2025/Box 5213/box23/12.

The accounts in the same year record that the needlework raised £37 14s and 4d. "Marking" refers to the marking of laundry, a common task that used the same skills displayed on the samplers. This is priced at ¼d per letter or figure, giving some indication of how quickly they could be sewn, when compared to a larger garment.

In the Annual Reports the money raised by needlework is listed as

1837 £37, 14s, 4d (£3,422.65 Bank of England 2024)

1851 £37, 14s, 4d (£4,267.75 Bank of England 2024)

1854 £31, 16s, 1d (£2,839.51 Bank of England 2024)

1892 £17, 3s 0d (£1,784.60 Bank of England 2024)

Throughout their time at the orphanage the curriculum focused on plain sewing, the form of needlework that teaches how to construct and mend simple garments which the School Mistress taught. The historian Richmond in researching working class clothing in the 19th century (2014 p100) explains the girls would not be taught "fancy work" as this was considered inappropriate for working-class girls. "Fancy work" was the preserve of the middle and upper classes. In 1876 this was codified in the regulation of the Education Departments New Code of Regulations. It states that "darning, mending, marking and knitting" were acceptable to be taught "but no fancy work of any kind may be done in school hours."

There is also a clear statement at the base of the prices list that work "must be cut out" retaining the delineation between the "skill" of cutting and the "labour" of sewing as stated by Kidwell (1979 p3) further reinforcing the specificity of the training that the girls received, focused on the needlework used in the role of lady's maid.

Some of the samplers and needlework may have been sold at a "Fancy Fair" or bazaar and this may well have been the source of the extant samplers. They may have been produced specially for the sale. According to the Cheltenham Journal 26th August 1833 a Fancy Fair took place on the 22nd, where people were able to contribute fancy work, the name for small items of handicraft, made by middle-class women. In producing handicraft items, they were establishing that they had time to produce craft, that their time was not taken up with everyday sewing tasks but with items that showed their skill and abilities in leisure crafting, an indicator of "wealth and self." There could have been a wide range of items and may have included shell work, leather work etc. Here the items are being sold at a fair to raise money for the orphanage under the patronage of Lady Sherbourne. As with the Ball, this is an acceptable form of philanthropy that creates the impression of a caring society but in a performative way, indicating the middle classes own skills and values.

The event was reported in the Cheltenham Journal on 26th August 1833 and was considered a remarkable success stating that £387 was raised (£38,000 Bank of England 2024). Much of this fundraising went into the construction of the new building, which was opened in 1834 as "Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum". When the building was opened on the 23rd of October 1834 by the Bishop of Gloucester,

the Cheltenham Journal reported that “All present were delighted with their neat and healthy appearance” (Cheltenham Chronicle 30th October 1834).

The description of the children as neat and healthy is again an indicator of the values the orphanage was expected to uphold, those values that were prioritised and cherished by the middle and upper-classes and hoped for in domestic staff. As Douglas (1966 cited Delamont and Duffin 2013 p13) explains “Dirt is essentially disorder” and the determination of middle-class Victorians to eliminate dirt is a positive attempt to organise society. It is to establish the values of the middle class over what they see as the impoverished morals of the working class as represented by the “dirt” the working class live with. There was a shame about dirt. Social historians Davidoff and Hall (2013 p344) explain that dirt was often connected to slovenly behaviour of the working classes. It was considered that disease was spread by “miasmic contagion” which was often signified by smell. There was a great deal of concern over the dirt indicating poor morals (Davidoff and Hall 2013 p383). The “cleanness” of the children could be an indicator of their morals and the institution raising them. The girls were regulars at public events such as the coronation of William IV in 1831. The Cheltenham Chronicle on 8th September 1831 reported that a public dinner would be given to all the children in charity schools. With their distinctive uniform they would have been easily recognised and the orphanage was content for the children to be seen in public, as the well-presented children would be seen as an indicator of the success of the orphanage.

With the new building open, the reputation of the Asylum spread further and the Cheltenham Journal on the 12th of January 1835 reports that Mrs Darling would establish a Female Orphan Asylum and School of Industry modelled exactly on the principles of the Cheltenham Asylum in Sydney, NSW. The orphanage is seen as a “success” and to be doing well. The committees are happy to open the orphanage for others to visit and see, it is an acceptable place to visit as part of the usual round of visiting by middle- and upper-class women. Regulation XXV of the 1851 report allows the Institution open to the inspection of the public. However, not all were able to visit. Men were not allowed into the orphanage unless they were a member of the Committee. The Annual Report of 1851, regulation XXIV restricts when relatives of the orphans could visit, again this can be seen as a way in which the working class are being controlled, and their influence on the orphans would then be restricted.

> The relations and friends of the children may be admitted to see them, by written order from the Chaplain, Treasurer, Secretary or either of the two Lady Visitors, on the undermentioned days, viz: the first Thursday in January, April, July, and October, between the hours of ten and four o'clock, and at no other time, excepting in cases of sickness, or some special circumstances, to be judged of by the Chaplain, Treasurer, or Secretary. (Cheltenham Local History Studies Library 1851p16)

In reading the newspapers of the time, the language around the orphanage places the philanthropy as "calculated to effect the present welfare and future happiness of the otherwise helpless, homeless and friendless to whom its benefits are extended" (Cheltenham Journal 26th August 1833.) This suggests the belief that there was no support system within the working classes, that the only salvation of these children was through middle class intervention and patronage.

The Asylum is financially stable throughout the 19th century, with little need to change or alter the curriculum or circumstances once it is seen to be effective in producing the type of domestic staff it was established to do. However, some attitudes are changing and at the AGM of 1867, reported in the Cheltenham Journal on 26th January, it is decided that:

> the Rule against parents having parish relief be abolished and that in future children whose parents have been compelled to accept aid from the parish shall be admitted, but that no child who has ever been an inmate of a workhouse can be revieved into the Asylum.

Nationally there are greater moves to improve education and the situation of the working class. The Newcastle Commission Report of 1861 was set up under the chair of the Duke of Newcastle. It was responding to the lack of places for children being provided for education in churches and voluntary bodies. It helps to understand the underlying attitudes of the day towards children's education. The report states:

> if the wages of the child's labour are necessary, either to keep the parents from the poor rates, or to relieve the pressure of severe and bitter poverty, it is far better that it should go to work at the earliest age at which it can bear the

> physical exertion than that it should remain at school (Education Commission 1861 p188).

School was to remain voluntary, and children were to remain in the labour market to support the family. The orphanage already reflected this with its focus on training the girls to become lady's maids, to encourage independence later in life through training. However, the Newcastle Commission does raise concerns over the quality of education, Boos (2015) notes from the Commission report that "[Girls leaving school] can scarcely read or write, and certainly not spell, and [only] a few can cast up a simple sum, they have no knowledge of needlework, [and] cannot cut out or even mend...."

In the 1860s nationally schools continued to be run by church and voluntary groups, this possibly held back the implementation of state provision due to conflicts over funding. The Education Act of 1870 is the first commitment to education provision on a national scale. The development of a universal primary education system for working-class children, the underlying ideas of what the curriculum would contain, are focused on the roles that the children would be directed into. In the case of the orphanage, this was to life in domestic service. It is hard to evaluate what impact the reforms had on the orphanage as there is no record of the curriculum at this time of changing attitudes towards the education of children.

Thomas Hood, the author of The Song of the Shirt, used poetry to raise awareness of the lives of working-class women who make their living through needlework. Although not politically radical, his work helped to raise awareness through publication such as Punch on the labour of seamstresses. In August 1863 writing in The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine, he writes "Whereas when a woman works it is generally because she is alone and friendless, a man has nearly always someone else besides himself to support" (The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine Hood p179). It is this attitude, that the young girl as an orphan would have otherwise been destitute, if the orphanage had not intervened. She was to be taken into the orphanage and taught a trade which would support her through the rest of her life. It would not be a role in which she could provide for a family, and it was not a role that would take away a place of work from a man.

Hegemony, power and the productive worker.

The structure of the orphanage clearly supports the middle classes as it provides a source of labour with the skills needed to work in domestic structures. The prevailing cultural values of the middle class is evident, through social and cultural control that influenced the girls as children, which then produced an adult who is a model domestic servant to complete the tasks required by the middle classes. From an early age the girls are being trained to be productive, anonymous and pious. On entry to the orphanage their childhood ends and there is no evidence of childhood pastimes. There is an all-encompassing curriculum that produces girls who can stitch on the finest cloth with exquisite neatness. The girls achieved an expert level of specialist labour through their intensive education. This degree of specialism enables the middle-class lady of the house to continue her lifestyle.

There is evidence of both the soft and hard power which the middle-class institution held over the girls. Once the girls had entered the orphanage their daily lives and routines were defined by the institution to establish the appropriate behaviour. The structure of the appropriate behaviour was defined by Victorian Christian values which was reinforced through the inclusion of verses in the needlework. This pious attitude and values appear as common sense to Victorian society. The clothing that the children wore embodied the desire of the institution to display the conformity that their training was establishing in the girls.

The institution isolated the girls from their families, restricting all visits and external influences through a series of rules and regulations, designed to control and instil certain behaviours. If the regulations were not complied with, the girls would be punished via exclusion from the opportunity to complete their training. There were no impartial overseers to hold the management accountable. The working-class families of the girls consented to the institutional control of the children. They had come to believe that the middle-class society were better placed to understand the possibility of self-improvement through hard work and dedication and so consented, indeed, through the ballot, competed to be part of it. The working class had come to believe that it was, using the politicians Gramsci's phrase, "common sense" (Crehan 2016) to allow children as young as seven to be taken away from their families for a training of life as a domestic servant. The orphanage perpetuated the belief that the

role of lady's maid has status among domestic staff and therefore it appears to improve the prospects of the orphans.

The prevailing cultural values and predominance of the middle-classes appears as benevolent philanthropy, the desire to care for the orphans, to prevent them from slipping into what the middle class perceive as "vice." It appears to have been created from a desire to improve the welfare of others, as a compassionate institution. However, by the time the needlework is being produced it has become an institution that perpetuates the labour relations between the working and middle classes through the ideology of the middle classes. The desire to find suitable candidates, from specific backgrounds, combined with the intensive training to produce a certain model of servant that appears to be the most appropriate for the task of lady's maid.

It is impossible to gauge what the life of the orphans would have been if they had not been accepted into the orphanage. The extraction from their families and working-class support mechanisms was extreme and borne out by a belief of the middle classes that their power, influence, values, and instruction could only improve the chances of the young girl. There is no suggestion that other support mechanisms would be as appropriate. It was accepted by the working and middle class that the orphanage would be the most appropriate pace of care for the female orphans.

Why do the samplers look as they do?

In describing the needlework produced at the orphanage, it needs to be named. The name of an artefact is sometimes based on function, or materials, or on the subject matter. The orphanage needlework could be described as a sampler, it could be a piece for learning stitches, a piece for sale by the institution, a souvenir for those who purchased it or as a decorative item. Its definition depends on the context of the viewer. The object I am describing is a sampler, although, even here, the descriptor "sampler" could be problematic. In the 19th century, English samplers had become a schoolroom exercise worked almost exclusively in cross-stitch (V&A Museum 2016), no longer a reference tool for stitches and patterns. The orphanage needlework fits with this description; they are worked in cross-stitch and have been produced in a "school room." However, as the same design was copied and reproduced, they are not an example of personal stitching; they do not contain an alphabet or a name, so typical of other samplers at the time. In my research I wanted to look closely at the needlework to see how it would inform an historical account.

In cataloguing the work, I have used Prown's (1982) and Flemmings' (1974) processes to understand the artefacts as objects of material culture and place them within the context of the community that produced them and the how society understands them today. I undertook the formal process with two items which can be seen in appendix 3. The extant CFOA needlework produced in the orphanage has a range of designs. They are a rare and unusual example of working-class needlework samplers, and their features make them easily identifiable. They appear to date from 1830-1850 but it is not possible to date them precisely, know who made many pieces, or how many still exist. Only one sampler (Artefact K) contains a date of 1837 but has stylistic differences from most of the orphanage samplers. There is no formal contemporary explanation of why they were being produced, other than a reference to a souvenir pincushion presented in 1844 to Rev Kinsey (29 /01/1844 Cheltenham Journal).

The items may have been produced for fundraising, for sale through a Fancy Fair such as the one on 20th August 1833 (Cheltenham Journal 1833). They may also be the culmination of a needlework education.

It is usual, within historic samplers, to connect the production of samplers to a particular teacher, who would teach certain characteristic motifs, and this is likely in Cheltenham but there is little dating evidence. They appear to have been produced under a Housekeeper, Elizabeth Perrin, and a Matron, Mary Hyatt who were at the orphanage during the 1830's and 40's. There is a uniformity to the work, indicative of the standardised nature of production within an institution. There are repeated designs that use common phrases, moral verses, and layouts, suggestive of a whole class exercise instigated by a teacher, rather than design choices made by an individual maker. The production of an item of needlework might signify agency of the maker but in this context, it reflects the lack of agency these girls could come to expect in their role as lady's maid or as a child in this school.

The needlework is on a fine cotton, with up to 30 threads per centimetre. Some of the pieces are translucent as seen in figure 20, the glove can be seen easily through the cloth. The use of such translucent cloth could signify the girl's ability to work with the finest cloth.

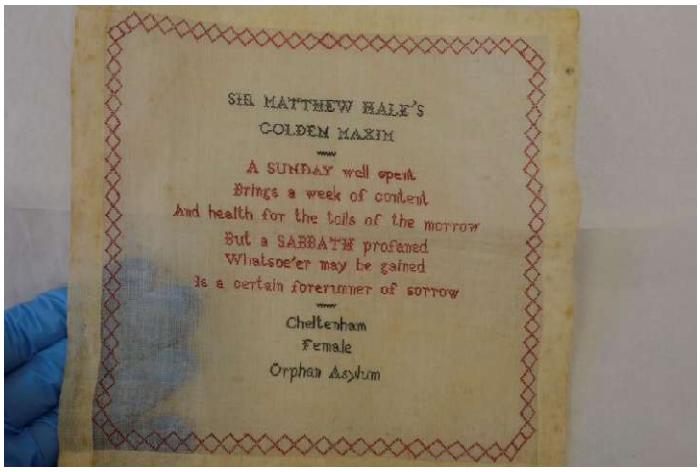


Figure 12 Artefact C Sir Matthew Hales Golden Maxim

The fabric used for the needlework is a variety of lightweight cottons, and muslins. The needlework varies in size and structure slightly as the fabric varies. Even when an item has the same design, the sizes of similar extant pieces have small variations, possibly due to the tension of the stitches, possibly because there was no standard cloth used, or the girl's used scraps and leftover cloth. The materials used are those that were considered appropriate at the time for plain dressmaking, such as shirts. The choice of cotton reflects the growth of its use in the 19th century as

historians Burman and White found in a study. It had a “capacity to signify cleanliness, health and respectability” (2007 p39). It was rapidly being considered superior to linen for its ability to be bleached very white. This use of such a fine muslin in the sampler may suggest the ability to work with the best quality cloth, reassuring the “lady of the house” of the abilities of the girl as lady's maid. Burman and White (2007 p104) consider “The choice of white cotton...the expression of a set of increasingly hegemonic ideas about the demonstration of decency and cleanliness”.

The skill needed to produce work of this quality on such fine cloth would be remarkably high, suggesting that it was a piece produced towards the end of a girl’s needlework education. The stitcher would need to count the threads to place the stitches and have exceptionally fine motor skills to work accurately. The grid of the cotton defines the stitches, which are “cross stitch” with each stitch going over 1 or 2 of the warp/weft threads throughout the work. The lettering and patterns are stitched with black thread or red thread, most likely to be a “marking thread.” The seams have been sewn with a white thread.

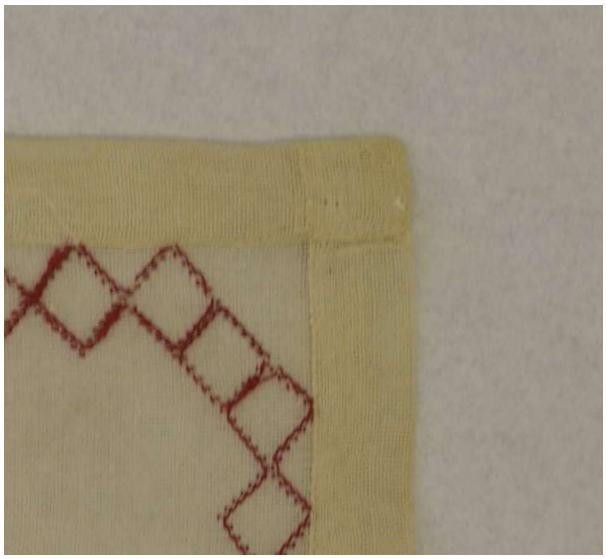


Figure 13 Corner of Artefact C Sir Matthew Hales Maxim Sampler.

The samplers are flat with a seam around the edge of the piece visible as a layer on the front. The edges have been sewn into a seam and sewn on the back as seen on figure 21. The pincushion uses the same stitches but also a gusset around the edge to create a 3D shape with little excess fabric.

Figure 14 Artefact M Close up view of stitching.

The words and verses stitched onto the pieces give a fascinating starting point into the nature and history of the orphanage.

The most common phrase stitched onto the work is "Religion is our guide and Industry our Support.” It is a phrase specific to the orphanage. Its two-part phrasing immediately establishes the values and attitudes of middle-class desire to impress on the young of the working classes the need for work. It also appears on p4 of the 1837 annual report (Glos Heritage Hub 1837) and is still being printed in the report of 1892 (Glos Heritage Hub 1892). It communicates the values of the orphanage as an institution, expressing the pious nature of the girls and the quality of the religious education they received. The needlework also impresses a notion of appropriate values on the minds of those who stitch it. The visual qualities indicate the quality of sewing but also the hegemony and ideology of CFOA. It can be read as an attempt at social control of the girls to support the continuation of the class system.

Much of the needlework has simple border patterns that add a decorative element, sometimes a “Greek key” design, others are geometric patterns, retaining the simplicity of the design. It is clear to see in many of the examples that the pattern and spacing of the border has been resolved as they have been stitched, rather than a following a pre-produced design.

The rarity of a stitchers name on the needlework may be down to the object as a saleable item, it would not have been considered a work of art, so no “artist” name was needed. The lack of a name could also indicate the ability of the future domestic servant to be anonymous within the household, to know their place in the background of a household. There are names on some samplers in private collections, such as the Jane Frost sampler (Artefact H).

Artefact An Acrostic or I Live to Die Sampler

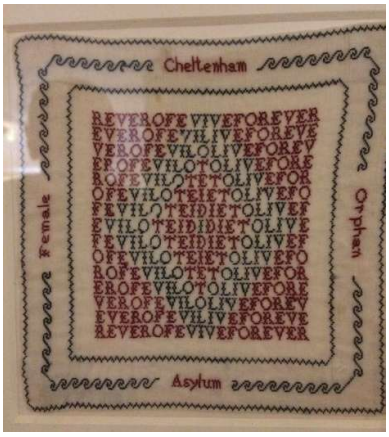


Figure 15 The Acrostic or "I live to die" Sampler at the Holst Victorian House Museum

One of the most unusual samplers is the Acrostic Sampler, this contains hidden within, the phrase “I die to live forever.” This is repeated as a complex acrostic, which initially is hard to decipher. The phrase starts with the central “I” which has been highlighted in a different colour. However, the stitcher has not chosen to represent each word with a new colour, so it appears as a jumble of letters. The change of colour draws the eye to read/group the letters differently. This phrase is indicative of Christian faith and a belief in the afterlife. The repetition of the verse must have had some effect on the girls who sewed it. The power of the phrase feels uncomfortable to me when it is understood that it was stitched by a teenage girl who had lost her parent(s). This is a reminder of as a central tenet of education for all. The sizes vary of this style of sampler, from 10cm on each side up to 15cm on each side.

Artefact B Acrostic Sampler or I Live to Die

This sampler repeats the design of Artefact A

Figure 16 Artefact B The Acrostic or "I live to die" Sampler from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham.

Figure 17 Artefact B Reverse of Acrostic of "I live to Die" Sampler

The back reveals that the central design was stitched starting from the central "I" as it is possible to see/read where the threads are carried across the cloth to the next letter. The hem/seam was completed towards the end of the construction as it is covered by one of the borders, thus hiding some of the stitching.

Artefact C Sir Matthew Hale's Golden Maxim (Red Text).

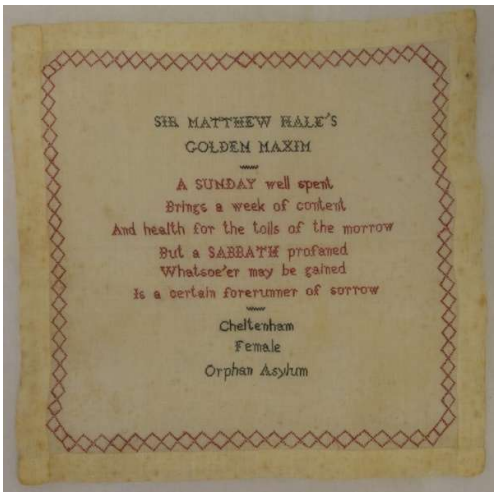


Figure 18 Artefact C Sir Matthews Hales Golden Maxim (Red Text) from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham.

A Sunday well spent
Brings a week of content,
And health for the tolls of the morrow:
But a SABBATH profaned
Whatsoe'er may be gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.

Figure 19 Artefact C Reverse of Sir Matthews Hales Golden Maxim (Red Text) from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham.

Sir Matthew Hale was a noted 17th century puritan, barrister, MP, and judge, who, coincidently, was born Gloucestershire.[5] His Golden Maxim was printed and circulated by the SPCK, Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. Leaflets and books by the SPCK were the only literature allowed into the orphanage by the

[5] For further information on him see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Hale_(jurist)
The outfit he wears in the image is still part of the Museum of Gloucester collection.

rule of XXIII of the Annual report of 1851(Cheltenham Local History Studies Library 1851).

Here the moral warns against working too much, that Sunday, referred to as Sabbath should be kept free. The implication for Christians is that the Sabbath is a day for prayer and church attendance. The inclusion of specific moral literature in the orphanage is an indicator of the control the institution had over the girls. The choice is limited, and the skill of reading is only there for moral education, not for leisure.

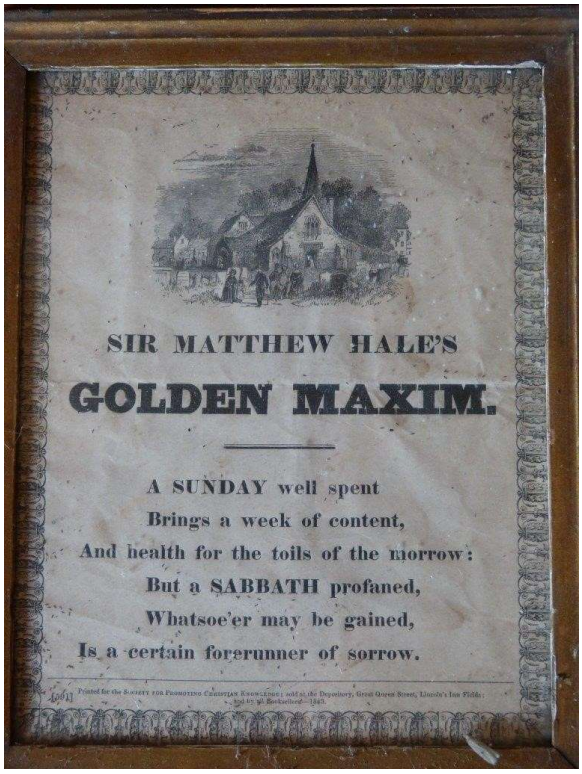


Figure 20 The SPCK flyer with Sir Matthew Hales Golden Maxim. The format and capitalisation of the text matches that of the Sampler https://twitter.com/JamesBettley/status/975329946997547009 (accessed:5/2/24)

Artefact D Sir Matthew Hale's Golden Maxim (Black Text).

Artefact D is the same design with black stitching on the main text.

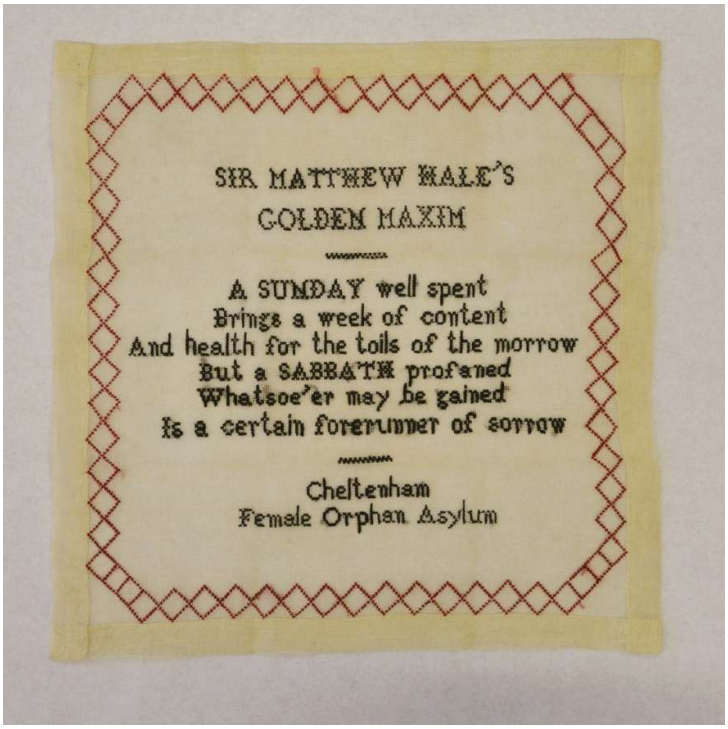


Figure 21 Artefact D Sir Matthews Hales Golden Maxim (Black Text) from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham.

When side by side the stitching appears to be a slightly different scale, possibly due to the scale of the cloth, or a sign of the individual hand of the maker.

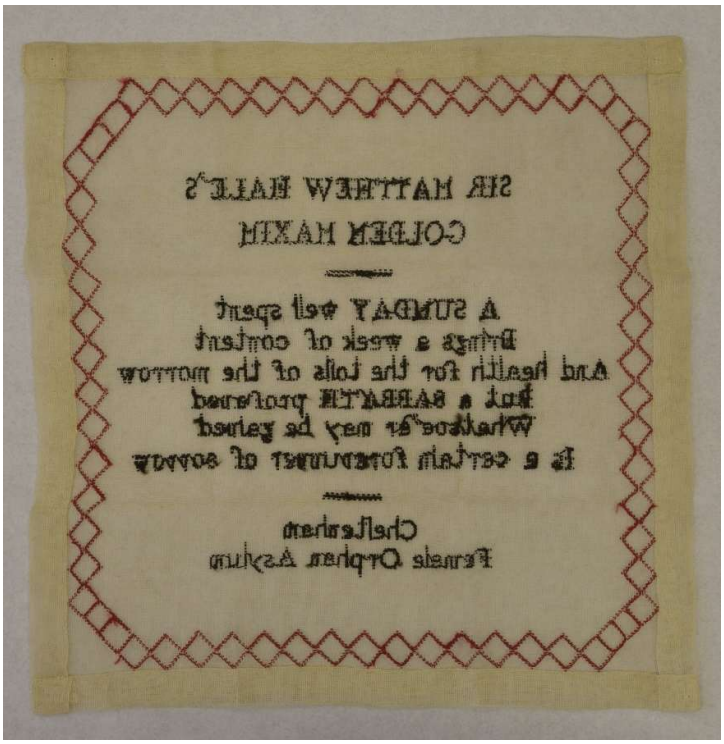


Figure 22 Artefact D Reverse of Sir Matthews Hales Golden Maxim (Black Text) from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham.

Artefact E Hymn Sampler

Figure 23 Artefact E The Hymn Sampler Hiscock (2022)

On the Hymn Sampler a verse from a hymn is stitched.

Where shall the child of sorrow find God
A place for calm repose

Thou, Father of the Fatherless,
Pity the Orphans woes

This comes from a hymn titled as per the first line. It may be a quote from Psalm 68:5, possibly based on 1 Corinthians 15 (Hymnary 2024).

The earliest date known for this hymn is 1824, which fits well with the suggested dates of the production of the samplers. It may have been used as it contains a reference to orphans and again as with other moral verses included in samplers, refers to a benevolent “father” that can be relied on.

The reference to Queen Charlotte as Patron places the piece prior to 1842 when Queen Victoria became Patron.

Artefact F May the Blessings Sampler

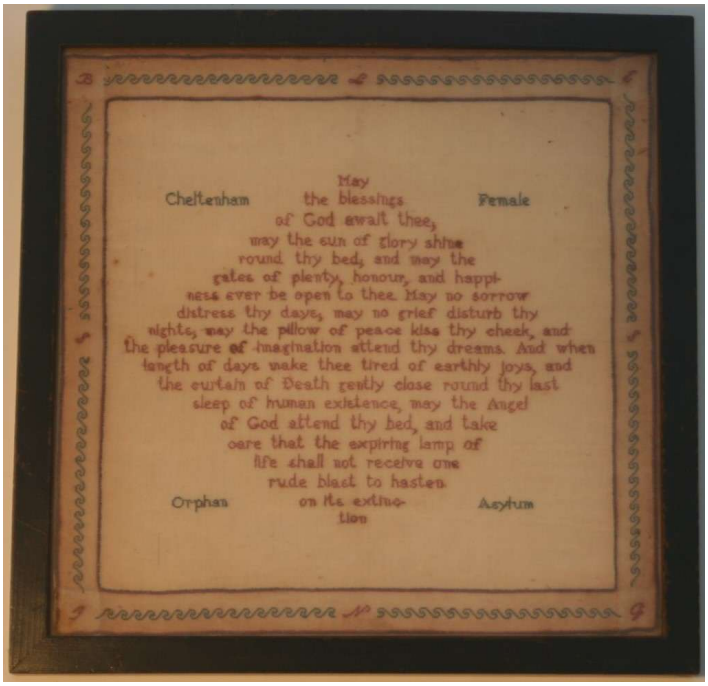


Figure 24 Artefact F The May the Blessings Sampler Hiscock (2022)

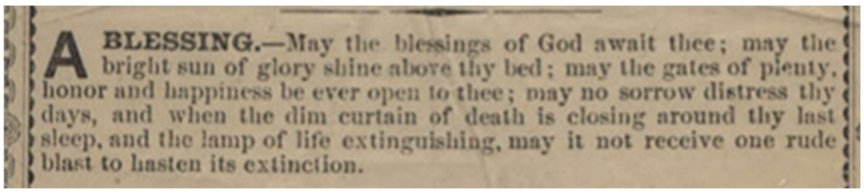

A BLESSING.—May the blessings of God await thee; may the bright sun of glory shine above thy bed; may the gates of plenty, honor and happiness be ever open to thee; may no sorrow distress thy days, and when the dim curtain of death is closing around thy last sleep, and the lamp of life extinguishing, may it not receive one rude blast to hasten its extinction.

Figure 25 Taken from a 19th century flyer found at https://collections.digitalmaryland.org/digital/collection/mdbv/id/226/rec/1.

Another unusually shaped sampler places a piece of prose within a diamond. This prose was found on a flyer used to prompt householders to give work to casual labourers. The blessing itself offers a positive message of a long and happy life to the recipient of the blessing. The construction and regularity of the diamond would have involved quite specific geometrical problem solving.

Artefact G Puzzle Sampler

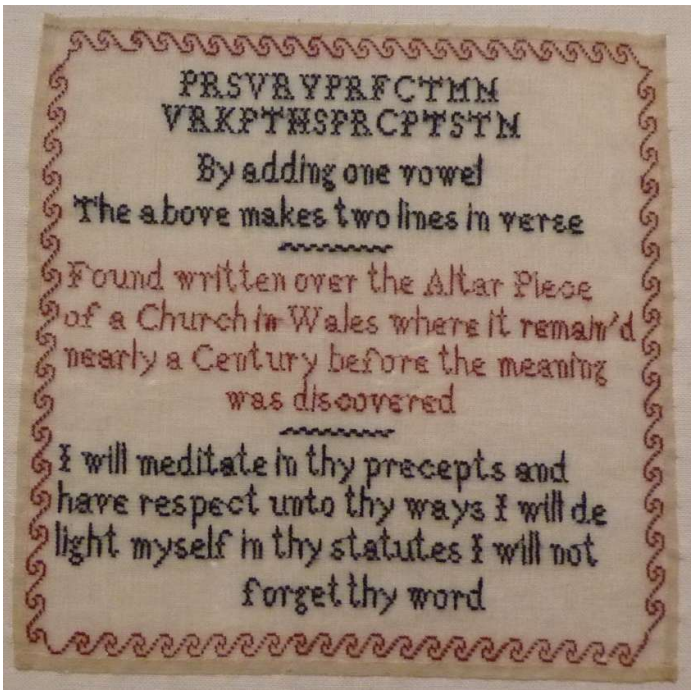


Figure 26 Artefact G An unusual sampler that uses a puzzle for its message.

The puzzle sampler is an unusual variation, and it has not been possible to find the original context of the puzzle. The sampler states that the original puzzle was found written over the altar piece of a church in Wales[6], but this may be a legend.

The Puzzle is PRSVR YPRFCTMN VRKPTHSPRCPTSTN[7]

[6] however Friedman when discussing Willian Moore's work on Shakespeare's cyphers, recall it as an English Church- more info at https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Shakespearean_Ciphers_Examined/PcHJbsXOTMwC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=prsvryprfctmnvrkpthsprcptstn&pg=PA88&printsec=frontcover p88

[7] The solution is PRESEVERE YE PREFECT MEN EVER KEEP THESE PERCEPTS TEN

The puzzle is solved by adding one vowel to the string of letters. The verse hints at the solution. It reads “I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect into thy ways I will delight myself in thy statutes I will not forget thy word.” This has been taken from Psalm 119 14-16 (Bible hub 2024). Again, the nature of the verse is in instilling appropriate behaviour through religious authority.

Artefact H Jane Frost Sampler

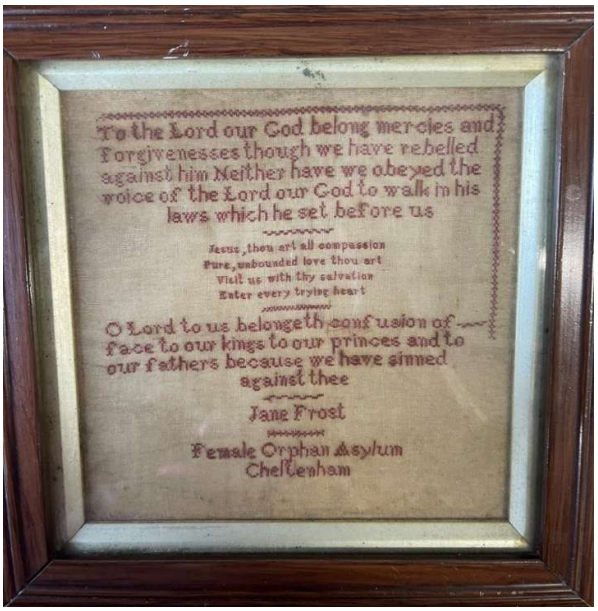


Figure 27 Artefact H Jane Frost Sampler https://twitter.com/PhilipSerrell/status/1433058315039346690 (accessed 30/3/24)

The samplers do not generally contain names of the girls who stitched them, there are a few examples of named samplers such as that produced by Jane Frost which was sold at auction in 2021 but the majority are anonymous. This anonymity is unusual in samplers and suggests that they were not produced for a personal purpose. Jane Frost is listed as an orphan in the 1837 Annual Report making her a contemporary of the stitcher of Artefact K which contains a date.

Artefact I “When my Father and my Mother forsake me.”

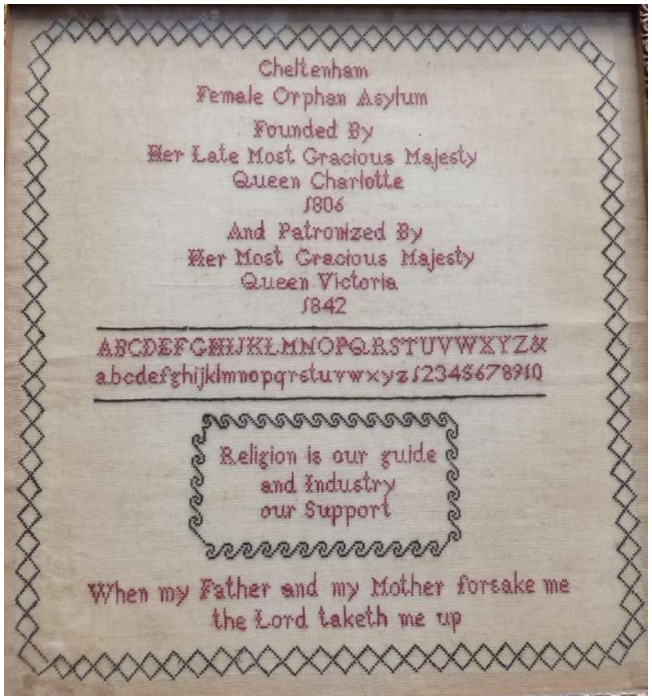


Figure 28 Artefact I “When my Father and my Mother forsake me”.

This verse contains the wording “When my father and my mother forsake me, the LORD will take me up.” This is taken from Psalm 27:10 of the King James Bible (Biblehub 2024). It references the Christian belief in an afterlife and God as a benevolent father. It could also be an indicator to the girls that the orphanage, as an institution, was acting in place of their own parents as it had taken them in.

Artefact J Alphabet Sampler

Figure 29 Artefact J Alphabet Sampler from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham.

This small sampler contains an alphabet and the title of the orphanage. It is still worked in the same fine detail on a fine piece of cloth to the same standard as others. Motifs such as crowns were used in laundry marking to indicate the status of the owner of the items.

Artefact K Cooper Hewitt Sampler

Figure 30 Artefact K The Cooper Hewitt Sampler Cooper Hewitt http://cprhw.tt/o/2DZ5x/ (accessed 30/3/24)

This sampler has a slightly different style and scale to the other works, suggesting that different scale cloth was used. This has little red thread used, the majority being black. There are two small crown motifs, either side of the dedication. It contains the same text as artefact I and unusually, it contains a date: August the 8 1837. This puts the stitcher who produced it a contemporary with Jane Frost – Artefact H and Emma Boughton – Artefact M. At this time, there is clearly a variety of samplers being produced.

Artefact L The Harper Sampler

Figure 31 Artefact L The Harper Sampler https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/228247 (accessed 30/3/24)

This sampler uses the same colour scheme as the others, black and red. It features the usual motto of the orphanage plus the alphabet and the dedication to the founding by the Late Queen Charlotte who died in 1818. Unusually it has some small motifs to decorate either side of the dedication.

Artefact M Emma Boughton Sampler.

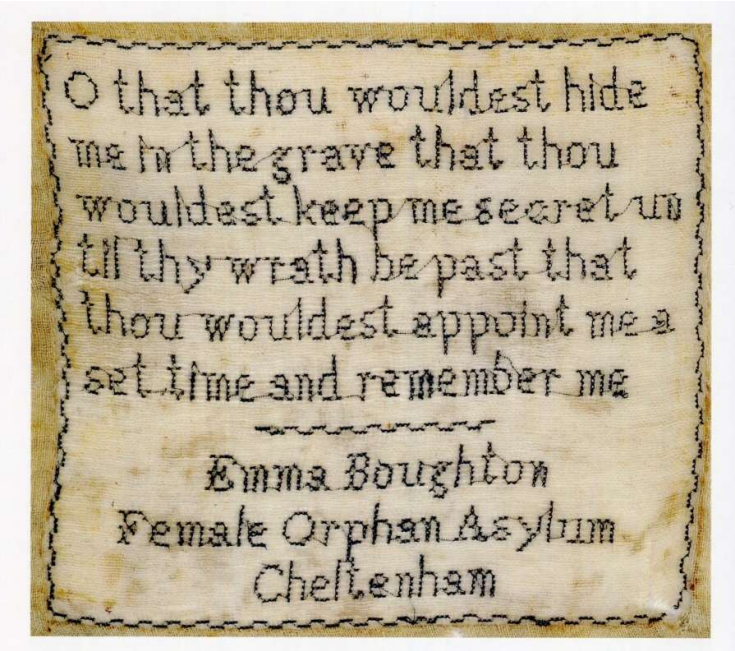


Figure 32 Image of Emma Bought sampler from Scott (p38 2019)

This small sampler, 23 x 22cms, is made from such fine fabric that the carrying threads under the cloth can be clearly seen. The text reads “O that thou wouldest [sic] hide me in the grave that thou wouldest [sic] keep me secret un till thy wrath be past that thou wouldest [sic] appoint me a set time and remember me” which is taken from Job 14:13 (Biblehub 2024). This is a harder verse to understand than the others but might suggest some theological thought or discussion on the process to everlasting life. It could be read as a reminder that the orphanage was a place of training for a future role.

Pincushions

There are also pincushions identifiable as the work of the Orphanage.

Artefact M Pincushion

There are two designs of pincushion.

Figure 33 Artefact M Pincushion with tassels, the front. from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham.

Figure 34 Artefact M Pincushion with tassels, the reverse. from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham

This pincushion is approx. 7cm square, with a depth of 2cms. The cloth has been sewn to create a cuboid, but the effect of the stuffing has domed it out greatly.

There are duplicates of the pincushions and when compared side by side they differ only in minute details such as the size, which can vary by approximately 1cm which could be from the use of the available cloth, making each slightly different.

At each corner there is a pale red, almost pink tassel. There are 8 tassels in all, they appear to have been made from a different thread that was used to stitch the text. It is a plied thread, with some silkiness to it. The tassels seem a little bit frivolous on such a formal ordered design but add a bit of flamboyance to what is a practical object. It is clear from the way that the tassels were produced that it is a “amateur” made item and not from a passementerie workshop. Some extant pincushions have no tassels.

The front contains the words, stitched in red,

Cheltenham
Female
Orphan Asylum
School of Industry
Instituted on the 19 May 1806
Religion is our guide
and Industry
our Support

On some examples of pin cushion, further details are added stating that it was “Founded by Queen Charlotte” or “Founded by Her Late Most Gracious Majesty Queen Charlotte” and then “Patronized by Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria” depending on the time of production. This clearly indicates the royal connection that the orphanage wishes to remind people of, to add status and prestige to the orphanage. It is an indicator of the respect held by the middle classes for royalty and the desire to express it.

The back contains the lettering.

ABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUVW
XYZ&1234567890
abcdefghijklmnop
qrstuvwxyz
From
a friend

On some pincushions the stitching says “A present from Cheltenham” reminding of the status of Cheltenham as a holiday resort.

The use of the alphabet on the reverse seems a little unusual on a decorative pincushion but it connects the piece to the nature of samplers which is traditionally understood to be a way to learn letters for laundry marking. It may indicate that it is made by a child, as it suggests education by including letters.

As a fundraising item, it seems a suitable item to sell, to purchase, it is useful around the home. The only reference in the archive and records of the orphanage, to this style of decorative needlework is in the Cheltenham Examiner when Rev Kinsey, who had served 10 years as treasurer, stepped down from his post. He was presented with a pincushion embroidered with the description “To the Rev W.M.Kinsey, B.D. ten years Treasurer, with gratitude and respect from the children of the Orphan Asylum, Cheltenham. Jan 26, 1844” (Cheltenham Examiner 1844).

Artefact N Victoria Pincushion

The second style shows an unusual use of colour. It does not contain the usual phrases but has many other similarities in terms of the size and production. The name of the orphanage is stitched around the edge of the pincushion.

Figure 35 Artefact M Front of the Victoria and Albert Pincushions from the auction house images of Lot 785 at Reeman Dansie Auction on 15th February 2023.

Figure 36 Artefact M Reverse of the Victoria and Albert Pincushions from the auction house images of Lot 785 at Reeman Dansie Auction on 15th February 2023.

On the front it records the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on February 4th, 1840. The reverse is stitched with the words “A Virtuous Woman Is A Crown To Her Husband.” This is taken from Proverbs 12:4 (Bible Hub 2024) and suggests the 19th century values expected from women, that their behaviour will be impactful on a husband. As a motto, it reinforces the gendered nature of Victorian society, reinforcing to the orphans their place in a marriage and the expectations of Queen Victorias marriage.

How were the samplers made?

Throughout the archival research I have been unable to find any records produced by the orphanage on their needlework teaching practices and methods. A study of the extant needlework is essential to the research. The needlework they produced does not conform to the teaching manuals produced at the time. It is quite unique, suggesting that the teacher of the orphanage developed her own ideas on what was an appropriate curriculum for the orphans to follow. Therefore, to understand the way in which the girls were taught, I have looked to the wider context of 19th century Victorian culture to find this information. I have analysed images of needlework education, references in Victorian literature and the teaching manuals of the mid-19th century to build an image of how needlework training was undertaken in schools. This research created a framework in which I developed the practice led research to remake an item in the style of the 19th century orphanage needlework.

Images of needlework education

Careful examination of Victorian images is a way of researching the experience of a girl learning to sew. These images have been taken from 19th century publications.

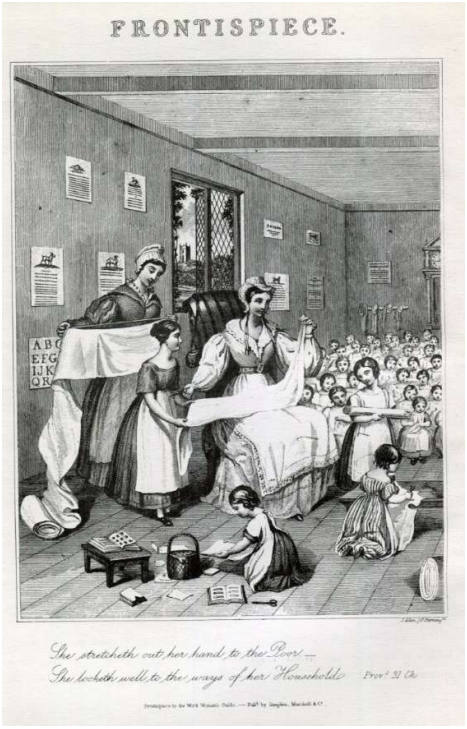


Figure 37 Frontispiece from The Workwoman's Guide 1840

Figure 38 Late 19th century Engraving of Sewing in the Workhouse by John Henry Bacon, From The Quiver 1886

Figure 39 Late 19th century Engraving of The Sewing Class by John Henry Bacon, From Sunday Magazine, 1890

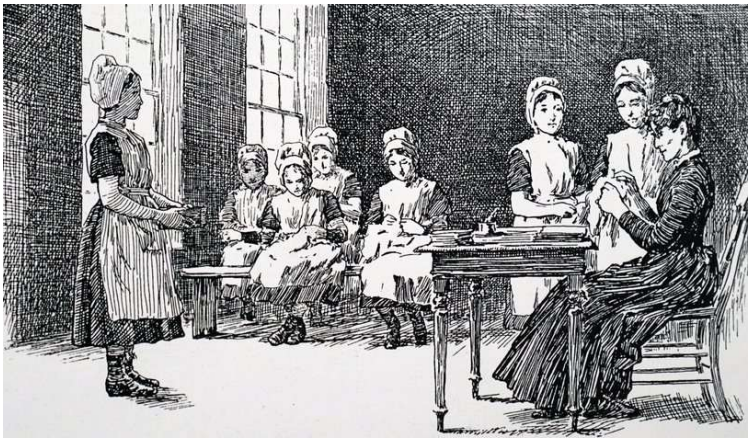


Figure 40 Engraving depicting a sewing class at the Ladies Charity School Image ID: 2CWBK6N (Alamy Stock Photo 2024)

The images have many similarities. There are a group of girls gathered, the cloth is resting on their knees led by a teacher or facilitator, it feels a familiar sight and is how we might expect needlework education to have taken place, the idea of sitting communally while completing a singular task. It reflects the way we see post 1870 education with one person supervising a group of learners. The images communicate how it might feel to be in this situation, learning to sew. The girls are side by side, a formality that may be established by the nature of the furniture, long benches being flexible in a classroom to seat a few or many. Where a chair is seen, it is reserved for the person in authority, the children sitting on a bench reminding the girls of their status, that they are still in a learning stage of life. The raised seat for the supervisor allows for an advantageous view of the group, though the rows of

benches allow for a place to “hide” a place to bring the head low to a small area of privacy between two people. The positions of the girls are all similar, eyes lowered and focused on the cloth in hand. One image allows the suggestion of interaction between the girls, but all the others show that interaction is only possible with the person on either side of you. It also restricts movement, the arms will remain close to your sides, to move away from the bench involves disturbing others in the row and so movement around the space is controlled. The benches give an order to the space. It gives regularity to the image. There are no tables between the benches, giving nowhere to rest items needed during the stitching, they must be with the girl, suggesting self-reliance and independence. It is a measure of trust that you will have your own items such as scissors, that you will use them correctly, but it is also a form of independent working. The images portray the agenda of the illustrations, the purpose of the image and the publication. They prioritise the image of the teacher, holding them centrally and in authority over her students.

They contrast with the images in Edelstein’s study (1980) of the iconography of the seamstress in the 19th century in response to Thomas Hoods’ publication of the Song of the Shirt (1843). After publication there is an increase in images of the seamstress to evoke a response to the plight of the working-class seamstress who worked long hours for little pay as seen the images in figure 16.

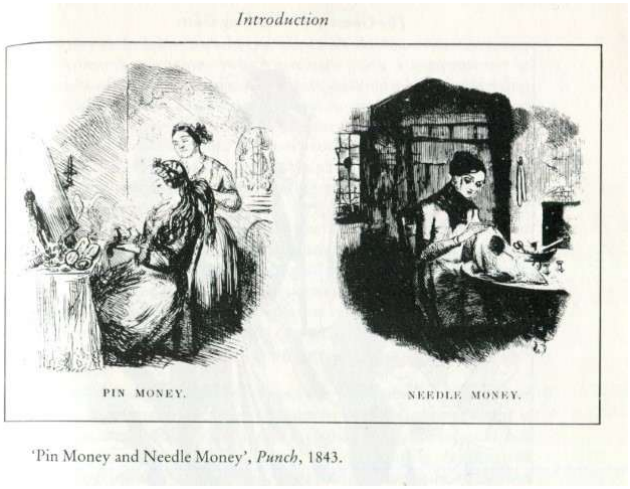


Figure 41 Pin money Needle Money from Punch 1843 Walkey (1981)

These images are powerful but divorce the woman from the social context in which she was working. As they portray adult seamstress, they are not relevant to this research on needlework with orphanages.

Victorian Fiction

There are written portrayals of needlework in early Victorian fiction, though this may not have influenced the structure of the orphanage, it gives an impression of the underlying themes of the day. In the 1840's there are novels which include needlework references. It is useful to use Alexanders' (1999 p32) studies of 19th century writers such as Charlotte Tonna (1844) who wrote "Wrongs of Women" which explores four fictional narratives with textile production at the heart. Elisabeth Stone (1843) wrote The Young Milliner; it was written to publicise the plight of women working in the needlework industry. Frances Trollope's (1844) book Jessie Phillips also uses the narrative of the seamstress to represent the larger group of working-class women. As needlework is so connected to femininity, the needlewoman is a character that many people can connect with. However, these authors do not include images of school room training, preferring to focus on the apprenticeship.

One fictional account that does include images of needlework education is Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte published in 1847. Literature historian Brain (2014) explores the Brontes' use of textiles as a metaphor throughout the work, as Jane's social status rises, so does the work she produces. The first reference to needlework is most relevant, on arrival at Lowood, Jane is instructed to sew and Bronte describes how Miss Smith "puts into my hands a border of muslin two yards long, together with a needle, thimble, &c., and sent me to sit in a quiet corner of the schoolroom, with directions to hem the same" (Bronte 2014 pp78-79). Jane explains that others were sitting and sewing around her while the teacher is supervising a group reading. The room is quiet, and she can hear the subject of the reading while she stitches.

Teaching manuals.

Another source are the newly developed teaching books that created systems to teach needlework.

One of the earliest of these dates from 1855 and advises the teacher on the class that:

> In commencing work the children all stand up in order in their places: the teacher, beginning with the first, gives each her work in succession; they then sit down; on leaving off, the teacher in the same order takes each child's work,

> sees that her needle is properly put in, and the work neatly folded, lays one piece of work upon another, to have them ready to give out in succession the next day, and puts them away; the teacher sits down in the Class and the children come up to her as she calls them. (Finch 1855 p2)

It suggests the same formality as the illustrated images. Another, The Workwoman's Guide of 1838 (A Lady 1975), written to teach the skills of "cutting out" using minimal cloth. The author hopes that the book "be admitted as a manual in the village school-room" (A Lady 1975 p.vi). The book does not contain any suggested methods or order in which to learn the skills.

Stitching the samplers

Remaking the needlework

Using this research, I was able to build a picture of how plain needlework was taught to young girls, it became my own starting point in setting up an experiential investigation of the reality of stitching a re-make of a sampler, giving me an understanding of how the girls sat to sew. However, in setting up to re-make an item of needlework, I am aware that it is not possible to recreate the experience. I do not have the same life experience, the same body, mind, nor am I an orphan. To imagine that I could recreate the experience of the orphans presumes that all orphans had the same experience, and each had the same thoughts and feelings within it. In undertaking this experience, I do not expect or believe that I will understand what it felt like to be an orphan stitching the needlework. However, with the absence of the voices of the orphans, this could be a way to experience how it feels to stitch in the same way they did. I hope that the way my mind and body respond to the task will reveal a different aspect of the narrative.

Setting up the experience.

As I prepare to sew, I set up the space in which I will work. I sit comfortably on the chair; it has a back so I can feel support. My scissors are on a cord and attached to my clothing as is my normal habit. I have needles and thread to my side as I must initially choose which will feel "correct" for the experience. There are few items I need to stitch, and my experience tells me what I will need.

Choice of materials

My first decision is the cloth. Through previous experimentation I know which cloth I will use. I have chosen to remake the “I die to live forever” sampler and from observation I can see that the cloth has a translucency, see fig 20. It is fine and has been starched. As an embroider, I prefer to use an old cloth, to re-use rather than to use new cloth. This is partly based on environmental values but is also for aesthetic reasons, older cloth is often of a better quality and often well washed, giving a softness to the surface that is not easily found in modern manufactured cloth. I had sourced a selection of older (1970’s) handkerchiefs as they have a similar quality.

“The Sampler” (Finch 1855 p209) advises how the fabrics should be sourced.

> To Provide Work for the School, calico (a term which has been used throughout this treatise as including linen, cotton print, or any other stuff applicable to the purpose) may be purchased by the piece, and cut out in various articles for the children to make up, either for orders, or to be disposed of by sale in the school room once or twice in the year. The calico ought to be of good quality, in order that purchasers may depend upon having good material as well as good work...Out of the receipts of the sale, the price of material should, in the first place, be appropriated to keeping up a stock for the following year, and the overplus may be applied towards the expenses of thread, &c., or disposed of in rewards.

The Workwoman’s guide (A Lady 1975 p1) informs me that “The needle and cotton should be adapted to the quality of the work.” The Sampler (Finch 1855 p207) is more precise over which type of the cloth is to be used. “Calico for the First-Class Sampler should be undressed, about ¾ of a yard wide; it is necessary that the threads should lie even and distinct. The border is to be of muslin or cambric muslin.” The term “undressed” here means to have no starch or finish applied to the surface. Once I have chosen my cloth, I need to prepare it. From handling the museum artefacts, the samplers are starched. This is backed up by anecdotal remarks from a dealer in embroidery, but this is unusual for samplers. It could have been to finish the item in preparation for selling. A way to inform the buyer that the orphan or the institution are fully capable of laundering to a high standard. However, my makers’ instinct tells me that as I am not using a hoop to embroider, I will need to starch the cloth to work it, to produce a firm surface to stitch on. In the images all the work is produced “in the hand.” Embroidery hoops and frames are commonly used for embroidered work, they stretch the cloth and ensure that it has the correct tension.

However, the girls of the orphanage were not learning to embroider, they were learning plain needlework, and it is not normal to place needlework in a hoop. In the 19th century embroidery as a pastime was not taught to working class girls in school. In this remaking experience I starched the cloth prior to sewing so that the cloth is firm and more “paper” like. I am not familiar with stitching on such fine translucent cloth so starching may help. I used a modern spray starch and ironed into the cloth. This was for ease and to compensate for a lack of knowledge of starch techniques in the 19th century. I also need to select a suitable thread for the project. Again, this is informed by previous experiment. It is not possible to identify the exact thread or be able to compare them to modern threads. There is little reference to threads used in the teaching manuals. However, as this is a form of needlework, it is likely to be a thread that was specifically manufactured for “marking” rather than embroidery. From close observation, the threads are like embroidery floss manufactured today. They are lightly twisted which leaves them soft and flexible but with an unevenness to the thread along its length. Each of these threads I have chosen is fine and appropriate for the experiment. The Workwoman Guide (A Lady 1840 p1) reminds that the correct thread should be used for the correct cloth, “thread” is a form of linen and should be used on linen as opposed to “cotton” which should be used on cotton. It suggests that when dealing with fine cloth “rovings can be taken from it, and used as thread, are very good for this purpose” (A Lady 1840 p1). Rovings are loose threads pulled from the edge of the cloth.

The Sampler (Finch 1855 p208) also has suggested threads for the task.

> For First-Class Sampler, No.8 and 10.
>
> For Hemming muslin borders, No. 12.
>
> For Plain work, the cotton should in general be as near as possible the same size as the threads of the material, and not much twisted. For darning linen shining cotton is generally used.
>
> For darning fine muslins, the ravel of book muslin is the best.

These are not descriptions used today for threads so the text cannot be used to source equivalent threads for this experience.

The final part of my equipment is the needle. The medical scientist Tallis (2003 p229) defines its function as “purely subsidiary” a third order functional tool. It is

there to guide the thread through the cloth and is therefore, with the thread, a composite tool and requires the thread to complete its task. Without these composite tools, each working with the other, the hand would not be able to complete the task. He writes “The manufactured tool manifests human intentions in space and stabilises them in time: it is human purpose made visible, offset from the natural world” (Tallis 2003 p231).

Its simplicity has remained unchanged for millennia with an uncomplicated beauty. It is a point of continuity for all forms of needlework. My experience as a maker informs me that the needle will be fine and not damage the cloth. I must be able to pass my chosen thread through the eye of the needle without too much issue. The choice of the needle is informed by my experience, and I will move towards the finest that I can find in my collection. The Workwoman Guide (A Lady 1840 p1) has little to say on needle other than in its care. It suggests that “needles, scissors, and all kinds of steel, injure materially when exposed much to the air, especially at the sea coast.”

The Sampler (Finch 1855 p208) has more to say:

Needles.—The best are Kirby's Ne Plus Ultra, silver eyed or drilled eyed.

For the Third-Class Sampler, No. 1 blunt.
„ Second-Class „ „ 8 betweens.
„ First-Class „ „ 8 and 9 do.
For hemming canvas . . „ 5 do.
„ calico . . . „ 6 do.
For darning . . . . . „ 6 & 7 sharps.

Figure 42 Types of Needles for sewing. (Finch 1855 p208).

Starting to sew

As I start to sew, I am immediately reminded of the scale of the cloth. The thread count is 160 meaning that there are 80 threads per inch in each direction, which is approximately 30 threads to each centimetre. This is a fine cloth onto which to produce cross stitch. At this scale, a stitch will go over 2 threads.

Video: Starting to sew (Click link to play video [YouTube])

As an experienced embroiderer I can work at this scale but will need to use a magnifier to work it. As I start to sew, the first stage is finding a needle that feels comfortable for the size of cloth, it needs to be straight and true, though over time. It took a few attempts to find the right needle as I have not sewn on this cloth/scale before. Once the needle and the thread are compatible with the cloth, I can start to sew. To find the position of the first stitch, I fold the cloth into quarters.

The words I stitch are being taken from a slightly enlarged photograph of the piece I have chosen to remake. I need to form the shape and number of the letters and build them stitch by stitch, in relation to each other. In the video I talk about feeling my way to the right scale of stitching, it's a process that includes more than looking, I am using my fingers and the needle to feedback to my eyes the size and scale of the movements needed. Watching the video I also become aware of the way my hands "unconsciously" complete this act of communication.

Video: Starting a new letter (Click link to play video [YouTube])

Once one stitch is in place the others will sit in relation to it and I can count along or across to find the placement of the next. Today cross stitch is completed using a chart that maps out the image. However, with letters of the alphabet it is straightforward to learn these. Once a letter has been stitched a few times it is held in the memory. In the video I can hear in my voice the difficulty in both stitching the letter and trying to communicate my thoughts. I have taught embroidery and so have regularly had to express my thoughts as I stitch. I was surprised at how hard it was to do this while concentrating on such a fine piece of work. Although it is a stitching I have done many times before, it is as though I am still learning it by producing it at such a small scale.

The Sampler (Finch 1855 p42) describes the stitch as

> Take the upper cross thread to the left, leave the end of the cotton to work over. Go back over the 2 cross threads from the left above to the right below, take 2 threads forward to bring the needle into the place for the second crossing. Go back over the 2 cross threads from the left below to the right above, and take 4 threads forward to bring the needle into the right place for the next stitch: then go back over the 2 cross threads from the left above to the right below, and proceed as before.

In the above description of the stitch, it says to “take 2 threads forward” possibly suggesting that the needle can be brought through in one action. With my skills, on this cloth, I will not be able to achieve that. It also gives guidance that the stitch should always be worked with the needle towards yourself. This possibly relates to the stitches that can be completed in one stroke, the needle into the cloth and out in one movement. On the starched cloth that may not be possible as the cloth has some firmness, making it hard to do a one movement stitch.

Illustrated plates in The Sampler (Finch 1855 plate 3) set out the alphabet on a chart, though this was as in image for the teacher not the pupil. There are a lot of similarities with the alphabet used in the CFOA alphabet.

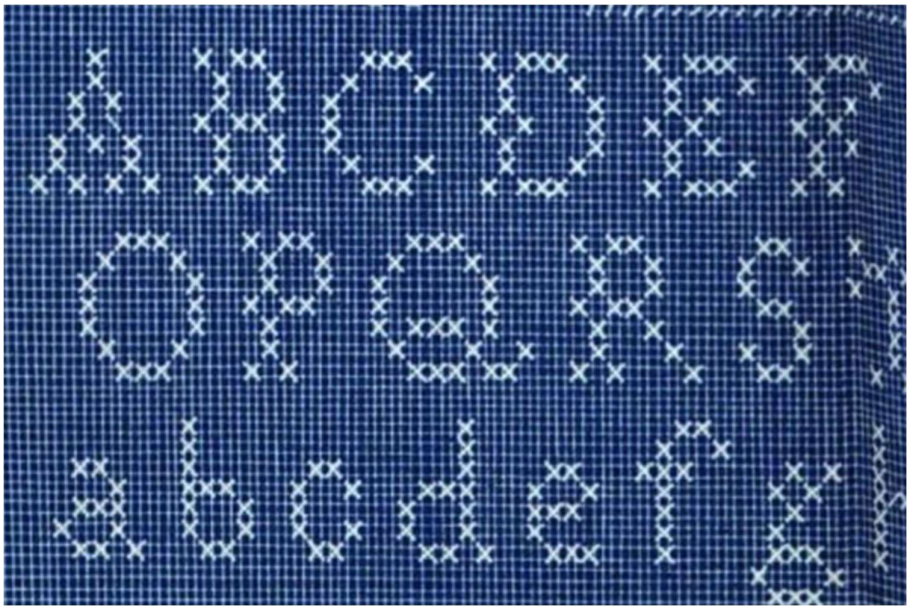


Figure 43 the Chart of the Alphabet Plate 3 The Sampler (Finch 1855)

Hand/eye/tool co-ordination

As I start to sew, I am aware of my hand eye co-ordination, I must fit my co-ordination to this scale of cloth. Pushing the needle down through the cloth is straightforward, it is easier to see which section to stitch into. To bring the needle back up through the cloth, my hand works underneath the cloth, I use the needle to guide my hand to the correct place, moving the needle with slow tiny movements and pushing the tip through to find the correct place. The more I do this, the better I become at judging where the needle needs to be. There is constant feedback from hand to eyes to improve this. My eyes are fixed rigidly to the cloth, to the position where I want the needle to pierce back through the cloth, instant feedback when the

needle is in the correct/incorrect position. This requires tiny movements of the hands, close observation of the work. My skills have developed over thirty years to be able to do this, but I must still learn the scale of this cloth. For the girls who originally stitched the pieces, it shows the specialization of the skills that they had in their teenage years. In his book on the hand, Tallis (2003 p 245) states “The increased demands made upon the hand by the tools ... drive plastic reorganisation and growth of those parts of the cerebral cortex that control the hand.” I am aware that my hand is a crucial tool, it can hold the needle, grip it to push and pull. If I grip too tightly, my hand will ache, if I grip too loosely, the action is ineffective. My hands are a major component in the process. As Tallis (2003 p222) writes

> The hand, however, is both less than a tool, being more of a precursor or precondition of distinctively human tool-use (and toolmaking), than a tool in its own right; and more than a tool, for there is no tool yet devised (or likely to be devised) by man that will come anywhere near the prodigious versatility of the human hand.

The needle as a tool cannot work without my hand understanding and using it the correct way. I must be thinking as I do this, I must be engaged with the process. I agree with Heidegger, the philosopher who states, “All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking” (1954 translated La and Gray 1968 p16). My hand has the same shape and form biologically as the girls who stitched these pieces. In remaking the sampler, I will put my hand through the same processes. The sociologist Sennet (2008 p152) in his work on craft says what will differ will be the thought processes, as life experiences will impact much greater on those. It is these thinking processes that I cannot access, and I must stay away from believing that I can. The point of connection is in the movements of the hand. Though Dyer (2024 p5) counteracts this using research by Leader (2017 p2) stating that “The activities that the human hands carry out are inherently located in a specific time and place…The experience of sewing is haptically distinct to its time and place.”

Burman, in her survey of those who sew (2023 p30) recalls the image of the stitcher “The seated figure intent on their work appears composed and placid but at the same time, their calm is dependent on these ceaseless biomechanical and neural connections.” This is what is seen in those images of stitchers, when the heads are

bowed in work, it connects the hands to the processing brain via the eyes. It is what Sennett calls “the triad of the “intelligent hand”” (2008 p174). He defines the interconnection as a method for producing good craftsmanship. “Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking: this dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding” (Sennett 2008 p9). It is through touch, the sensory feedback that the fingers send to the brain, that we deepen the understanding of the process of stitching. In the images, each girl is holding cloth. As I look at the image, I “know” that feeling from my own experiences. As Burman (2023 p29) says we are using our hands as a cognitive act. The act of sewing is a sensory engagement with feedback through our fingers. The girls did not have unusual hands, but the way they developed the sensory feedback was highly specific.

The act of regular sewing can cause calluses on the fingers. It is common to use a thimble to protect a finger, while pushing the needle through. The Workwoman's Guide (A Lady 1840 p1) advises that it is worn on “the second finger of the right hand” The thimble can be placed against the needle when pushing it through and saves a callus building up on the finger. The blunt eye end of a needle can be quite sharp and can pierce the skin. The thimble protects the finger and saves blood coming onto the cloth. When I stitch, I do not use a thimble, I use the side of my finger to push the needle and quickly develop a callus. Sennett (2008 p153) cites these as a type of localised touch. The pain of a needle in the finger is short and sharp, it jangles the nerves and frustrates the stitcher. Hand-eye co-ordination is still learning where the needle is in relation to the hands and fingers. Part of the touch experience is to know the feeling of the sharp needle. The hands also hold the cloth as it is stitched. It is thin and light and requires a fine grasp, different from the hand that holds the needle. Each hand has a separate task and must work together to co-ordinate. They respond to each other with no conscious effort of thought but are interdependent. As the stitches start to fill the cloth, I am aware of returning to the image to check and count. This is an action that breaks the momentum of the

stitching. It is a point to breathe and change position. I will soon know the structure of these letters from experience. They are based on a 7 by 7 cross stitches, ensuring that all are the same height and size. As I learn the shapes and the relation of the stitches to each other, I can predict where the next stitch will be, and I need less reassurance from the image.

Making Mistakes

At times, my attention slips, and I make a mistake. Learning a craft or skill requires mistakes to be made. The knowledge gained is based on experience and a process of trial and error. A stitch is the wrong size or in the wrong place, a mistake is a misjudgement over the relationship of one stitch to the next. The design of the needlework is fixed for me as it was for the girls and the error may need to be unpicked. The first thought is whether this mistake will matter, as part of the larger image, will it impact the overall design? Some errors are allowed. On the extant needlework, the border stitching shows errors. The design of the stitching has been worked out as it was sewn, and the stitcher has made errors. On some samplers, each corner is different suggesting that no overall design was copied, that this is an allowable error, that it will not impact on the overall design. The stitching of the letters does not contain errors.

Once it is decided that an error cannot remain, it must be unpicked. The nature of the cloth and the thread impacts here. To unpick, the point of the needle teases under the stitch, to loosen it, then the stitch is pulled up, this is repeated on the back, removing the thread. If the thread is too long, it damages the cloth. The thread is kept short while unpicking. It can leave tiny pieces of thread behind on the cloth which must be removed. Here again the needle is the best tool for the job, with its fine point able to pick up such tiny pieces.

Video: Making a mistake (Click link to play video [YouTube])

It is the same advice in the teaching guidance for the book A Sampler (Finch 1855 p76). It is “To Unpick a Stitch. -Begin with the last stitch, take out one stitch as a time with a needle or pin, be careful not to draw the threads of the calico.” In the unpicking in the video, I use the tools to hand, I use my scissors and my needle to pull and pick at the stitches. I need no more specialist tools.

Unpicking is frustrating but part of the learning process. I can hear myself producing a deep sigh in the video, that my breathing has changed, and my frustrations are in small sharp breaths. Without mistakes the skill will not develop. Making is a series of problems to solve and opportunities to try diverse ways to solve them. Even when the outcome has been decided, there are still points at which decisions must be made over how to tackle the problem.

In the Flow

Now that I am working in the “flow” on the task my hands can move quickly and deftly to the right point to stitch. In observing my movements on the video I can see how each hand is specialised separate task that contributes to the whole task, even separate fingers complete unique actions such as the little finger which helps to add tension to a thread when needed. I had not been aware before how minute some of those actions were that produced the stitching.

Working in the flow I can also hear on the video that my breathing is regularly and steady, my breathing is in unison with the stitching and stitches are completed “with” and breath is regular and steady, breathing in as the needle goes into the cloth, breathing out as it leaves the cloth. My breathe is in unison with the stitching.

As the stitching continues the rhythm of the sewing becomes comfortable. The small movements have been refined and the action has become more instinctive. The hands and body are absorbed in the task. Many makers describe this as “in the flow” a form of hyper focus or being “in the zone.” The conditions are right to produce the item. The maker is not conscious of time or the space around them. Sitting with my head bowed stitching I become aware of other physical sensations that my body needs me to respond to, the need to stretch and move. Having previously spent extended periods of time stitching, I can sit for longer than I had expected. My whole body responds well to the task. I am aware of the temperature, but my hands are not cold. When I am stitching a letter, my breathing slows to concentrate. I am aware that it is hard to form ideas over the experience at this stage, my mind is focused on the task. Slowly and steadily my co-ordination is improving. As Sennett (2008 p160) says “Technique develops, then by a dialectic between the correct way to do something and the willingness to experiment through error.” In his case study of a

glass blower, he describes how she is absorbed in the task. “The complexity here is that she was no longer conscious of her hands. She no longer thought about what she was doing: her consciousness focused on what she saw; ingrained hand motions became part of seeing ahead” (Sennet 2008 p176). Once the task starts to feel more comfortable the mind may find the task repetitive. Here in the needlework, my task is to copy, to remake, and so once the task has become understood there may be no more problems to activate the thinking part of the brain. It is at this stage that I will need to remain focused. My own method is to listen to an audio book. This allows me to settle and stay in the flow of the task. Like Jane Eyre, I can stitch and listen. Whereas Charlotte Bronte’s flightier character of Caroline in Shirley struggles with her needlework and tells us “If I sew, I cannot listen: if I listen, I cannot sew” (Bronte 1895 p80). For people not engaged with the task or whose skills are not developed enough boredom may set in as the task does not contain a hidden depth to it. Sennet (2008 p175) writes that:

> For people who develop sophisticated skills, it is nothing like this. Doing something over and over is stimulating when organized as looking ahead. The substance of the routine may change, metamorphose, improve, but the emotional payoff is one experience of doing it again.

An achievement

As the stitching appeared on the cloth I started to feel a sense of pride, that I can stitch to a similar and exquisitely small scale as the orphanage needlework. I became aware that I was doing the task well and my attention is to thread of the back of the cloth. In embroidery for many years the tradition and challenge has been that the back of the cloth is as neat as the front. For the embroiderer, the neatness on the back is needed to avoid seeing threads from the back through the fabric. Here on such fine cloth, I must be aware of the threads and how they will be seen through the cloth and following the guidance in the Sampler (Finch 1855 p77) “To Fasten off the End of the Cotton. -Take 2 threads, put the cotton under the point of the needle, put the needle in over the loop, and run back 3 threads.” I find myself trimming threads closely. I consider where the thread will move from one letter to another so that only tiny amounts of thread will be seen. It feels appropriate for the task.

Video: In the flow (Click link to play video [YouTube])

I feel pride in working to the orphanage standard and wonder if my work would be acceptable to the teacher. In 9 hours, I complete about 10% of the sampler, estimating that the piece would take 80-90 hours to complete. I wonder, compared to the orphans, if I am faster, with better lighting in the room, less pressure from an authority figure, or whether I am slower, still learning the skills. I have sat in companionable silence with the girls, focusing on my task in the way that they would have done. My hands have responded to the cloth and the thread in the way their hands did. I have some of the skills that they had to complete the task, a better understanding of the high level of focus needed for the task and the way in which the cloth needed to be starched to work it well.

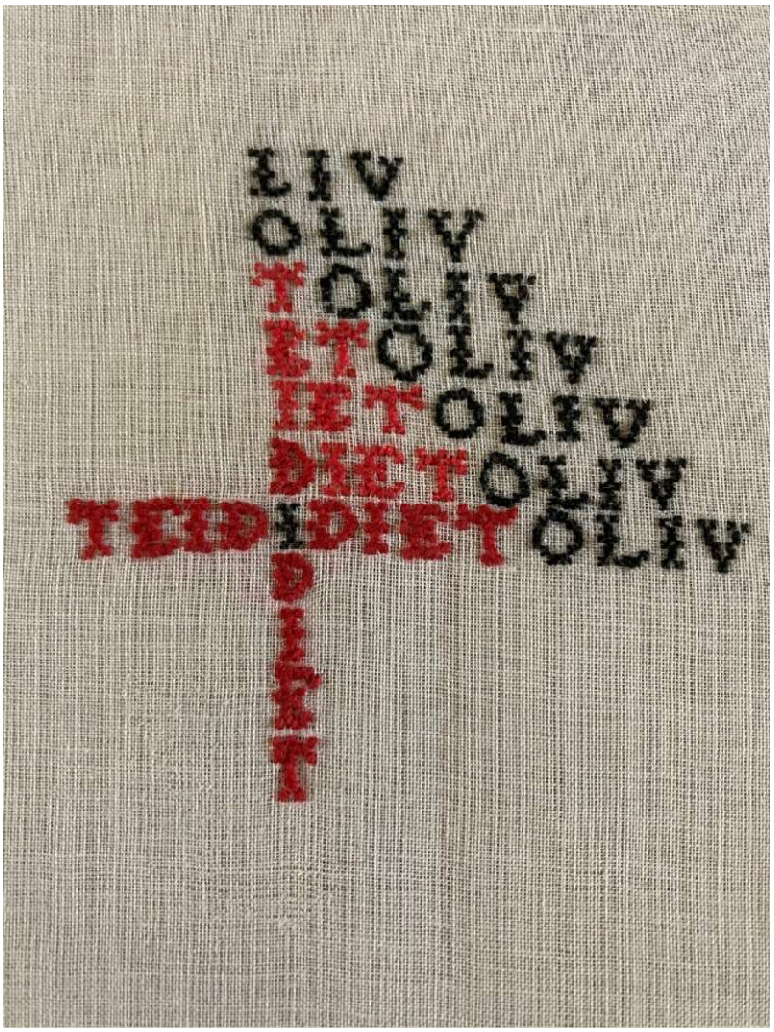


Figure 44 My own stitching.

I have immense respect for their needlework abilities.

Narrative one: Museum Display

As part of my research, I had the opportunity to curate an exhibition that overlaid the narrative of the orphanage onto an existing museum space. The desire to communicate the narrative well and concisely to a public audience was a powerful method to bring together many ideas.

The Holst Victorian House Museum is a small 19th century terrace house which is set to the 1870s, the time of Gustav Holst's childhood in the house. It is less than 100 metres from the site of the orphanage so the occupants of the house would have known and seen the girls from the orphanage. It was ideally placed for an exhibition of artefacts. The house contains both middle-class and working-class settings. Importantly, this opportunity enabled me to highlight the labour of the lady's maid in relation to the rooms of the house, the social hierarchy of the house, and to evoke and evidence *what* the maid did in her working day. In making the labour of the lady's maid evident, I have put the labour of work in the space in such a way that it overcomes the existing hierarchy of social spaces and problematises the sanctity of the middle-class spaces of the home. The diversity of the labour of the lady's maid also becomes more evident and enables me to demonstrate the philanthropy of the household in supporting the orphanage and the education of the girls. As visitors moved around the house, with an interpretation booklet in hand, the narrative of the life of the maid and her education became more alive.

Planning the exhibition

I completed an online training course with the V&A Museum that explored a method of producing exhibitions. It has enabled me to create a structure that developed the exhibition effectively, starting by establishing the exhibitions overall key messages. For the exhibition planning see appendix 4. It starts by stating the key themes from which artefacts are selected to support those themes. The methods were then developed which would engage the audience. These could take the form of displays, images, interpretation etc. The methods of delivery would be limited by the overall budget, the space available etc. The exhibition was produced in collaboration with the museum, on the museum's tight budget, my own research budget, and the goodwill of connections to support its success.

The key themes were:

- Life of working-class girls, both at the institutions and in the middle-class home
- The hegemony of the middle classes and its values displayed through the needlework produced.
- The place of learning to sew in the life of 19th century working-class girls.

As the exhibition took place in a recognised museum space it was possible to loan historic items. Some of the extant orphanage items are in the collection of The Wilson Museum in Cheltenham as well as private collections.

In researching the archive of Rev Francis Close at the University archives, I had uncovered a selection of items that were produced by students at the Cheltenham Training College, founded by Rev Francis Close. These date from the 1870s through to 1901 and are needlework examples intended to display the individual skills by the women training to be teachers. They include an examination book with individual pieces for techniques in needlework, plain dress samplers and items of clothing produced in a small scale that display the skills needed to make larger items of clothing. Although these items were not made at the orphanage, they are examples of needlework education locally and could indicate the type of needlework that would have been produced at the orphanage.

Figure 45 Plain Dress sampler in cotton from the University of Gloucestershire Archives.

Figure 46 Plain dress sampler in wool at the University of Gloucestershire Archives.

I also made and reproduced items for the display. This allowed me to produce items which visitors could handle and "experience" beyond the extant needlework displayed within the cases. My aim was to counteract some the nature of the extant textiles being behind glass and bring the physical nature of the textiles closer to the visitor. I produced a booklet which was also a creative act that added to the experience of the visitor, and I used it as a place to present the interpretation that might normally be seen on panels around a museum, see Appendix 5 for the booklet. This was in line with how the museum present their interpretation.

Room by room explanation

By curating the exhibition, I developed a narrative that was communicated through the rooms, using artefacts and interventions.

Outside the building

The exterior of the building is visually like those around it, a late Regency terrace, typical of Cheltenham. As visitors arrived, they saw a large cloth banner on the railings of the museum displaying a reproduction of the coat of arms of the orphanage. This signalled to the regular visitor that the current display concerned the orphanage. Once inside the building, you enter on the ground floor, the reception staff provided the interpretation booklet and advised the visitor to start at the nursery on the top floor.

Nursery

Figure 47 Three examples of CFOA sampler in the nursery of HVH museum.

The room is set as a “typical” middle-class nursery and there are items you would expect to see, wooden toys, a dolls house etc. On the wall are three framed items of orphanage needlework which contrasts to the middle-class toys. These pieces function as an initial statement that there are many strata to Victorian society. Here the working-class childhood needlework is placed in contrast to the wooden toys, dolls house and educational globe of a middle-class childhood. The visitor starts their journey with a reminder of the alternative childhoods that were experienced, the middle-class childhood of toys and education, and the working-class childhood of training for productive future work. The needlework would not have been shown in this way in the 19th century so here on the largest white wall in the building I have placed the items as “works of art” framed and treasured.

Maids' bedroom

Figure 48 Small maid's room with a pile of 19th century clothes ready for mending.

The maid's room is a small windowless space. Here the paucity of the room is evident with few personal possessions. Here could be seen my own re-made example of a detachable pocket. These pockets were common in the early 19th century as a place for personal items. Here in the room that is for the maid, her most private space is within the pocket. For many domestic staff, their rooms could be searched by employers whenever it was felt necessary. The pocket was a place of privacy. Beside the pocket is a pile of mending and some needlework items ready to use on the mending. For the maid her labour will continue, here in the space for rest, she must still make sure her work is done. Her role within the house is as productive worker and it is an incessant role. Her domestic labour is productive work, but it is work that disappears into the efficient running of the lady's wardrobe and clothing as the white needlework is hard to distinguish on the pale bedclothing.

From here the visitor descends a floor and is directed to the Lady's bedroom.

Lady's bedroom

Figure 49 The Ladies room - the unmade bed.

Figure 50 The dressing table waiting to be tidied.

Figure 51 Re-made pincushion of CFOA.

Here I chose to elevate the labour and productive nature of the working classes and arranged the room as it might have been before the maid came in to start her work. It is common to see rooms like this with the domestic work completed as the room is seen as a middle-class space in the home. The intervention was to remind visitors that all the middle-class spaces are places of working-class labour and that there are alternative narratives for the space. The bed is unmade, the fireplace is in the process of being made, with coal and firelighters. A cloth used for dusting left on the fireplace. The bed pan is visible under the bed with a cloth covering it, to suggest it is waiting to be emptied. These interventions are subtle but try to pivot the focus towards the work that the maid would have done in the room. It is designed to encourage visitors to recognise the maid working in the personal space of the lady of the house. For many visitors it is uncomfortable to enter a room that is strewn with personal detritus, but this setting allowed the visitor to see the workplace of the lady's maid and be reminded of the personal and intimate nature of the space and the work the maid would have undertaken.

There is also a remade item, an orphanage pincushion. This was placed on the dressing table, see fig 48, and worked as a reminder to visitors that that the maid is from the orphanage. It also reminds of the benevolent philanthropy of the homeowner who both bought the item and has provided work for the orphan. It functioned as reminder to the maid of where she came from and the interdependent nature of the philanthropy.

Parlour

Figure 52 The parlour - Tickets for the ball on the mantelpiece.

Figure 53 The tea table laid with documents and newspapers from CFOA for visitors to read.

Figure 54 Examples of middle-class needlework that form the decorative scheme of the room.

Figure 55The maid at the window, looking out to the world.

This space has a strong visual identity as a middle-class setting. It contains a table set for tea, artworks of the time, comfortable furniture covered with items of middle-class needlework, and Berlin wool work. It is a space for leisure and “work” for a middle-class woman. Placed and arranged around the room are reproduction documents from the orphanage, see fig 50. Visitors were encouraged to pick up the

items and engage with them. They were placed to remind the visitor of the bureaucratic nature of Victorian life with papers that relate to the orphanage. Here the visitor could see the name of the girls and the brief biography that narrates their eligibility for the orphanage. The power dynamics of householder over the orphan are made clear on the ballot paper, when it is understood that only two girls will be accepted from the list, that a decision that would affect the rest of the girls' lives. Further philanthropy is made clear through the tickets for a charity ball displayed on the mantelpiece. The ball was an opportunity for the middle class to be seen in their philanthropy. There was also price list for the needlework completed in the orphanage, a reminder that the children were both in training and being employed by the orphanage, another opportunity for philanthropic behaviour.

In figure 52 you will see a contemporary photographic image of a maid standing at the window. It is printed onto translucent cloth so that light comes through the image to make it look ethereal. The photograph of the maid is in front of the window so that it is unclear where the image begins and ends in the space. The maid is static and looks thoughtfully out the window. She is in an unusual state of stillness with a pensive look, looking out to the rest of the world while securely in the room. This was a reminder that here in the middle-class space there is still the presence of the working-class maid.

From here the visitor descends a flight of stairs to the Discovery Room.

Discovery Room

Figure 56 Some examples of 19th and early 20th century needlework from the University of Glos Archives.

In this room, the visitor takes a step out of the historic home. It is a discovery room that contains some of the Holst archive, a short film, and children's activities. Here a simple sewing activity is set up for visitors to try making a small felt pocket. The participatory sewing activity was sited next to the examples of needlework education samples. The task was a simple one but reinforced the difference in skills of children in the 19th century and now.

There are also two drawers displaying some of the needlework from the university archive. This display reminded the visitor of the preoccupation with needlework in girls' education through the 19th century and the specificity and highly specialised skills they were taught, such as hand stitched buttonholes and hand stitched lace/broderie anglaise.

From here the visitor is directed to the basement by returning to the ground floor before descending another flight of stairs.

Maid in Hallway

As the visitor passes through a hall, there is another modern image of the maid over a door. This image is of a maid moving and is placed in front of a door. The image is blurred as she is in motion, in comparison to the image in the parlour where she is still. She has her back to the viewer and is walking away. The two photo interventions retain the anonymity of the maid, her face is not seen.

Figure 57 The Maid in the hallway, always in motion.

Kitchen

Figure 58 The Kitchen

The Victorian kitchen is set with plates and dishes, items relating to the daily task of providing food. Here I chose not to place an intervention. It is already understood as a site of working-class labour. It is also the domain of the cook not the lady's maid.

Scullery

Figure 59 The Scullery with items relating to laundry and household tasks.

The scullery is a place of working-class labour and is filled with extant items and props that relate to the tasks of laundry and food preparation. Here the items that the maids and the domestic staff would have used are displayed but not with the biographical detail of those who would have worked in this space. As the visitor moves around the house, they may be aware that the only photos are of Holst as a young boy. These are displayed on the stairs. In this space I chose to reproduce some daguerreotypes of maids taken in the 1870's, to remind the visitor of who would labour in that space. There are no names to the images as Hiley (1979) did not have them available to list. These were printed on cloth and hung in the space amongst the laundry. Two further pieces also have photographs and include hand stitched words. One from the diary of Hannah Cullwick, (Cullwick and Stanley 1984) a reflective piece written in old age that explores how she started in service at an early age and the impact it has had on her. The second piece is taken from Beeton (Beeton 1861p1001) writing on the "maid of all work" suggesting that is the worst role

in domestic service. The words are stitched in red, in reference to the laundry marking that the girls at the orphanage would have learnt. One piece is in the mangle, while another hangs on a laundry stand, sitting subtly amongst other laundry items. Over the course of the intervention these images unintentionally faded which seemed apt.

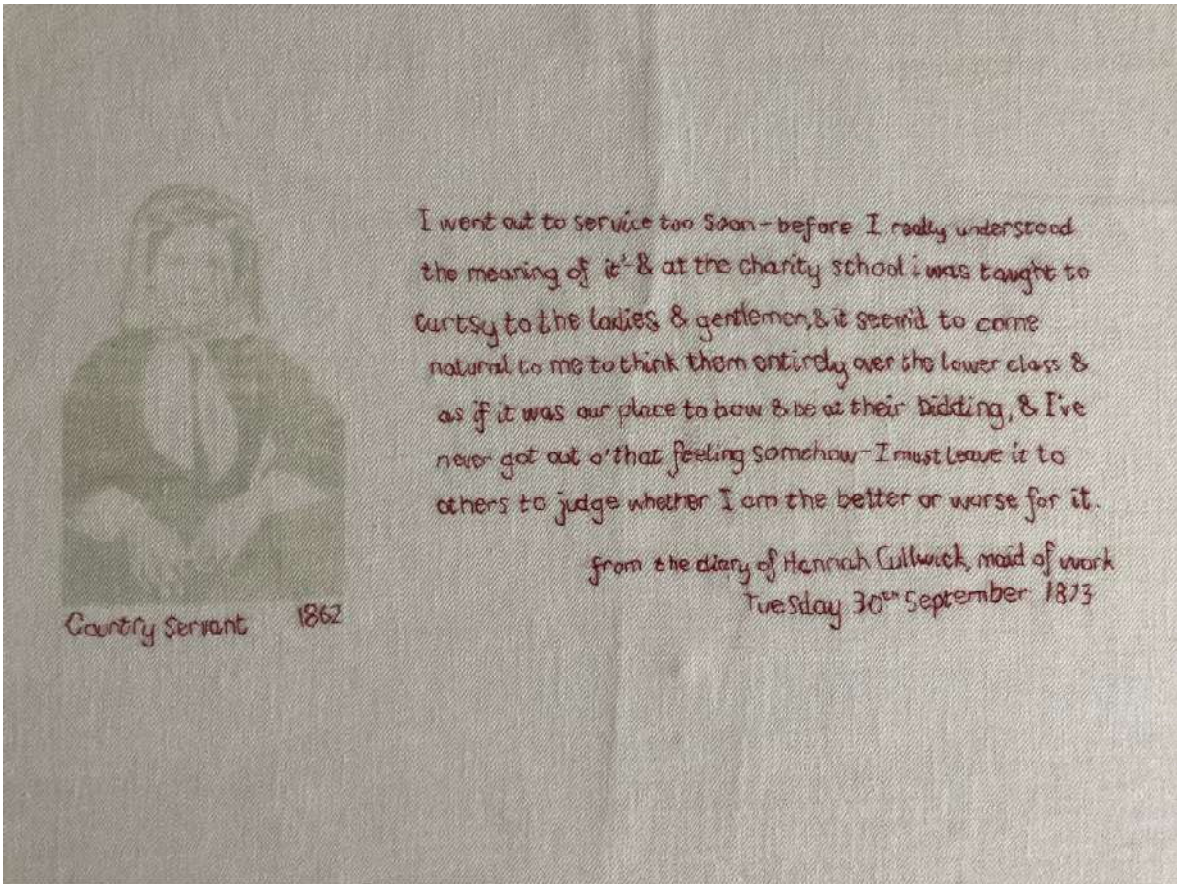


Figure 60 Hand stitched text from The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick.

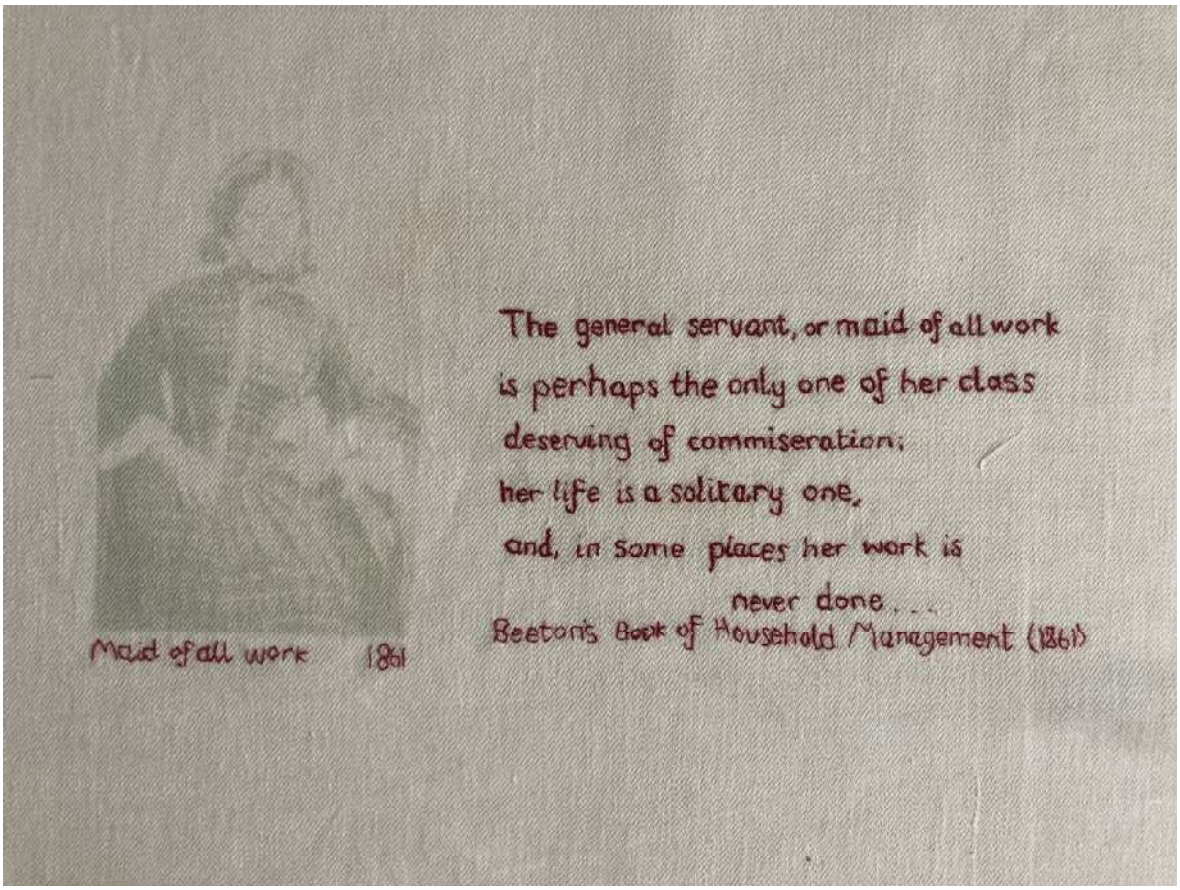


Figure 61 Hand stitched text from Mrs Beetons writing on the general servant.

Maid's parlour

Figure 60 Maid's parlour with hand sewn items made from The Workwoman's Guide.

The maid's parlour is also in the suite of rooms in the cellar, and again the life of the working-class occupant has already been made clear, with the paucity of the times and the lack of comfort when compared to the middle-class parlour upstairs. Here the intervention took the form of remade items. Placed on the table are items I have made using the instructions from the Workwoman's Guide (A Lady 1840). There were sample items, a sleeve, and a small part of nightdress, these are here to represent the sample plain sewing items that girls might have made. There is also an example shirt, part made from the instructions from the Workwoman Guide. Pages from the guide are left on the table for visitors to handle alongside the sample needlework. With this intervention, the aim was to elevate the highly accomplished needlework skills of the lady's maid and help the visitor to recognise the advanced level of knowledge needed to make clothes, a reminder of specialist training that the lady's maid had undertaken.

Audio Visual room (AV)

Figure 61 The Audio Visual (AV) Room with book box archive, the timeline of Mary Gillet and handling bags of extant 19th century christening gowns.

The AV room also allows the visitor to step out of the domestic display of the home. Here on a display board, the visitor would find the life history of Mary Gillet, an orphan in the 1850's. It set out her life through the "official" documents that relate to her, such as census returns. There are images of the documents so that the visitor can follow her and the official references to her life. This is the first point of the house where the people involved in the orphanage are made real and are named. Elsewhere in the house, the anonymity of the orphan is retained. This room represented a moment of connection when the whole narrative of the individual is pulled together, giving the visitor an understanding of the people who produced the samplers and the life of the labour they had been trained for. The display contained the names of other 19th century residents of Cheltenham involved with the orphanage. They were fellow orphans, teachers, benefactors or members of the committee. Their lives are portrayed in book boxes, stored in shelves in the room which visitors can open and explore as there is seating in this room. It is clear, as the boxes are explored, that those of the men connected with the orphanage contain

more reproduction documents than those of the women and orphans. Another indicator of the need to explore women's lives through alternative sources.

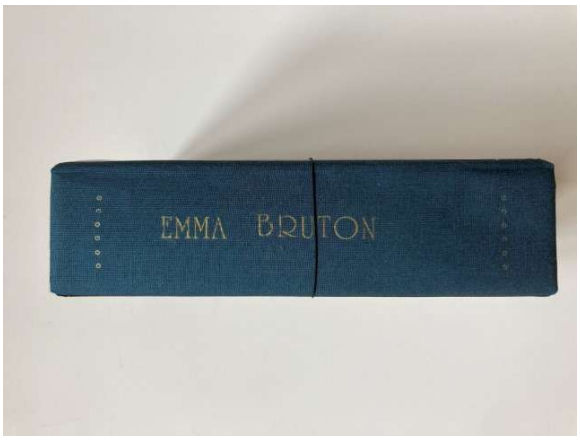


Figure 62 Repurposed book used to make a file on the life of Emma Bruton, orphan listed in the 1847 Ballot paper.

Figure 63 Book box chronology of Emma Broughton's life with reproductions of census reports, maps etc.

See appendix 6 for the details of other book box archives made.

Also within the room were two 19th century handmade christening gowns that displayed many of the needlework skills which working-class women were expected to have. These are available for visitors to handle and explore with cotton gloves and magnifying glasses, allowing a close examination of the stitches and skills that is unavailable when textiles are displayed in cabinets. Through the study of these, I hoped that visitors could really understand the level of skill and expertise that needlework on the 19th century required. The handling pack also contained a notebook with a description of the needlework and detailed photographs of the

gowns. There is also opportunity for the visitor to add any more notes on the items if they were able to add to the knowledge, to try to access specific needlework knowledge that the visitor may have had.

From here the visitor returns to the ground floor and the reception space.

Display cabinet.

Figure 64 Display Cabinet in the reception area.

Figure 65 Samplers and pincushions on display.

The display cabinet on the ground floor is the focal point of the shop and reception. It is a purpose-built cabinet designed to display items effectively. In the top of the display cabinet can be seen extant items of orphanage needlework. These were loaned by the Wilson Museum and collectors. Two pincushions were displayed, artefacts M and N, which allow for viewing both sides. There were two unframed Sir Mathew Hale samplers, artefact C and D, which had been displayed side by side, to allow for comparison of the minuscule differences. They were displayed on a Perspex angled frame so the transparency of the cloth could be seen. There was a small alphabet sampler, artefact J and an example of the puzzle sampler, artefact G. There was a small print of the original building as in figure 3. On top of the display, available for use were magnifying glasses, an itemised inventory of the display and a copy of the puzzle sampler that could be more easily read. The display case contained three further drawers with extant 19th century items. The first draw contains two plain sewing samplers from 1901 which were produced by Cheltenham Training College, one in cotton and another in wool, see fig 45 and 46. The second drawer contained a charming 19th century pocket and small items of stitched clothing samplers to aid the visitor to understand the variety of needlework skills that were taught and needed for the mending and production of clothes in a home.

On the wall behind the cabinet is a large photograph of the front and reverse of one of the Sir Mathew Hale samplers, artefact C that allows the viewer to see the quality of the stitching. In showing the reverse, the minute details of the maker can be seen. Even as a large scale photograph the needlework looks exquisite and neat and I wanted the visitor to recognise that quality of the work. It also allowed the visitor to see the normally hidden aspect of needlework such as how the threads carry from one letter to another. The way the threads are carried are indicative of the individual's style who worked the pieces and is as close as we can come to identifying an individual stitcher in anonymous work.

Piano room

Figure 66 The Piano Room. On top of the painted chest in the right-hand corner is a shirt produced at the Emma Willis Studio in Gloucester.

Across from the reception space is the Piano Room. The intervention here is small and subtle. This room is focused on the piano that belonged to Holst and other items

of family furniture, so the narrative is strongly on Holst. In the corner I have placed a shirt produced by Emma Willis.[8] The company have a sewing production facility in Gloucester and is a contemporary example of a company who make a conscious choice to employ recent migrants with tailoring skills. It gives a modern-day comparison on forms of philanthropy.

Narrative two: Cultural Biography of a CFOA Sampler.

Throughout the research I have been searching for a personal connection to the needlework, to connect myself as a maker and embroiderer with the girl who made the needlework. Whilst I could have chosen a genealogical approach to my research, and indeed I used a genealogical approach for part of the exhibition, this did not enable me to connect to the girls' education, her experience of sewing or of working. There are no accounts in the archive record, nor can I "find" her in the images and literature of Victorian life. In this account I use the approach of a cultural biography of the object to see whether it was possible to take an object centred approach and develop a narrative that explored what it was like to be trained at the orphanage and what the sampler meant to those that produced it and handled it. In producing this cultural biography, I have used imagination to construct a narrative that is creative, but which enables the subjectivities of the people involved with the sewn artifact to be recounted.

[8] For more info see https://www.emmawillis.com/

Figure 67 Artefact L Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum Sampler at The Met Museum. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/228247 (accessed 30/3/24)

Sampler as labour and education

This sampler was made by a girl such as Hester Dee, an orphan at the asylum in 1834 having been there since she was 8 years old. She had spent her days at the asylum, following the curriculum to train to become a lady's maid. This role involved supporting the life of the lady of the house. She would oversee her employer's wardrobe, preparing her bath, and her clothes, serving meals when required, keeping her employer's quarters tidy; being able to mend and make items of clothing that might be worn by the lady of the house, of which underwear and night wear was of key importance. From the day she arrived in the orphanage, she had been learning how to sew. She had started with small projects like pockets, but she had learned fast and had quickly moved onto the items that came into the orphanage from the wealthy of Cheltenham for making up, items like shirts and petticoats. Hester would have been about 15 years old when she made a sampler like this and would most likely leave the orphanage a year later. She would be able to sew a shift quickly with small, neat stitches, she knew all the techniques of plain dressmaking, such as buttonholes and plackets. She could cut a simple item from basic body measurements using the cloth carefully, so not to waste any. Hester sewed this

sampler in preparation for a bazaar at which it was going to be sold. There was to be a Fancy Work bazaar to sell work produced by local middle-class women. Her teacher would get all the oldest girls, to complete some items in preparation as gifts or to be sold at the bazaar. This would help pay for the girls' lives at the orphanage. The teacher would decide what layout they would stitch, and all the girls would produce them. They would not stitch their names onto the samplers as they were to be sold and so names were not needed. Some of them had produced samplers with their names on to send to their families. These items for the bazaar would have the same design but would still be anonymous. Hester was good at stitching and knew that this would not be a challenging task. She would sew in the morning and the afternoon; bible study was for the early morning and the evenings. Her teacher had given her a piece of cloth, fine muslin, the sort of cloth that was used to make soft undergarments that she knew how to sew. She knew the feel of it and a suitable size for her stitches. Once she had her cloth, she folded it in half, to find the centre line as this was how she would set out the work. She threaded her needle, with a short length of red thread, this was the red turkey thread they would usually “mark” linens and laundry with, as it did not fade nor run in the wash. The cloth was stiff from starching making it easier to work the cloth in her hand. If too soft, it is hard to get the tension of the stitches right. It made it easier to get the stitches all the right length if the cloth was stiff with starch. The words she would stitch would be written on a chalk board in front of the girls for all to copy. They had each been taught the alphabet and knew how to construct the letters from tiny crosses on the cloth. Hester could write a few words on a page, but the orphanage had never taught her to write. The focus of her education had been learning to sew, learning the tasks she would need for domestic service, she could read the bible but there were very few other books at the orphanage.

She started with the word Cheltenham, starting with the second e, she would sew that onto the centre fold, this would help her to place the word in the middle of the cloth. Sometimes they would start the sewing in the centre and work outwards, but this one would be worked in rows. She started with the place she was in: Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum, and it grounded her in who she was and where she lived. She then continued to stitch the details of the founding by Queen Charlotte. This was the history that Hester knew that the Queen had given money to

establish the school and without that support, there might not be an orphanage. The stitching was small, just taking the thread over two threads of fine warp and weft of the cloth, first in one direction and then the other. She had to be careful on the back that none of her threads could be seen as they travelled from one letter to another. She found that she quickly got into a rhythm with the sewing, and it was as if her needle knew the right place to pierce the cloth. Sometimes she needed to check the size of her stitches but mostly she just knew from years of sewing, how big her stitches would need to be. When she sat and sewed, she liked to be near the window to get plenty of light, it helped with the sewing. They sat together, sometimes one of the girls would read from the bible. Hester liked it when that happened as it kept her mind occupied, and she could imagine the stories while she is stitching. Once she settles to her stitching, time just flies, she gets so absorbed in the task. It keeps her hands busy and if someone is reading, it keeps her mind busy. The reading stopped her thoughts from wandering from sewing. She starts to breathe in time to the stitching, she cannot sew when she is cross or annoyed, and the sewing helps to calm her breathing. Some girls never settle to it and struggle to sit still for so long, but Hester has been sewing since she was 7 and she can now comfortably sew for long lengths of time.

If she spent a long-time stitching, she might get a bit fidgety, her neck would stiffen from leaning over and looking at her work, so she liked to get up and walk around the room to stretch, then she sat back to her sewing. A lot of the girls can sit together when they are sewing as they do not take up much space and on a chilly day, they can feel the warmth from each other. The cold makes it hard to sew, her hands would start to stiffen, and she would lose feeling in her fingers. Sometimes she wore small woollen fingerless gloves but even then, her grip was not so strong if her hands were cold. When it was hot, her hands were sweaty and then she would need to wash them more often so as not to get dirt on the cloth. The needle sometimes slipped from her fingers when she was hot. When they all sat together to sew, there is a peace and quiet calm that settled over the group as they start to focus on their stitch, only punctuated by a rustle to take new thread from the paper fold, or a sigh of frustration when the stitching goes wrong. It felt very industrious when everyone is sewing together, a companionable group.

Once the wording on the sampler is finished it looks good. She worked at it one row at a time. She worked out which was the central letter in a line and started to stitch from that letter. Then she can go back and sew the first half of the sentence working backwards. She had to pay a lot of attention to the writing as she copied, it is easy to miss a letter in such long sentences. If she made a mistake, she must unpick the letter, and that is harder than stitching, as it can leave bits of thread behind in the cloth and sometimes holes where the thread has been. She enjoyed stitching the little chevron patterns between the alphabet as it is quick to stitch and you do not have to think too much about the pattern, it is easier than the letters as there is a rhythm to it.

At the bottom of the sampler is the phrase “Religion is our guide and Industry our Support.” She would know where to stitch this because she could look at the teachers and other girls' work and find the right place by measuring with her thumbs and fingers. Her thumb, from the knuckle to the tip is about 1 inch, and she often uses this to measure things. The pattern around the motif is harder to do, it is the corners that cause a problem, she had to work out how to turn the corner and keep the pattern going. Everyone solved this in their own way, and it is one of the ways that they could tell the difference between their samplers. When she got to the corners she had to decide if she had room for one more of the curls or whether it was time to move to the line on the side. She decided it was easier to do some of the curls on the side then go back and stitch into the gap. Sometimes this works and she can get the curls to fit, sometimes it did not. She could only work this out on the cloth, judging the spacing, she had no other way to work out these corners.

When the border is finished, the sampler is nearly done. Now Hester had to hem the cloth, so she took the time to press the cloth and crease in the turnover. When the crease slips, she can run her finger along the seam to warm the cloth and re- fix the crease. She used roving threads pulled from the cloth to stitch down the double hem. The cloth is fine, so the corners are neat and easy to make. She folded in the corners so that all the rough edges were hidden and carefully used tiny stitches to hold it all in place. Then she added the final border, a series of chevron shapes, the same as between the alphabets. This is quick to stitch as she remembers the rhythm of the stitches from before, but as before the corners are trickier, and she must work out where the right place to turn is to get the pattern to fit.

The sampler is finished but Hester still had some time before the bazaar, so her teacher suggested she put something else on the work. She decided to add some little tree and flower shapes. She decided that they would be the same shapes on each side, but she would swap the colour, on one side it would be mostly black and on the other mostly red. It was quite hard to make up a picture when you are not allowed to do so very often. With the tree shapes at the bottom, she stitched a trunk and some branches, then she added leaves. She decided to put some flower shapes higher up, one on each side. Not everyone had time to add the shapes, so she is pleased that she has done it, but they do look a funny shape, defined by the stitch and the weave of the cloth.

Once all the stitching is finished the cloth is washed and ironed. She has learnt to do this working on the laundry at the orphanage. She starches the cloth and then it is ready for the bazaar. She has worked hard on this piece and really shows how finely and neatly she can stitch.

Sampler as commodity.

Her teacher gathered up the pieces of work that the girls produced, she can tell who has sewn each piece as there are very subtle differences, especially on the back, the way some girls finished off the thread, the way the threads move across the back of the work. It was hard to tell the difference, but she could, each girl had her own very subtle style. She decided the layout for the sampler that the girls would sew this year for the bazaar. She had made sure that they had acknowledged the Queen as patron and she had made sure that the girls included the School of Industry, to remind them of the purpose of their training in the orphanage. She did not let the girls add any of the extra details that wealthy girls would put into their samplers, she had made sure they had stayed within their needs of learning plain sewing. A couple of the girls had added some small decorative details, but it hardly made them “fancy" work. It was her duty to the girls that they learnt the sort of sewing they would need to do. It would be better for them not to learn all the “fancy” stitches that the wealthy young ladies would learn. These girls were here to be “saved” and knowing their place was part of this.

Once pieces were ready for the bazaar, she checked them over again as they needed to be in the best possible condition to show what the orphanage can do and

that she keeps the girls and the orphanage clean and neat. On the day of the bazaar, she took the pieces over for sale. The bazaar had been advertised locally; people come along as it is a way to support the orphanage. Many other wealthy ladies had made items of “fancy work” for the bazaar and the girls’ pieces would look quite plain and simple next to the fancy work. It would be a busy day setting it all up with visitors looking at their work and discussing the orphanage. She hoped that everyone would like the work. She was proud of the work that girls produced. She was fond of the girls and had been in the job for a long time. It was a good place to live, and they have all become a sort of family. She did not like all the girls as much, some were difficult to work with but most of them were hardworking and she was happy to teach them. If they had not come to the orphanage, she genuinely believed that their lives would have been awful. The orphanage did excellent work in taking these girls and they should be thankful for how it has changed their lives.

She could see people had started to arrive at the bazaar. People like Mrs. Browne, the wife of Reverand Browne who was the orphanage chaplain and on the Superintendence committee. Mrs. Browne was on the Management Committee. She would bring her friends to the bazaar; they might buy something. The Management committee was a good place for women to get involved in the running of the Orphanage as part of their Christian duty and their skills were especially useful in organising a place to care for the girls. The bazaar was a popular social event, and many women liked to meet their friends there. When Mrs. Browne came along to the bazaar, she decided to buy one of the pieces of needlework. She took her duty of Christian charity seriously and the orphanage gave her chance to be involved in something beyond running her own household. She bought a sampler to support the orphanage. It is a little like something that she made as a child, but not as decorated as she was able to use more colours and choose her own designs. To her it is right that the girls learnt only plain sewing, it is what they will need to become domestic staff, they do not need to know how to embroider and the fancy work that she had learnt, that would not be needed for their futures. She chose a sampler and handed over her money, carefully rolled up the cloth and popped it into her bag to take home. She might see lots of people she knew at the bazaar, and she would like to talk to about their Christian duty and support the orphanage as she does.

When she was back at home, she took out the sampler and placed it on the table. She saw that it was fine work. It made her think about the work of the orphanage and if there was anyone else that she could recommend when the next place comes up. She felt comforted that she supported the orphanage so much.

Sampler as propaganda and an example of values

When the scullery maid came in to deal with the fire, she saw the piece of sewing on the table, and she could see that the sewing was exceptionally fine. She could sew well but not as fine as this. Her hands were rough from cleaning the grates, from her work in the scullery. She knew it had been sewn at the orphanage but never went there. She had seen the girls around in their uniform, a big cloak, and a white pinafore. She had grown up with her mother and father and had come to work in the house when she was 13. She would never be a lady's maid, she felt it would be too hard for her to know how to behave to look after a lady. She felt happier with Cook who knew her family. As scullery maid her work was long, but she knew what she needed to do, and Cook was nice to her, so she wanted to keep her job. She could read her letters and started to try to read the sewing on the cloth but then remembered that she needed to continue her work.

The sampler was left on the table while Mrs. Browne had friends over for tea. It sat next to the cake. One of the ladies noticed it and picked it up. She read the words carefully and admired the fine work. It reminded her that she should pay her subscription to support the orphanage. She sometimes visited with her friends on a Tuesday afternoon. It had a reputation for producing girls who are good at sewing and have a good pious attitude. She needed a new maid and wondered if she should ask if there were any girls ready to work. She could ask her cook to recommend a girl, or advertise in the paper, but it is a lot easier if the maid comes from somewhere she already knows. She admired the work that Mrs. Browne puts into the orphanage.

After a few days the sampler is put away, it is tucked into an album that Mrs. Browne keeps, where she keeps small cards and souvenirs to keep them flat, so the sewing is safe and not damaged. Mrs. Browne wanted to remember the work she does in the orphanage, and this is a good place to keep it.

Sampler as inert object.

The book is kept for a long time and when Mrs. Brown passes away it is passed onto her family. They look through the book and some of the items remind them of their relative, other items seem strange as they do not know what they represent. The sampler has a name on it, so they know it is from the orphanage she supported. After some years it seems a bit strange to keep this book as many of the items now seem inconsequential. The sampler is removed and placed in a pile of cloths and embroideries that the owners no longer need and put into an attic. It is a large house, and it is easy to put items out of sight.

The cloth lurked in the attic until the family sold the house when the bundle was discovered, but it was forgotten who made it and owned it. It looked old and may have been passed onto a second-hand merchant along with other unwanted items. He would pay a small amount for a wide selection of items. The items would be sorted, silver and good linen. Handmade lace was removed as it had a good resale value. The rest would be stored in baskets for people to pick through. There was a whole variety of embroidered handmade items, fancy Victorian work, and lace. In the junk shop, nobody noticed the piece and it started to get damaged as it lay there. It has little significance and so it may have been handled badly. [9]

[9] This is not the end of the life history of this sampler. During the 20th century it is possible to trace its life as it is purchased by Mabel Herbert Urner, a popular newspaper columnist who wrote about her trips to Europe to buy cloth, then as donation to the Met Museum, where the curator, Edith Stanton would have seen it. She was one of the “Monuments Men” who worked to preserve cultural monuments in World War 2. It has since become a feature sampler by Dr Isabella Rosner in her podcast Sew What. The 20th century cultural biography can be found in Appendix 7

Conclusions

At the outset I stated that this research would address three questions:

- Who made the samplers?
- How were the samplers made?
- Why do the samplers look as they do?

To answer these, I have used a variety of methods to create a discursive space that includes archival material, accounts of nineteenth-century education, material methods, re-making, a curatorial exhibition and finally the creation of a cultural biography which interweaves imaginative reconstructions of various subjective speaking positions, to bring to life the experiences of working-class girls whose lives and skills have previously been overlooked.

- Who made the samplers?

I have demonstrated that the samplers were made by orphans who were from respectable working-class families who were admitted to CFOA. Apart from one named example, artefact H by Jane Frost, the rest can only be identified as having been made by girls from approximately 1830 to mid-1840's under the tutelage of Mrs Maynes and then from 1837, Mrs Perrin and Mrs Hyatt.

- How were the samplers made?

Using a practice led approach to re-make artefacts created an understanding of how the samplers were made with a relatively simple cross stitch technique but executed on fine cloth that demonstrated an extremely high level of skill, fine motor control and self-discipline. The materials used were fine cotton and the thread is most likely to be floss usually associated with laundry marking.

- Why do the samplers look as they do?

The samplers look as they do because of the expectations placed on lady's maids to undertake plain sewing. The samplers materialise the values expected of a lady's maid, those of a pious nature, neat, controlled and anonymous. The samplers enabled the students of CFOA to demonstrate their highly skilled and practical

stitching while as an artefact they are also an indicator of the middle-class values of those who ran the orphanage. The design of the samplers reveals more about the values of the orphanage than the girls who stitched them. The needlework was produced as mementos, and most likely objects to sell, raising funds for the institution.

This conclusion does not come from one method. By using a variety of methods , over the course of my research, has helped to understand how methods can intertwine to produce complex narrative accounts. With each strand a new aspect has been revealed allowing the evidence base to expand, creating a more dynamic piece of research. To produce a deeper understanding of the needlework, I found methods that used creativity to access other forms of knowledge, by working in areas of traditional historical methods and combining them with practice led research which allowed for imaginative connections that further investigates the context of the needlework. These methods were necessary to uncover avenues of research that might have otherwise been missed. The historical accounts I have produced now have a focus on the needlework and the makers of the work, focusing on the lived experience of the girls who produced the needlework. It is grounded in the history of a 19th century institution that was developed to perpetuate the labour relations between the middle and working classes.

The archival research was invaluable in constructing the historical account. It clearly revealed the values of the middle classes, which impacted on the orphanage from the outset. There are no firsthand accounts of the experiences of the girls in the orphanage, it was not a priority for the record keepers and 19th century authors of the institution. The institution worked to establish appropriate behaviours and values in the girls and would not have felt any need to record working-class attitudes. These documents are rich with details that support my understanding of 19th century society and allow insight into the middle-class hegemony of the institution, but they do not contain the experiences of the girls and for that I needed to look elsewhere.

Close examination of the artefacts using material culture methods, within the context of archival research, made clear the way in which the values of the orphanage are contained in the design of the needlework. It is a method I have been using on artefacts unknowingly for many years and it felt comfortable to adopt this as an

approach to research. Despite the formality of the process, it felt an imaginative approach, using the artefact to stimulate thought. Being able to hold an object, to look at it closely was a powerful moment in the research and one I will not forget. It was a moment that connected me though time to the makers of the pieces. This proved essential to fully appreciate their work. Although I had understood the small size of the pieces, I had not sufficiently recognised the nature of their scale. Digital images and books that I had studied up until that point had been clear but had not had the same impact. The power of the "reality" of the artefact was very stimulating to thought in a way that other images were not. Combining the historic research with observation of the needlework, I have shown it as the embodiment of the values of the institution, the values required to be a lady's maid. The needlework is neat, anonymous, pious, frugal, with few decorative details and used little resources. My view is that the institutionalised nature of the design reflects the lack of agency and control these girls were given, both as orphans and possibly as future lady's maids. These were considered the ideal values required of a lady's maid in the 19th century. It has required the context of the archival research, an understanding of the values and attitudes of the institution, which I have overlaid with the research into the formal design qualities of the needlework, to create a fuller picture of the orphanage needlework.

The deep dive into writing the cultural biography as method for exploring context of production and ownership made me consider further aspects of the needlework. I adapted the process and produced a piece of writing that supported my own needs. It was a creative exercise concerning the production of the needlework and built on the knowledge I have of stitching, teaching and collecting textiles. The writing gave an opportunity to explore some of the actions that impacted on the production. This method of investigative research helped me to understand how the object is inert, until a narrative is applied to it. I produced a form of historical narrative that moved beyond the historical methods of evaluating and analysing causes and consequences to an informed study of human nature.

Imagination was also central to the practice led exercise in remaking an item of needlework. The tactile nature of the cloth was important as it engaged the senses and it felt good to handle cloth and to stitch. I felt the same "connection" to the narrative of the girls in the orphanage as I did when I handled the artefacts. From

this investigation I developed an understanding of the physical feeling of stitching the needlework to the same measurements. Without this tactile experience, I would not have appreciated the specialism of the girls' knowledge of how to handle the needlework and cloth to achieve the desired results. I agree with the historian Graham's research into how senses impact on our understanding. (2013 p3) She says:

> Studies which unite touch, taste, sight, sound and smell are thus considered capable of providing a more comprehensive and profound understanding of the role of the senses in the construction of ideas about, and experiences of, space and place, identity, performance and other aspects of ancient culture.

The remaking exercise as a method was highly enjoyable, a chance to try out some ideas on how the object had been constructed, as Nimkulrat (2010 p66) in describing his own practice led research says, "research through one's own creative practice facilitates a thorough examination of the research problem". It felt exciting to research through an embodied experience, for embroidery is an enjoyable, mindful activity. In trying to find the story of the girls through that making, I was aware that to the girls of the 19th century, sewing was a labour, a task they learnt. I had to approach the task as labour, not as pleasure, reminding myself that it was not possible to understand the mind of the girls who had sewn, only to understand the bodily experience of the girls. This was on my mind a lot during the experience, and it challenged me to halt my imagination and stay grounded in the haptic experience, focused on the tacit knowledge. It was a subjective experience but one which enabled me to understand and interpret the skills and discipline that the orphans had. As a method, it felt anecdotal and not as robust as other methods in producing a clear narrative. In this research its strength lies in the combination with other methods such as the archival research. The method became more robust when used in combination with the material culture methods such as Prown's "description, deduction and speculation" (Prown 1982). Ultimately, I agree with Dyer (2024 p35) that adding "recreation" adds more understanding of the production of the artefact and the specialist knowledge that it required. By shadowing the actions of the girls who produced the needlework, I came closer to understanding their experience of the labour involved in the task.

The reflective nature of auto-ethnographical research caused me to identify an adaptation in my skills as well as to gain a greater understanding of how the needlework was produced. By including a remaking exercise, I understood better how the needlework would start to take on dirt from hands, the need to keep hands clean while stitching, to keep both the piece clean but also to keep the needle free from “stickiness” that might hinder working with it. The exercise made me consider the body position of the stitchers and how this might affect their bodily warmth. Being either too hot or too cold could impact on the quality of the work produced. To complete the work, I had to work to a finer scale which required greater concentration along with smaller and finer hand eye co-ordination. My skill at working at this scale was newfound and improved the longer I remained on the task. Before I started the remaking exercise, I had not envisioned that the task would fine tune my skills as much as it did. I had expected the task to challenge my understanding of how it felt to stitch the needlework, but I had not expected to have to “learn” how to stitch to this scale as the stitch is a basic one that I have used for many years. The reflection on how my skills had changed caused to me consider even more the highly specialised skills of the girls within the orphanage. By being reflective the remaking experience went beyond my own thoughts and experiences to one that could be analysed in relation to the reading and other research. It was a highly effective method bringing a greater understanding of experience of the girls and has added greatly to the plausibility of a coherent narrative. I cannot “prove” this cultural experience of remaking is the same as the girls in the orphanage, I would never expect it to be the same, but I have accessed some of the materiality of the object and the physicality of making the needlework, being attentive to many of the issues. It has allowed to seek the greater experience in the personal experience.

The need to engage with the artefacts was one of the key themes I portrayed in the exhibition, to be able to handle the needlework I had produced, to handle the christening gowns, and so examine the stitches and acknowledge the power of the artefact to communicate an historical account. By curating the exhibition, I had to distil and focus my research into a form of communication appropriate for the space. It was successful in reframing the needlework as an important artefact relating directly to the social history of Cheltenham and away from it as a decorative item. My

interventions around the building elevated the labour and class relations between some of the female household members and vividly portrayed the labour of the lady's maid. They also demonstrated the intimate and specific nature of the tasks that were undertaken to ensure the efficient running of the middle-class home. The interventions were successful in representing these spaces as places of working-class labour and not being limited in its spatial elements to being "below stairs." The exhibition connected well with audiences due to its tangibility and the opportunity to see the museum through a different lens. It was a way to access non-verbal knowledge and use visual literacy to inform the audience on a local story that many were unfamiliar with. My research was strengthened by understanding how I would communicate with a museum audience. As a future method, it is not practical to produce an exhibition with each piece of research but the methods I used to consider how I would communicate would be invaluable in other forms of presentation.

I have had opportunity to share the work with others, through talks and the exhibition, trying to ensure that my narrative is grounded in the "facts" that prioritise the needlework and the girls who made them. For many people, the moment of connection has been when an orphan is named, Mary Gillet, when I have told her story through the public documents that remain. For many people, their imagination was fired when they had a character to pin their thoughts onto, to attach the artefact to. Whilst the genealogical approach was not central to my research methods, and it did not inform my own connection to the training and labour of sewing, this account was successful in engaging audiences.

The synthesis of the methods I had used throughout the research created a rich form of historical narrative. In producing my own narrative, I have worked with the chronology written by Shorey-Duckworth and in comparing both works, it leads me to consider which is the more "accurate." Each uses the 19th century documents, as White phrased (1984 p4) in a "proto-scientific" way believing that they accurately portray the values and society of the day. I have needed to ensure that I bring an element of reflexivity to examine my own conclusions when reading the documents and constructing the narrative. My understanding of the empirical material would have been formulated through my own interpretation, there will be aspects that I do not "see" or comprehend, and a need to investigate what the document cannot say. I am aware that the narrative will never be complete, however, I have constructed an

account that has brought people closer to the working-class girls who produced the needlework.

As I moved through the methods, I was aware of my own positive confirmation of the ideas that I had, and aware that I should be staying in a "theoretical" mindset and trying to avoid overusing my imagination. I must also consider how robust my methods have been to produce an historical account. Davidson (2019 p339) states that "experimental history is equally valid as an approach".

The historical accounts I have created have a plausibility that I feel is strong. However, I cannot rely on my own "feeling," I need to understand further how to validate plausibility. The historian Seixus (2016) explores the concept of Rüsen's Triftigkeit or Validity, produced by Rüsen the German philosopher. Seixus cites three forms of validity, to ensure that a narrative is plausible.

The first Seixus calls empirical or evidential validity, which is to use a variety of sources, analysing their usefulness. This fits the model used on the archival record. It involved applying theory to the documents and 19th century sources.

The second form of validity Seixus lists is normative plausibility, which is to see how it fits with the agreed norms of accepted history. I used this approach with the production of a public exhibition allowing it to be challenged and discussed by a wide variety of visitors. I also took the research out to stitching groups, local history groups, spoke publicly via a popular textiles podcast and published the work in a national magazine to provoke conversations about the nature of the research.[10] The plausibility of narrative is based on how well it concurs with our understanding of the past. There will be many variations and I have produced only one, but in making it public I am investigating how it fits into the public's perception of the orphanage and its history.

The third strand of Seixus' theory of validity is that of a narrative plausibility, that people in the past behaved and had similar motivations as we do, that there are typical principles that can be related to how we behave today and how people behaved then. Here the practice led research allowed me to connect with those behaviours. My knowledge as a maker understood the continuity between makers

[10] The podcast is available at https://hapticandhue.com/samplers-and-stories/.
Embroidery Magazine Jan/Feb 2024 "The life of a lady's maid"

separated by time. It allowed some rational understanding of the girls who made the needlework. All the methods I used contributed to producing the hidden narrative, to recover that history behind the production of the needlework. Each of these approaches brought a different aspect to the narrative, each enhanced on the work of others. It would have been impossible to write the cultural biography without the archival research to understand the context of the institution. The remaking task required close study of the artefacts to understand the skills needed.

The research process was highly empowering, to choose my own methods and develop methods that pushed my research on the narrative of the orphanage. This combination of methods is now an essential tool when I see needlework and artefacts in museums and collections. I can come to my own analysis that is focused on the stylistic decisions on materials and imagery that the maker chose and combine it with the historic narrative. To give an example of this, and to demonstrate the potential for further research, I visited the Whiteland's College Archive at the University of Roehampton to see the work produced by the young adult pupils of Kate Stanley in the late 19th century. It made a fascinating contrast to the needlework of the University of Gloucestershire Archive, produced by teacher training students. Future research could investigate the techniques and methods taught in these institutions to further understand the reach of hegemony within an institution and to investigate how this may have impacted on the design of the needlework under Stanley's teaching.

Bibliography

A Lady (1975). *Workwoman's Guide: Containing Instructions to the Inexperienced in Cutting out and Completing Those Articles of Wearing appare, &c. ...* Doncaster: Bloomfield Books & Publ.

Adams, T.E., Linn, S. and Ellis, C. (2015). *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research*. Oxford; New York Oxford University Press.

Adamson, G. (2022). *CRAFT: an American history.* S.L.: Bloomsbury.

Alamy Stock Images (2018). *Engraving depicting a sewing class at the Ladies Charity School, Powis Gardens, Notting Hill, London, founded in 1702 Stock Photo - Alamy*. [online] www.alamy.com. Available at: https://www.alamy.com/engraving-depicting-a-sewing-class-at-the-ladies-charity-school-powis-gardens-notting-hill-london-founded-in-1702-image377040791.html?imageid=399B4E63-540E-48F1-ADE0-00DA65DB7B5C&p=75935&pn=1&searchId=f41feabf297e2732e4bded9086f87bdc&searchtype=0 [Accessed 6 Apr. 2024].

Alexander, L. (1999). Creating a Symbol: The Seamstress in Victorian Literature. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, [online] 18(1), pp.29–39. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.2307/464345.

Alford, M. (1886). *The Project Gutenberg eBook of Needlework as Art, by Lady M. Alford.* [online] www.gutenberg.org. Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/30472/30472-h/30472-h.htm [Accessed 1 Feb. 2024].

Alvesson, M. and Sköldberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive Methodology New Vistas for Qualitative research.* Los Angeles Sage.

Ardener, S. (1975). *Perceiving Women*. London: Malaby Press.

Bank of England (2023). *Inflation Calculator*. [online] Bank of England. Available at: https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator [Accessed 9 Feb. 2024].

Beeton, I. (1861). *The Book of Household Management Isabella Beeton*. [online] Wellcome Collection. Available at: https://wellcomecollection.org/works/fvdfypma/items?canvas=3 [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024].

Berger, A. (2014). *What objects mean: an introduction to material culture*. Walnut Creek, Ca: Left Coast Press.

Bible Hub. (n.d.). *Proverbs 12:4 - Loving Discipline and Knowledge*. [online] Available at: https://biblehub.com/proverbs/12-4.htm [Accessed 17 Jan. 2024].

Bible Hub. (n.d.). *Psalm 27:10 Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.* [online] Available at: https://biblehub.com/psalms/27-10.htm [Accessed 17 Jan. 2024].

Bible Hub. (n.d.). *Psalm 119:15 - Your Word is a Lamp to My Feet*. [online] Available at: https://biblehub.com/psalms/119-15.htm [Accessed 17 Jan. 2024].

Biggs, M. and Karlsson, H. (2012). *The Routledge companion to research in the arts*. London: Routledge.

Boos, F. (2015). *'The Education Act of 1870: Before and After'.* [online] https://branchcollective.org/. Available at: https://branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=florence-s-boos-the-education-act-of-1870-before-and-after.

Brain, T. (2014). Stitching a Life, Telling a Story: Sewing in Jane Eyre. *Women's Writing*, 21(4), pp.464–487. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2014.880297.

Bronte, C. (2014). *Jane Eyre*. [online] Available at: https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119-2014-04-09-Jane%20Eyre.pdf [Accessed 10 Apr. 2024].

Brontë, C. (1895). *Shirley*. [online] *Google Books*. Smith, Elder, & Company. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Shirley/aBLEhoIhrtUC?hl=en&gbpv=1 [Accessed 6 Mar. 2024].

Browne and Wearden (1999). *Samplers from the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London: V & A Publications.

Browne, J. (1807). *Guide to Cheltenham*. Cheltenham: Glos Heritage Hub ref B313/55585GS.

Burman, B. (2023). *The Point of the Needle*. Reaktion Books.

Burman, B. and Fennetaux, A. (2020). *The pocket: a hidden history of women's lives, 1660-1900*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Burman, B. and White, J. (2007). Cotton, Consumption and Domestic Economy. In: J. Batchelor and C. Kaplan, eds., *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Candy, L. (2006). *Practice Based Research: A Guide*. [online] Available at: https://www.creativityandcognition.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/PBR-Guide-1.1-2006.pdf [Accessed 10 Apr. 2024].

Carroll, T. (2020). *Lineages and Advancements in Material Culture Studies*. Routledge.

Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Cheltenham Chronicle (1834). 30th October. p3 column 3.

Cheltenham Chronicle (1839). Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum. 31 Jan., p3 column 4.

Cheltenham Examiner (1844). Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum -Old School of Industry. 29 Jan. p2 column 4.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1829). Female Orphan Asylum. 30 Nov. p2 column 3.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1830a). 10 May, p2 column 4.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1830b). 6 Sep. p2 column 3.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1830c). 6 Sep. p2 column 2.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1833). 26 Aug. p2 column 3.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1835). 12 Jan. p1 column 5.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1843). Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum- Old School of Industry. 23 Jan. p2 column 5.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1844). 4 Nov. p2 column 5.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette (1867). Female Orphan Asylum. 26 Jan. p4 column 4.

Cheltenham Local History Studies Library (1851). *the Report of the Committee of Superintendence of the Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum 1851*.

Cheltenham Local History Studies Library (1852). *The report of The Committee of Superintendence of the Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum 1852*.

Cheltenham, St Mary parish records Vestry minutes, 1794-1822. (n.d.). Gloucestershire Heritage Hub and Archives.

Cole, N.L. (2020). *How the Ruling Class Maintains Power Using Ideas and Norms*. [online] ThoughtCo. Available at: https://www.thoughtco.com/cultural-hegemony-3026121.

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. (2015). *Sampler (England)*. [online] Available at: https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/objects/18727651/ [Accessed 31 Jan. 2024].

Crehan, K. (2016). *Gramsci's Common-Sense Inequality and Its Narratives*. Duke University Press.

Cullwick, H. and Stanley, L. (1984). *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick, Victorian Maidservant*. Virago.

Davidoff, L. and Hall, C. (2013). *Family Fortunes*. Routledge.

Davidson, H. (2019). The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as an Academic Practice. *Fashion Theory*, 23(3), pp.329–362. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1080/1362704x.2019.1603859.

Davis, W. (1821). *Hints to Philanthropists; or a Collective view of practical means for improving the condition of the poor and labouring classes of society*. [online] *Google Books*. Wood, Cunningham & Smith. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/_/Iw0SVcXNhwMC?hl=en&gbpv=1 [Accessed 24 Jan. 2024].

Delamont, S. and Duffin, L. (2013). *The nineteenth-century woman: her cultural and physical world*. London; New York: Routledge.

Digital Maryland (n.d.). *May the Blessings Flyer.* [online] collections.digitalmaryland.org. Available at: https://collections.digitalmaryland.org/digital/collection/mdbv/id/226/rec/1 [Accessed 6 Mar. 2024].

Dolan, A. and Holloway, S. (2016). Emotional Textiles: An Introduction. *TEXTILE*, 14(2), pp.152–159. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1080/14759756.2016.1139369.

Drazin, A. (2020). The Object Biography. In: *Lineages and Advancements in Material Culture Studies.* Routledge.

Durrans, B. (1988). The Future of the other. In: *Museum Time Machine*. Routledge.

Dyer, S. (2024). *Labour of the Stitch*. Cambridge University Press.

Edelstein, T.J. (1980). They Sang ‘The Song of the Shirt’: The Visual Iconology of the Seamstress. *Victorian Studies*, [online] Vol 23(No 2), pp. 183-210. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3827085 [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024].

Education commission of Great Britain and University of California Libraries (1861). *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of popular education in England*. [online] *Internet Archive*. London: H.M. Stationery off. Available at: https://archive.org/details/reportofcommissi01grea/page/188/mode/2up?q=+exertion [Accessed 24 Jan. 2024].

Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. and Bochner, A.P. (2015). AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: AN OVERVIEW. *DOAJ (DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals)*.

Feller, E. (2011). *Micheal & Elizabeth Feller - the Needlework Collection 2*. Needleprint.

Finch, E. (1855). *The Sampler, a System of Teaching Plain Needlework in Schools*. [online] *Google Books*. Rivingtons, Waterloo Place. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Sampler_a_System_of_Teaching_Plain_N/e0ACAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024].

Fleming, E.M. (1974). Artifact Study: A Proposed Model. *Winterthur Portfolio*, 9, pp.153–173. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1086/495828.

Gapps, S. (2009). Mobile monuments: A view of historical reenactment and authenticity from inside the costume cupboard of history. *Rethinking History*, 13(3), pp.395–409. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1080/13642520903091159.

Gloucestershire Heritage Hub (1837). *The report of The Committee of Superintendence of the Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum and School of Industry.* D2025/Box41/Bundle8 (part).

Gloucestershire Heritage Hub (1847). *Ballot papers for election 1847 and 1848.* CW/63G360/CE.

Gloucestershire Heritage Hub (1892). *The report of The Committee of Superintendence of the Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum 1892*.

Gloucestershire Heritage Hub Cheltenham, *St Mary* parish records *VESTRY* AND PCC *Vestry* and PCC minutes Vestry meetings 1636-1725, 1636-1896

Gorham, D. (2013). *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*. London; New York: Routledge, Cop.

Graham, E.J. (2013). *The Multivalency of Sensory Artefacts*. [online] Available at: https://fass.open.ac.uk/sites/fass.open.ac.uk/files/files/classical-studies/Senses_Abstracts2013.pdf [Accessed 8 Nov. 2022].

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, [online] 14(3), pp.575–599. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066.

Harris, S. (2020). The sensory archaeology of textiles. In: J. Day, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Sensory Archaeology*. Routledge.

HathiTrust. (2022). *The Quiver: an illustrated magazine for Sunday and general reading v. 2-3 (Dec. 1885-Dec. 1886).* [online] Available at: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433082320346&seq=566&view=2up [Accessed 6 Apr. 2024].

Head, R.E. (1922). *The Lace & Embroidery Collector*.

Higginbotham, P. (n.d.). *The Workhouse in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire*. [online] www.workhouses.org.uk. Available at: https://www.workhouses.org.uk/Cheltenham/#google_vignette.

Hiley, M. (1979). *Victorian Working Women*. Moyer Bell Ltd.

Hofer, M.K. (n.d.). *Cross-Stitched History: Artistry and ambition in Christina Arcularius Tree of Knowledge sampler*. [online] Commonplace. Available at: https://commonplace.online/article/cross-stitched-history/ [Accessed 7 Mar. 2024].

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2016). Counting Visitors or Visitors who count? In: *The Museum Time Machine*. Routledge.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1992). *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London New York Routledge London New York Routledge.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2013). *Museum, Media, Message*. Routledge.

Huish, M. (1900). *Samplers and Tapestry Embroideries*.

Humphrey, C. (2017). *Sampled Lives. Samplers from The Fitzwilliam Museum*. Fitzwilliam Museum Enterprises Ltd.

Humprey, C. (1998). *Fitzwilliam Museum Handbook- Samplers*. Cambridge University Press.

Hymnary.org. (n.d.). *Where shall the child of sorrow find*. [online] Available at: https://hymnary.org/text/where_shall_the_child_of_sorrow_find [Accessed 17 Jan. 2024].

Internet Archive (1890). *The Sunday Magazine 1890: Vol 26*. [online] *Internet Archive*. Out-of-copyright. Available at: https://archive.org/details/sim_sunday-magazine_1890_26/page/232/mode/2up [Accessed 6 Apr. 2024].

Jeffrey, D. (2004). *Experiential and experimental archaeology with examples in iron processing*. [online] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeo-metallurgical-studies/. Available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeo-metallurgical-studies/sites/archaeo-metallurgical-studies/files/iams_24_2004_jeffrey.pdf [Accessed 16 Jan. 2024].

Jenkins, K. and Muslow, A. (2004). *The Nature of History Reader*. London; New York: Routledge.

Kidwell, C. (1979). *Cutting a Fashionable Fit*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Kiely, A. (2020). *Edith Standen – American Monuments Woman*. [online] A Scholarly Skater. Available at: https://ascholarlyskater.com/2020/04/24/edith-standen-american-monuments-woman/ [Accessed 1 Feb. 2024].

King, K.R. (1995). Of Needles and Pens and Women's Work. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 14(1), p.77. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.2307/464249.

King, W. (1709). *Useful transactions in philosophy, and other sorts of learning. January - September 1709.* [online] *Internet Archive*. London: Printed for Bernard Lintott ... Available at: https://archive.org/details/s1id11857700/page/n11/mode/2up [Accessed 1 Feb. 2024].

Kopytoff, I. (2014). The Cultural Biography of Things: commoditization as process. In: A. Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of things Commodities in Cultural Perspective.* Cambridge University Press.

Krancberg, S.K. (1986). Common Sense and Philosophy in Gramsci's 'Prison Notebooks.' *Studies in Soviet Thought*, pp. 163-181.

Kwan, S.C. (2012). Chong Kwan, S. (2012) 'Drawing on Jules Prown's material culture method of object analysis to investigate sensory engagement with everyday dress' in Lifter, R. ed. Working Papers in Fashion Studies 2. London: London College of Fashion. *www.academia.edu*. [online] Available at: https://www.academia.edu/9402461/Chong_Kwan_S_2012_Drawing_on_Jules_Prown_s_material_culture_method_of_object_analysis_to_investigate_sensory_engagement_with_everyday_dress_in_Lifter_R_ed_Working_Papers_in_Fashion_Studies_2_London_London_College_of_Fashion [Accessed 16 Jan. 2024].

La, T. and Gray, J. (1968). *What is Called Thinking?* [online] Available at: https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Heidegger_What_Is_Called_Thinking.pdf.

Leavy, P. (2015). *Method meets art: arts-based research practice*. New York; London: The Guilford Press.

Leavy, P. (2019). *Handbook of arts-based research*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Lee, J. (1834). *A New Guide to Cheltenham, and its environs. [With maps.]*. [online] *Google Books*. John Lee. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/A_New_Guide_to_Cheltenham_and_its_environs/-LZYAAAAcAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1 [Accessed 24 Jan. 2024].

Liddchi, H. (2013). The Poetics and Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures. In: *Representation Cultural Representations and Signifying Practice*. Sage.

Little, B. (1952). *Cheltenham*. Cheltenham: Batsford Books.

Lumley, R. (2016). *Museum Time Machine: putting cultures on display.* Taylor & Francis.

Macdonald, S. (2011). *A companion to museum studies*. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Malcom Davies, J. (2023). Structuring reconstructions: Taking a systematic approach to scholarly experimentation. In: *Making Historical Dress Network.* Replicas, Reconstructions, and Recreations.

Marshall, Y. and Gosden, C. (1999). *The Cultural Biography of Objects*. London: Routledge.

Mason, R. (2006). Cultural Theory and Museum Studies. In: S. Macdonald, ed., *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Blackwell.

Mason, A. (2018). *Auction Report: Exceptional sampler causes a stir*. [online] Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard. Available at: https://www.wiltsglosstandard.co.uk/news/17283089.auction-report-exceptional-sampler-causes-stir/ [Accessed 10 Apr. 2024].

McNiff, S. (2019). Philosophical and Practical Foundations of Artistic Inquiry: Creating Paradigms, Methods, and Presentations Based in Art. In: P. Leavy, ed., *Handbook of Arts-Based Research*. Guilford Press.

Mercier, D. (2020). Looking at Things. In: T. Carroll, A. Walford and S.W. Walton, eds., *Lineages and Advancements in Material Culture Studies*. Routledge, pp.129–145.

Mida, I. and Kim, A. (2018). *The dress detective: a practical guide to object-based research in fashion*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

Middleton, S. and University of California Libraries (1838). *Pompeii, a didactic poem;* [online] *Internet Archive*. Cheltenham: Wight. Available at: https://archive.org/details/pompeiididacticp00midd [Accessed 24 Jan. 2024].

Morton, A. (1988). Tomorrow's Yesterdays. In: *The Museum Time Machine*. Routledge.

Nadzeika, B.-L. (2021). *Mabel Herbert Urner: Collecting Needlework in Fiction and in Fact*. [online] PieceWork. Available at: https://pieceworkmagazine.com/mabel-herbert-urner-collecting-needlework-in-fiction-and-in-fact/ [Accessed 1 Feb. 2024].

Nimkulrat, N. (2010). Material inspiration: From practice-led research to craft art education. *Craft Research*, 1(1), pp.63–84. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1386/crre.1.63_1.

Norfolk.gov.uk. (2024). *Voluntary organisations and schools - Archives*. [online] Available at: https://www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/education/education-in-norfolk/voluntary-organisations-and-schools.

Olsen, B. (2003). Material culture after text: re-membering things. *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, 36(2), pp.87–104. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1080/00293650310000650.

Outram, A.K. (2008). Introduction to experimental archaeology. *World Archaeology*, 40(1), pp.1–6. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1080/00438240801889456.

Parker, R. (2019). *The subversive stitch: embroidery and the making of the feminine*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

Phillips, J.G. (1930). A Special Exhibition of Samplers. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 25(4), p.100. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.2307/3255827.

Platts, A. and Hainton, G. (1954). *Education in Gloucestershire: A Short History.* Glos County Council.

Poulos, C.N. (2021). *Essentials of autoethnography*. Washington, Dc: American Psychological Association.

Prochaska, F.K. (1977). Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth Century England. *Journal of British Studies*, [online] 16(2), pp.62–84. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/175360?seq=10 [Accessed 16 Jan. 2024].

Prown, J.D. (2001). *Art as evidence: writings on art and material culture*. New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press.

Prown, J.D. (1982). Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method. *Winterthur Portfolio*, 17(1), pp.1–19. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1086/496065.

Purvis, J. (1989). *Hard lessons: the lives and education of working-class women in nineteenth-century England*. Cambridge: Polity.

Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor. (1814). [online] *Google Books*. Society. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Reports_of_the_Society_for_Bettering_the/xywMAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=The+Reports+of+the+Society+for+bettering+the+condition+and+increasing+the+comforts+of+the+poor.+vol+6&printsec=frontcover [Accessed 24 Jan. 2024].

Richmond, V. (2014). *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth Century England*. Cambridge University Press.

Ring, B. (1993). *Girlhood embroidery: American samplers & pictorial needlework, 1650-1850*. New York: A.A. Knopf.

Rosner, I. (2021). *Episode 10*. [online] Sew What? Available at: https://sewwhatpodcast.com/episode-10/ [Accessed 7 Mar. 2024].

Ruskin, J. (n.d.). *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain (Volume 1 of 8)*. [online] www.gutenberg.org. Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/59456/59456-h/59456-h.htm [Accessed 7 Mar. 2024].

Samuel Young Griffith (1826). *Griffith's New historical description of Cheltenham and its vicinity*.

Schlereth, T. and Ames, K. eds., (1985). *Material Culture*. University Press of Kansas.

Schlereth, T.J. (1999). *Material culture studies in America*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira Press.

Scott, R. (2006). *Stitched in Adversity*. Witney Antiques.

Scott, R. (2019). *Historic Samplers 1700-1900*. Witney Antiques.

Scrivener, S. (2011). Transformational Practice: on the place of material novelty in artistic change. In: M.K. Biggs and H. Karlsson, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. Routledge.

Seixus, P. (2016). *In Search of Narrative Plausibility - Public History Weekly - the Open Peer Review Journal*. [online] Public History Weekly. Available at: https://public-history-weekly.degruyter.com/1-2013-9/4-2016-41/in-search-of-narrative-plausibility/ [Accessed 29 Jan. 2024].

Sennett, R. (2008). *The Craftsman*. London: Penguin.

Shorey Duckworth, J. (1999a). *Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum*. Privately published. Gloucestershire Archives pamphlet series Finding reference PR14.10GS.

Shorey Duckworth, J. (1999b). The Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum. *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol 117, pp.141–149.

Standen, E.A. (1958). First Efforts of an Infant's Hand. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, [online] 17(3), pp.92–99. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.2307/3258282.

Stanley, K. (1883). *Needlework and cutting out*. [online] *Google Books*. Standford. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Needlework_and_cutting_out/Oj8CAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1 [Accessed 1 Feb. 2024].

Stone, E. (1843). *The Young Milliner*. [online] *Google Books*. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_young_milliner/RFhpAAAAcAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1 [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024].

Strobel, H. (2022). *Mary Linwood | Celebrated Fiber Artist of 18th-century Britain*. [online] Art Herstory. Available at: https://artherstory.net/mary-linwoods-balancing-act/.

Sydney, R. (1997). *The Rev. Francis Close and the Foundation of the Training Institution at Cheltenham 1845-78*. [Thesis] Available at: The Rev. Francis Close and the Foundation of the Training Institution at Cheltenham 1845-78 [Accessed 17 Jan. 2024].

Tallis, R. (2019). *Hand*. Edinburgh University Press.

Thatch, A. (2019). Craft. *Textile History*, 50(2), pp.244–248. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.1080/00404969.2019.1655939.

The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine 1862 - 1868: Vol 7. (1862). [online] *Internet Archive*. Out-of-copyright. Available at: https://archive.org/details/sim_englishwomans-domestic-magazine_1862-1868_7/page/179/mode/2up?view=theater [Accessed 24 Jan. 2024].

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (n.d.). *Sampler | Nasca*. [online] Available at: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/313093 [Accessed 16 Jan. 2024].

The National Archives (2019). 1833 Factory Act. *Nationalarchives.gov.uk*, [online] 1(1). Doi: HTTPs://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/default.htm.

The Victoria History of the County of Gloucester, Vol. 2. (1899).

Tonna, C.E. (1844). *The Wrongs of Woman*. [online] *Google Books*. W. H. Dalton. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Wrongs_of_Woman/S6NmD1wpFNEC?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA2&printsec=frontcover [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024].

Trafford, Robert Sydney (1997). The Rev. Francis Close and the Foundation of the Training Institution at Cheltenham 1845-78. PhD thesis The Open University.

Available at: https://oro.open.ac.uk/54185/1/336983.pdf (Accessed 24th January 2024)

Trollope, F.M. (1844). *Jessie Phillips: A Tale of the Present Day*. [online] *Google Books*. Colburn. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Jessie_Phillips/ngdmAAAAcAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA1&printsec=frontcover [Accessed 18 Jan. 2024].

Turkle, S. (2007). *Evocative Objects: things we think with.* MIT Press.

Victoria and Albert Museum (2016). *V&A · Embroidery – a history of needlework samplers*. [online] Victoria and Albert Museum. Available at: https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/embroidery-a-history-of-needlework-samplers [Accessed 16 Jan. 2024].

Walkley, C. (1981). *The Ghost in the Looking Glass*. Peter Owen Publishers.

White, H. (1984). The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory. *History and Theory*, 23(1), p.1. Doi: HTTPs://doi.org/10.2307/2504969.

Wilderspin, S. (1825). *Infant Education; Or Remarks on the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor, from the Age of Eighteen Months to Seven Years: With an Account of the Spitalfields' Infant School, and the System of Instruction There Adopted. To which is Added, the Latest Improvements, and a List of Schools Already Established, in England*. [online] *Google Books*. Simpkin. Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Infant_Education_Or_Remarks_on_the_Impor/enBYcNGonzcC?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover [Accessed 24 Jan. 2024].

Willem (2017). *Old Samplers and Tapestry Embroideries (1900)*. [online] www.trc-leiden.nl. Available at: https://www.trc-leiden.nl/trc-needles/texts-films-customs-and-event/exhibitions/old-samplers-and-tapestry-embroideries-1900.

WILLIAMS, G.A. (1830). *William's New guide to Cheltenham: ... with a sketch of the surrounding country, and an account of Gloucester and its Cathedral, ... Embellished with accurate maps, and engravings*. [online] *Google Books*. G. A Williams; S. Bettison, Duffield and Weller, E. Roberts, S. C. Harper, E. Matthews, and W. Porter. Available at:

https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/William_s_New_guide_to_Cheltenham_with_a/4pxYAAAAcAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1 [Accessed 24 Jan. 2024].

Appendices

Appendix 1 Definitions of words.

All definitions taken from the OED https://www.oed.com/

reconstruction	The action or process of reconstructing something. The rebuilding of something natural, artificial, or abstract.
re-creation	The action or process of creating again or in a new way; the result of this process, a new creation.
re-enactment	The action or process of reproducing, recreating, or performing again; esp. the action or process of acting out a past event.
re-make	A thing that has been remade; a new version.
replica	A reproduction or facsimile; a copy or model, esp. a model made on a smaller scale.
reproduction	The action or process of forming, creating, or bringing into existence again; an instance of this.

Appendix 2 Biography of Mary Gillet

Mary Gillet appears on the 1847 and 1848 ballot paper. Through the official documents such as census records it has been possible to identify an outline of her life story.

10th Feb1839 Mary Gillet baptised as a child of William and Mary Gillett Innkeepers of the Sherbourne Arms

1841 Census shows William and Mary Gillett and their children Mary aged 2, Hannah aged 5, and twins Esther and Emma.

1844 Death of Mary Gillett- Mother

1847 Mary first appears on a Ballot paper, described as “One of five children their mother dead- their father now reduced to great poverty.”

1848 Mary appears for the second time on a ballot paper with the same biography, with the addition of “Unsuccessful at previous election”.

1851 Census shows Mary as in Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum.

1861 Census shows Mary as a Ladies Maid to Mrs Gertrude Golightly, wife of Rev Golightly at the Rectory in Shipton Moyne.

1871 Census shows Mary as a teacher at Northampton Industrial School for Orphans in Swansea.

1878 Mary marries widower William Wilkinson aged 50 a watchmaker & Jeweller.

1881 Census shows Mary & William Wilkinson and his children from first marriage living in Cottingham.

1891 Census shows Mary, William and sister Esther. Esther did not enter the orphanage, as she was old enough to start domestic service when their mother died. She was a domestic servant and a nursery nurse through her career. William passes away in 1891 after the census.

1901 Census shows Mary and Hannah, another of Marys sisters, both widows living on own means in Cottingham.

1911 Census shows her with her brother William Gillet and his wife in Fulham.

1912 19th December Mary died in Fulham.

Appendix 3 Material Culture Approaches

This documents my own understanding of the processes developed by Prown and Flemming. Initially, I analysed each process to clarify in my mind how each process was structured. I then used the process on two artefacts to see how they worked and prompted in depth and analytical thinking. I then used a duplicated artefact to investigate each process. I chose a duplicated artefact so that I was not using an "outlier" or unusual item that might hinder the process.

The first table was constructed using J. Prown Mind in matter: an introduction to material culture theory and method,

Winterthur Portfolio 17 (1982) pp1-19.

Stage name	Type of action	Action	Notes
Description	Description.	Starts with the object itself, physical dimensions, precision will be decided by investigator. Description of the materials used, e.g. weave. Start with larger features, move to the smaller features. Be accurate in terminology, Guard against external intrusion, assumptions, or conclusions, prior experience.	Avoid over details, use the amount that is relevant to the object. Hard to do, familiar objects. Vigilance is needed in doing this. No stylistic, iconographic analysis
	Analysis of content	e.g. the wording on the piece.	
	Formal analysis	The objects form, lines, areas, colour, light, pattern etc.	
Deduction	Relationship between the object and the perceiver	Interacts with the object, physical use if possible. It must connect to the moment in time	Do the deductions use common sense/reasonableness? If they are hypothetical, they must wait till the next stage.
	Sensory engagement	Touch- feel the weight/mass of the object	

	Intellectual engagement	What does it do, how does it do it?	This will include some of the investigator's previous knowledge – which is acceptable.
	Emotional response	How does it make you feel?	Reactions vary, may not be subjective
Speculation	Creative imagining	Using the investigators common sense with a free association of ideas.	
	Programme of validation	A plan of scholarly investigation of questions posed by the material evidence.	

This is based on E. McClung Fleming. Artifact Study-A Proposed Model. Winterthur Portfolio 9 (1974) pp153-61.

Stage name		Action	Notes
Identification	Description	Information based on the 5 properties of the object. History Material Construction Design Function Description of the aesthetic qualities, materials used, and physical size of the object.	 The history may be unknown. This is not subjective and relies heavily on our own cultural values.
Evaluation		Based on our own cultural standards The design qualities and effectiveness as a tool etc. Factual comparison with other related items.	Cultural standards vary.
Cultural Analysis	Relationship between the object and **its own culture**	Functional analysis purpose/meaning of the object, the functions it performed in its own society. The reasons to produce the item and its intended uses. The unintended characteristics as a communicator of values etc.	
Interpretation	Relationship to the culture of the investigator.	How the object is perceived by the present culture.	

Here are two abbreviated accounts using material culture processes. To explore the process which Prown developed I completed the tasks with one of the available pincushions.

Figure 68 Artefact M Front of Pincushion

Figure 69 Artefact M Back of Pincushion

Figure 70 Artefact M Side of Pincushion

Description

- Analysis of Content
- Formal Analysis

The dimensions of the artefact are approximately 7 centimetres in height, 7 centimetres in length and a depth of approx. 3.8 centimetres. The cloth has been sewn to create a cuboid, but the effect of the stuffing has domed it out greatly.

The cloth is a pale cream, it may have yellowed through age. At each corner there is a pale red, almost pink tassel. There are 8 tassels in all, they appear to have been made from a different thread that was used to stitch the text. It is a plied thread, with some silkiness to it. Each tassel has been attached with a small loose thread of the same type. It does not contain a core to make the tassel but has been made by looping over many threads. The surface is covered in small stitches that form words and patterns. The stitch is a cross stitch. The cloth is a fine woven cotton, The yellowing of the colour is indictive of cotton that is degrading due to age/light condition etc. The threads used in the stitching are red and black. It appears to be a loosely twisted thread. There is no sign of the colour running or bleeding into the cloth it has been stitched on. The thread has been used to create patterns and words on all sides of the artefact, using the grid of the cotton to define the cross stitches.

Figure 71 Artefact M Close up view of stitching.

Each stitch is approximately 1 millimetre wide, going over 2 individual threads of cotton. Each stitch is made up of two stitches, the first placed on one diagonal, the second on the opposite diagonal.

The front contains the words, stitched in red,

Cheltenham
Female
Orphan Asylum
School of Industry
Instituted on the 19 May 1806
Religion is our guide
and Industry
our Support

Separating the date and the motto is a small section of chevron pattern using red and black stitches. The front piece has a similar border chevron pattern around the edge. As the stitches have been sewn the tension caused by the stitching has slightly distorted the weave of the cloth.

The back contains the lettering.

ABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUVW
XYZ&1234567890
abcdefghijklmnop
qrstuvwxyz
From
a Friend

The letters are stitched in alternate colours of two letters at a time in red and two in black. Between each row there is a pattern made up of cross stitch, using the square as a base and repeating the combination of stitches to create the pattern. There is a small crown motif stitched in black on the second lower case row. The “From a Friend” is stitched in black. There is a border, stitched in black around the outside of the wording. The side panels have a band of red stitching in an interlocking “Greek key” style pattern. This is then bordered by two black borders of a chevron pattern. The piece fits into the palm of your hand and has a weight that feels appropriate. It is tightly stuffed so that there is little give in the cushion. It is not clear what the stuffing is other than it is tightly packed. It is not possible to see the stuffing through the cloth but on a similar cushion I have been able to see that below the stitched cloth is another layer of cloth, suggesting that a pincushion was made, and the needlework was attached to the top as another layer.

Deduction

This object fits comfortably in the hand, and I am excited to hold it. I know it is an artifact of the orphanage and this is the first time, with protective gloves on, that I have been able to handle the item. At that moment of holding it, I make my own personal and

emotional connections to the girl or girls who made it. As a maker and stitcher, myself, I am intrigued by the stitch labour of others. This object could be a pin cushion but there is little evidence of it having been well used by pins. Overuse of pins breaks down the fibres and the stitches and this has not happened. It would work well as a pincushion; it is thick enough that the pins would not poke through and blunt or mark a surface. It fits well in the hand and would be easy to carry around, fitting into a sewing box. The cotton has a yellow tinge to it which I know can be a result of too much light. The red and black text threads still seem a strong colour, possibly “Turkey red” which is well known as a strong lightfast dye that was popular at the time. The tassels show signs of fading, they have a pale pink colour and may well have been a stronger colour, when they are opened, the colour looks a little stronger towards the middle. They are a loose twist thread so this could be embroidery silk rather than the “marking” thread used on the letters. The tassels seem a little bit frivolous on such a formal ordered design but add a bit of flamboyance to what is a practical object. It is clear from the way that the tassels were produced that it is a “amateur” made item and not from a passementerie workshop. The item is small, and I can see that there is little excess fabric in the making. My knowledge as a maker suggests this as an object that is easily made with small scraps and leftover fabric. Pincushions were common mementos in Victorian Britain. Adding the date of the establishment of the institution, gives a suggestion of the history of the institution, part of the “establishment.” The phrase “Religion is our guide and industry our support” is used on other Cheltenham Orphanage items so it is a phrase commonly used, and sums up the ethos of the institution, with a focus on religious education and training for work as a domestic service. The stuffing is smooth, under the surface of the cloth, it is not possible to tell with what it is stuffed. It is not possible to see the colour through the cloth, but its weight seems heavy for the size of the object. Whatever is inside has stayed smooth and solid, it has not started to break down or become lumpy, such as saw dust or horsehair can. It does not have dust coming out of it as it would if the sawdust were breaking down over age. It could be “emery” which was common in pincushions and helps to keep the pins sharp as it feels firm and heavy.

Speculation

The use of the alphabet on the reverse seems a little unusual on a decorative pincushion but it connects the piece to the nature of samplers which we traditionally understand to be a way to learn letters for laundry marking. It indicates that it is made by a child, rather than an adult as it indicates the level and quality of education by including letters. The cloth used is fine, the type that might be used for underwear or night garments, which might be left over from other sewing and stitching the girls were doing. In using it, it signals the girls’ ability to use this cloth. The pristine and accurate qualities of the stitching could have indicated the qualities of the girls and their stitching,

that the girls had been trained to be neat precises, focused on details etc. When similar orphanage pieces are compared through measurements and cloth count, it is possible to see that different cloth was used, even though the design is the same. This might suggest a more ad hoc process in choosing the cloth, using the remnants available. The lack of a name might indicate their ability to be anonymous within the household, to know their place in the background of a household. As a fundraising item, it seems a suitable item to sell, to purchase, it is useful around the home. It is the sort of item which people might make today and sell for a small amount.

Questions and investigation.

From a friend – who is the friend? The girls in the orphanage, was it made to be a gift to be given to someone else?

What was life like for the girls at the orphanage? What other forms of stitching would they have made?

How many of these were made? Was each pincushion made by the same person or was they produced by piece work?

Were there any other orphanages that produced items for sale, for fundraising? How does it compare to other orphanage pieces?

Was the girl who made it proud of her work? Was she aware that the quality of her stitching is so high? Did she have any connection to it as an object? How would she feel now to see it treasured and valued? How would she feel that this is her legacy?

Was it a joy to stitch or a drudge to complete?

Was the girl who made it proud of her work? Was she aware that the quality of her stitching is so high? Did she have any connection to it as an object? How would she feel now to see it treasured and valued?

To explore Flemmings process I used one of the Acrostic Samplers.

Figure 72 Artefact B Front of I die to live forever.

Figure 73 Artefact B Back of I die to live forever.

Identification

- Description

History

The samplers were produced in the 1840's to 1850's as part of a curriculum of needlework education that focused on the practical skills needed to become a Lady's Maid in the 19th century. They were most likely sold as a fundraising exercise at a fete, to raise money for the orphanage.

Material

The sampler is made from lightweight cotton, possibly muslin. It is 15cm x15cm. The translucent nature of the fabric means that it is possible to see shapes through it quite clearly. The lettering on the cloth is stitched with a black thread and a red thread to produce the lettering on the piece. The thread is most likely to be "marking thread" The seam has been sewn with a white cotton thread.

Construction

The piece is flat with a seam around the edge of the piece which is visible as a layer on the front. The seam has been sewn on the back; it is disguised by one of the border designs. The stitch used is a "cross stitch" with each stitch going over 1 or 2 of the warp/weft threads. The back reveals that the central design was stitched starting from the central "I" as it is possible to see/read where the threads are carried across the cloth to the next letter. The hem/seam was done towards the end of the construction as it is covered by one of the borders, thus hiding some of the stitching.

Design

The design is focused on a square format, the edge is defined by the seams. Within that is a black zig zag chevron design as the border, within that there is a spiral/Greek key style motif that incorporates the letter of the name of the orphanage, Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum. The spiral design repeats but at the corners the stitcher has had to adjust the sewing to tackle the corners. The border design is black, and the words are in red. This also marks the edge where the cloth has been folded on the back to create the seam. On the front it appears as a slightly different colour cloth, but this is the double thickness of the muslin. The seam on the reverse is hidden with another chevron border that repeats the border on the edge of the cloth. Again, the corners have been adjusted to accommodate the design as the stitcher was producing it. The central letters form an acrostic "I die to live forever" referencing Christian belief in an everlasting after life. The pattern repeats across, down and up the piece to produce many ways to read this phrase. The irregularities at the border suggest that the stitcher had to resolve the pattern herself. It had not been charted out onto paper for her, if it had, there would have been no errors.

Function

From research into the sampler's history, the piece had 3 functions at the time of production. It functions as a decorative piece of needlework; it functions as an example of the needlework that was possibly the culmination of the orphanage needlework curriculum, and it functions as an item which was probably sold as a fundraising item for the orphanage.

Evaluation

(Based on my own sewing standards and knowledge)

This piece of sewing is exquisite, the stitches are minute, and the skill needed to sew this was remarkably high. The scale of the piece is small. It has a similarity with other CFOA pieces and has no motifs or pictorial designs included in it. There is some similarity to other 19th century orphanage pieces in the plainness of the design. However, it varies as it does not contain a name, date, or alphabet as seen in most samplers of the period.

The quality of the stitching as compared to stitching today is very unusual. The nature of the cloth and the size of the stitches would be difficult for anyone other than a well experienced stitcher to reproduce today.

The power of the phrase feels uncomfortable to me when it is understood that it was stitched by a teenage girl who had lost their parent(s). This is a cultural value that has shifted greatly since the 1840s when the objects were produced, and faith was a central part of education for all.

Cultural Analysis

- Relationship between the object and its own culture

These samplers were small mementos, decorative items that were probably bought at a bazaar. They were an opportunity to support the museum through a purchase though we do not know this is how they were sold, though there is evidence of a bazaar. They could also have been given as gifts to supporters of the charity.

They appear to be an item that, as samplers often do, shows the quality of the stitching as completed at the orphanage. They are also a way of expressing the pious nature of the girls at the orphanage, to show the quality of the religious education which the girls received. These items are today called samplers as they conform visually to that set, however, they miss the important characteristic of a name Included is only the name of the institution, it might be more relevant to name this as an embroidery or needlework, part of a larger set that includes all items where a needle is pushed through cloth to make a decorative item. The stitches are limited and do not contain the variety that

would see it part of decorative embroidery. The girls who produced it, would not have identified it as embroidery, they would be more likely to identify it as needlework.

The production of samplers was quite standard across needlework education. Pincushions were a small useable item that would be used in the Victorian home, pins were an integral part of Victorian costume used to secure clothing. They were also part of a sewing box or kit. Pincushions were often given as souvenirs and love tokens.

The materials used are those that were considered appropriate at the time, the societal norms, and the easy availability of the white cotton. It is a particularly fine cotton muslin, with up to 80 threads per inch, or 30 threads per centimetre. This makes an extremely fine surface onto which to work, the stitcher would need to count the threads to place the stitches. The choice of a white cloth seems inconsequential but may well be reflective of a society including more white cloth as an indication of cleanliness and a higher moral seriousness. This choice of cotton reflects the growth of the use of cotton in the 19th century as historians Burman and White (2007) found in their survey of cotton in the 19th century.The traditional role of working-class samplers is to learn letters to mark household linen. It is most likely that such samplers were made in the mid-1840s, and it could be reasonably expected that the use of the alphabets etc were to teach the girls an appropriate lettering which could be used to mark linen for laundering. However, The Workwoman's Guide of 1838, states that “ink is better than silk” with the use of a permanent ink preferred. Once ink is readily available, it may be that the girls still learnt to stitch the alphabet as a “traditional” value that had always been taught, it could also be a performative exercise that established certain suitable behaviours in the girls. Despite the availability of permanent ink alphabet samplers were continued to be stitched in schools up to 1900.

Interpretation

- Relationship to the culture of the investigator

Today these samplers are collectible as examples of 19th century samplers and embroideries, the price of them is currently high due to one high auction price. They are an unusual chance to see the needlework of the working classes of the 19th century and to see what skills the girls had from the orphanage. They are the few remaining items of the orphanage of which most artifacts are now gone. The type of cloth used, the nature of the stitching, the choice of the motto appears to support the values of the orphanage rather than the individual girl.

Appendix 4 Exhibition Planning Process

The initial planning of the exhibition using a structure provided by V and A training – The Principles of Interpretation Jan to Mar 2022

Key messages	Life at the institution	Samplers tell us about the institution not the girls		Importance of learning to sew. Then and now			
Items/artefacts/ resources	Samplers	Pincushions	Annual Reports/census	Handmade Clothing	Sewing manuals	Documents of CFOA/	Piece of modern sewing
Key themes	Characteristics of samplers as indicators of skills and tasks learnt. Contrast of Working and middle-class childhood	Philanthropy Working class/mid class interactions and relations	Charitable and economic issues Moral decision making Hegemony of middle class.	Working class/mid class interactions and relations	Specialist knowledge - “make do and mend” society. Working class/mid class interactions and relations	Daily Life Using archive materials to create a story	Sewing and philanthropy today
Intervention/ display/resource.	Samplers displayed in the nursery. Recording of a Victorian sermon. School timetable/details of school day.	Pincushion Duties of a lady’s maid Images of Lady’s maids	Annual Reports Ballot papers reproduction. Copies for public votes Ball Tickets	Ladies room set to before cleaning. Maids room with pile of mending 19th century clothing displayed inside out to show stitching.	Sewing manuals and samples of work Film of stitching	Photos/illustrations of CFOA and life story of Mary Gillett	Piece of modern sewing Interview with Emma Willis member of staff.

Examples of Interventions and displays that would be integrated with the current museum display.

What?	Orphanage samplers- there are a variety of designs that were produced by the girls at the orphanage. These are rarely signed or dated and appear to have been made for charitable sales to raise money for the orphanage. This contrasts with many samplers that were produced to teach laundry marking. The samplers have a distinctive style and colour scheme but combined would make an interesting collection. I would like to display 5 assorted designs.
Where from?	The Wilson 2 x Matthe Hayle Golden Maxim 1 x alphabet 1 x pincushion. H Dealer 1 x puzzle Sampler 1 x Hymn Sampler Private collector 1 x Acrostic Sampler 1 x pincushion.
Why?	<u>Characteristics of the samplers.</u> These samplers' contrast with our usual visual expectation of samplers, exploring them through a material culture approach; they give an impression of the institution not the individual e.g., small, clean neat, anonymous, pious. All qualities expected of a well-trained member of domestic staff. <u>Moral education</u> Text relating to the origins of the verses also help to understand the values of the institution and the people who ran it. Contrast to middle class childhood.
How?	Large photos of the front and back to show the fineness of the work. Display with individual labels in display cabinet. In nursery to contrast with middle class childhood.
Where?	Display in reception space. In the nursery, on the wall opposite window

What?	Small Commemorative pincushions were also produced. There is much less variety in the design of these. They are small items that did have a practical purpose and may have been more likely to have been “displayed” on a dressing table.
Where from?	My own hand made pincushion.
Why?	Philanthropy This small, neat object tells us about the philanthropy of the women who bought them, the desire to support the institution. Its usefulness points to the social history of women’s clothing and the need for pins. Working- and middle-class interactions The relationship between working- and middle-class woman can be explored through these objects. They suggest the intimate nature of the relationship between a lady’s maid and the lady of the house/the orphans and the subscribers. Many of the orphans were trained to be ladies’ maids rather than other domestic roles.
How?	Displayed on a dressing table in the Ladies bedroom on the dressing table.
Where?	Bedroom

What?	Annual Reports from 1837 and 1892 (Including a price list of mending/clothes construction) Subscribers Voting paper for girls to enter the orphanage 1848. These paper items were produced by the orphanage as part of its local reporting.
Where from?	Digital scan from Gloucestershire Archives, produced as small booklet.
Why?	<u>Charitable and Economic issues</u> These reports give us a contemporary view of the orphanage from the view of the committees that ran it. The sparse and formal documents give us an insight to the values of the institution. It also contains the price list for mending, the money raised etc. These give us a valuable insight to the skills the girls were being taught. They also help to us understand the amount of money raised by the sales and work completed. <u>Moral decision making.</u> The Voting paper is particularly evocative with a small description of each girl being recommended and the boxes for subscribers to make their mark once a decision has been made. A powerful reminder of the impacts that choices can have.
How?	Reproduction Papers to be on the table in the Parlour, for people to handle.
Where?	Front room/parlour

What?	19th century shifts and clothing 19th century sewing ephemera.
Where from?	Museums own. My own items
Why?	Social and class divides To understand the nature of the work completed by the domestic staff in a Household. The daily work comes into the “private” space of the maid.
How?	Displayed as a pile of mending in the maid’s bedroom.
Where?	Upstairs maids’ room.

What?	Reproduction of pages form the Workwoman Guide (1838) Sample garments made from the instructions.
Where from?	From own reproduction copy.
Why?	Specialist Knowledge These books give us a contemporary view on girl's education, helping us to understand what was taught. The language used in them reflects the majority view of what was appropriate for the time. Sensory Archaeology Chance to handle items and see the way in which clothing was produced. Make do and mend society. They also remind us of the nature of the Victorian world where most people needed to know how to mend everyday items.
How?	A handling collection of hand sewn hems and buttonholes, small sample garments from the Workwoman Guide, for close examination of the work. Reproduction of a sewing manual that visitors can examine.
Where?	In the Maid's Parlour by the window.

What?	Photos of the institution. Life story of Mary Gillet and other people involved in the institution.
Where from?	Photographs/images from The Wilson/Archive Census reports images.
Why?	<u>The People at the Orphanage.</u> The chronology of some of the people involved in the orphanage and how their lives overlap. <u>Primary Sources</u> An opportunity for people to engage in their own research of the documents to understand more about how history is researched.
How?	Display board of life story of Mary Gillett Book box archives of the people involved with the orphanage.
Where?	In the Audio-Visual room.

What?	Item of modern clothing from Emma Willis,
Where from?	Emma Willis Workshop in Gloucester (Emma Willis has provisionally confirmed that they will take part)
Why?	<u>Sewing today</u> Using a modern handmade garment to contrast with the garments of the past. Emma Willis has been recognised for her charitable work and so connects well with this exhibition. It may be possible to have some quotes/profile of one of her local employees to contrast with the way Victorian clothing was made.
How?	Displayed on a table.
Where?	In the Music Room.

Appendix 5 Room Guide Booklet

MAKING, MENDING, MARKING BOOKLET_S

Appendix 6 Example of a character book box

Archive book boxes. Images etc

For some of the people involved with the orphanage I made “book boxes” that contained the chronology of their lives through the public documents.

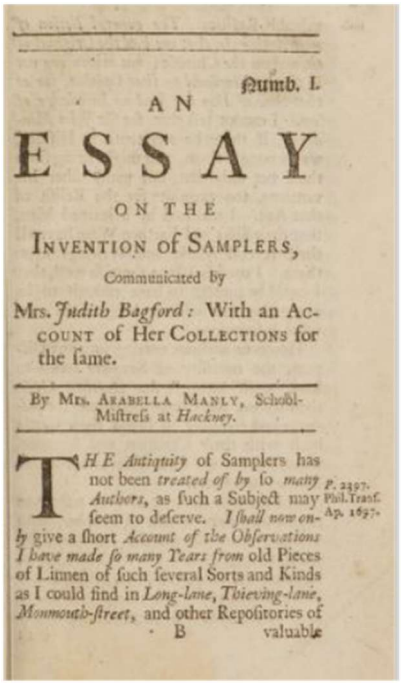
I made these for

- Henry Bromfield (Donor 1830’s)
- Lucy Askew (Committee Member on Management Committee 1830’s)
- Thomas Askew (Secretary and Superintendence Committee Member 1830’s)
- Rev Francis Close (Chair and Superintendence Committee Member 1840’s)
- Mary Gillet (Orphan 1850’s)
- Harriet Elizabeth Phillips (Orphan 1850’s)
- Emma Bruton (Orphan 1850’s)
- Margaret Morrison (Teacher and Orphanage Matron 1860’s)
- Mary Jane Folk (Teacher and orphanage school mistress 1860’s)

Appendix 7 The Cultural Biography of Artefact L sampler through the 20th Century.

Once I had explored the Artefact L the Harper Sampler through its life in the 19th century, I continued with it through the 20th century. It provided a fascinating aspect of history to see how it became a museum object.

To understand the sampler's biography in the 20th century, its useful to contextualise the position of samplers in the 19th mindset. Samplers are examples of stitching and patterns, and in the 19th century few people take interest in them. Some needlework was celebrated, like that of Mary Linwood in the 1830's, but Linwood was from a wealthy family and so her embroidery is an indicator of "wealth and self". This sampler was from an orphanage, it would not compete with the needlework of educated wealthy women. Earlier in 1709 samplers had been ridiculed in the satirical journal directed at Royal Society, and called "Useful Transactions in Philosophy, And other sorts of Learning" (King 1709). Its' articles poked fun at "learning" in essays such as one that translated nursery rhymes into Greek and Arabic, ridiculed the naturalists that noted events such as the dates when nightingales sang. In the March/April edition, the satire turns to samplers, with an essay entitled "An essay on the Invention of Samplers" (King 1709 p1) which mocks the needlework, and it leaves the impression that whatever stitching and design details they have, they are simply way to practice lettering.



Numb. I.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

INVENTION of SAMPLERS,

Communicated by

Mrs. *Judith Bagford*: With an Account of Her COLLECTIONS for the ſame.

By Mrs. ARABELLA MANLY, School-Miſtreſs at *Hackney*.

THE *Antiquity* of Samplers has not been *treated of by* ſo *many Authors*, as ſuch a Subject may ſeem to deſerve. *I ſhall now only* give a ſhort *Account of the Obſervations I have made ſo many Years from* old Pieces of Linnen of ſuch ſeveral Sorts and Kinds as I could find in *Long-lane*, *Thieving-lane*, *Monmouth-ſtreet*, and other Repoſitories of

P. 2397. Phil. Tranſ. Ap. 1697.

B valuable

Figure 74 p1 of An Essay on the Invention of Samplers https://archive.org/details/s1id11857700/page/n11/mode/2up.

Old needlework had been kept in wealthy families for a long time, valued more if it had a connection to a famous stitcher such as the work of Bess of Hardwick kept at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire. As needlework was not accepted by the Royal Academy, it was not considered an art form and so was often kept for sentimental value of women's work. Even when revivals of needlework as art occurred as championed by Marion Alford in her book Needlework as Art (Alford 1886), samplers were not included. Some needlework is kept in families when the name means they can keep a connection to the maker, some is kept for its beauty and fineness, but it is not necessarily kept for its value or collectability.

However, this is starting to change.

John Ruskin had celebrated needlework in his writing Fors Clavigera written from 1871-1885 and Kate Stanley, the needlework teacher at Whiteland's College, had dedicated her book in 1888 on plain sewing lessons to him in return. Kate Stanely (1881) trained girls to be teachers and governess and developed a curriculum for the girls to follow which is outlined in her book.

In 1900 in London at The Fine Art Society, there was an exhibition of samplers and embroidered items. This was a radical idea that took old and ancient embroideries and displayed them within an art context. It took pride in displaying samplers from 1640 to 1900 with work from every decade being shown. It was organised by Marcus B Huish and Mrs. R.E. Head. Marcus was an English barrister, writer and art dealer and an editor of the Art Journal and manager/director of the Fine Art Society. Mrs. R E Head was a collector of embroidery and lace. This was the first exhibition of samplers and included a sampler by the Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum. Huish (1900) published a book "Samplers and Tapestry Embroideries" which celebrated the work of the exhibition and the techniques and designs included. Later in 1922 Mrs. Head published her book "The Lace and Embroidery Collector" which continued the growing interest in old hand-made textiles. As much textile production had become mechanised, this could have been a way to recognise and hold onto some of the old traditions.

At the end of the 19th century the sampler may have been in a junk shop, seen as an interesting piece but with little value. It was here that it could have become damaged, but the fineness of the stitches and quality of the work was still clear.

It was in the 1930's when an American called Mabel Herbert Urner came across the sampler. According to Nadzeika (2021) she was a wealthy author who married Lathrop Colgate Harper in 1912, a businessman and book dealer from an old American family. The couple's life was written about by Mabel Urner in a fictionalised account called Helen and Warren, a popular newspaper serial both in the US and Great Britain.

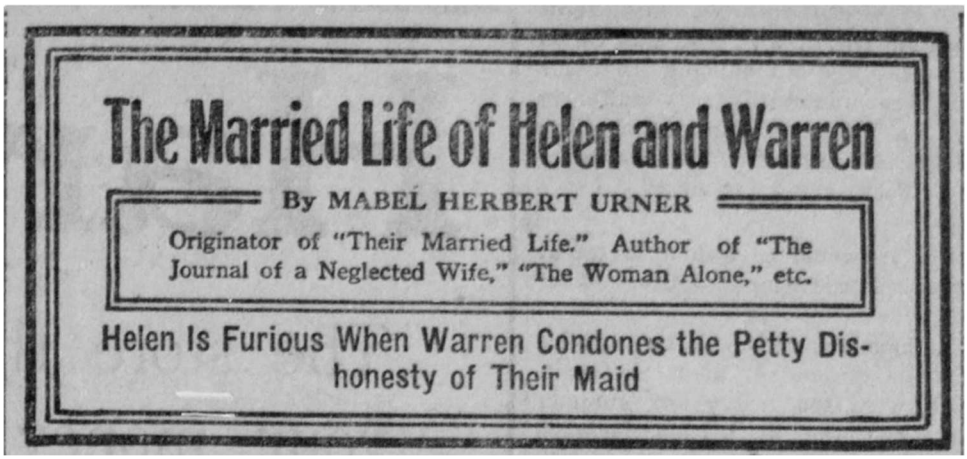


Figure 75 Title of Mabel Herbert Urners Newspaper Column https://pieceworkmagazine.com/mabel-herbert-urner-collecting-needlework-in-fiction-and-in-fact/ (accessed 30/3/24)

Figure 76 Image of Mabel Herbert Urner https://restaurant-ingthroughhistory.com/tag/mabel-herbert-urner/ (accessed 30/3/24)

Lathrope Colgate Harper was a specialist in early books, which brought him over to Europe to purchase and research them. While on these trips, Mabel would explore the backs of the bookshops, flea markets and junk shops to discover old needlework. Maybe she was inspired by the family needlework that Lathrop Colgate Harper had in his home in New York. His family went back several generations, and she saw needlework such as the Tree of Life Sampler produced by Lathrop Harpers grandmother, Christina Arcularius Harper in 1792

Figure 77 Tree of Knowledge Sampler by Christina Arcularius from https://commonplace.online/article/cross-stitched-history/.

The research and shopping trips to Europe were fictionalised into Mabels newspaper serial. Nadzeika (2021) explains that on the 19th of November 1922 in an article titled "Their Ramble Through Amsterdam Ends in a Disappointing Purchase," Mabel wrote about her search for needlework "While Warren looked through some dusty vellum-bound books, Helen explored the dim, rear recesses in her eager search for 'bargains.' 'Have you any old needlework? Samplers, caps or laces?'" Helen had been excited to purchase a sampler she believed was dated 1647 only to have Warren (the fictionalized Lathrope) point out that stitches in the six in the date were cleverly removed; the actual date is 1847.Mabels love of fabrics is clear, and she voices it through Helen. Nadzeika (2021) writes that, on May 30th, 1930, in Mabels newspaper column the description of Helen's excitement on handling cloth "How she loved it! Just the feel of the lustrous old fabrics." Through the 1920's and 30's while traveling through Europe, Mabel amassed many pieces of needlework, with a particular focus on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nadzeika (2021) found in an article in 1924 in the *Washington Post* article that explained "A few weeks ago, Mrs. Harper gave an exhibition of her collection for the Needle and Bobbin club [sic] of New York—a club of lace and other needlework collectors." Five years later the newspaper writes again "[H]er hobby is the collecting of embroidery work of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."

It was on one of these shopping trips that she would come across a sampler made at Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum. Now with some damage, she could have visited a junk shop or a dealer and enquired for old needlework, a bundle of cloth would be presented to her, and she would sift through, seeing some interesting pieces, she would agree a price for the whole amount, may have had it packaged up and sent to her home in New York. She may have had little thought of who made it, she might not ask questions about where the old cloths have come from, she was happy to find beautiful

old cloth. Mabel may have been reminded of the work of Walter de la Mare who wrote of samplers in 1923 in his anthology “Come Hither”. “Even the coarsest of old samplers has that tinge of the romantic which the mere passing of time never fails to confer on anything made by man, and gives in abundance to anything made by a child” (Standen 1985 p93)

On returning to New York, she would have enjoyed opening the parcels that she had bought and spending time looking over them in detail. She would have seen the date of 1806, making the piece appear over 100 years old. She did not pay a lot for these items but could have been pleased with the date and knowing that the piece is old it will remain in her collection. Her collection grew with each buying trip and with it her eye and collectors' passion develop and soon it is a collection that rivals the best. She had the money to collect all that she wanted. The best work may have been displayed in her home, but the Cheltenham Sampler is damaged and stays wrapped up out of the way. Into her old age, her needlework collection are her companions, and she may have looked fondly over it. Nadzeika writes that Mabel and Lathrope Harper were involved with many cultural institutions in New York and enjoyed the exhibitions and events they visited. In 1930, the Metropolitan held an exhibition of Samplers, which could have influenced her desire to leave the pieces to the Museum to expand their collection (Phillips 1930).

In her old age she may have sorted and chose which pieces would go which institution as part of her legacy. The Sampler made by Lathropes’ Grandmother would go to the New York Historical Society, it is part of the history of the family and their life in New York. Many of her other piece’s needlework do not have this connection so she decided a large selection of needlework would go to The Metropolitan in New York. It included in it the Cheltenham Female Orphanage Sampler. It may have already been damaged and does not have the decorative features that many of the earlier pieces do, so it is documented and recorded in the collection with an accession number 57.122.320 indicating it was recorded in 1957.

Sampler as inert museum object

The piece would have been looked over in the museum's stores by Edith A Standen. Kiely (2020) has documented some of Standens life. She was the Associate Curator in charge of the Textile Study Room. She had been one of the “Monuments Men "who were a small group of Allied service men and women who worked to protect monuments, fine art, and archives at the end of World War Two. Officially, this group was known as the Monuments, Fine Art, and Archives Section, or MFAA. She had seen the dangers of art looting and government institutions removing art and valuable objects at a time of crisis.

Figure 78 Edith Standen at the Wiesbaden Collection Point, May 1946. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gallery Archives. The Edith Standen Papers.

Edith understood the value of Mabels collection and ensured that it would be safe, but her focus was on the early embroideries and samplers that the Mabel had bought. She wrote about the collection in her article “First Efforts on an Infants Hand” (Standen 1958) ensuring that the context of the work as examples of learning was understood. Though the qualities of the work are high and anything but childlike, so she writes “But this interest in and respect for childish achievements is a very modern thing indeed and it is impossible to find on a sampler any trace of what we now admire in children’s art” (p92). She then acknowledges that they contain the stylistic qualities of adult work which “except for the craftmanship and, one hopes, some element of personal choice in the motifs” (p92). They are, to all extent, adult work. Maybe she did not quite comprehend the time girls in an orphanage would spend on stitching, that although they were children, at the end of their training they were expected to be the equal of adults in the quality of their work. Edith may have overlooked the Cheltenham piece, as its simplicity would have faded next to the examples of earlier work, maybe she felt that the piece was too damaged for display. It has no direct connection to the narrative that the Metropolitan Museum uses as the focus of its displays. It was safely stored in the storerooms of The Met with little chance of being displayed again.

Sampler as object of Research

However, in the age of the Internet and searchable databases, photographs of artefacts stored away in museum storerooms can bring the sampler back to a place where they can be seen. Researchers can identify pieces and see the work in a way that has not

been seen before. Dr Isabella Rosner, a researcher in embroidery, found a scrapbook of Indian 19th century embroideries in the Church Missionary Society Archive at the University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library and she decided to use this as a focus of her research and an essay that she needed to write. To understand the context of the Indian Samplers, she decided to look at similar pieces produced by girls in England in the 19th century. After an internship at the Met, she was aware of the sampler made at the Cheltenham Female Orphan Asylum. She compared the use of the colour red and the similarities of the design in England and colonial India. Further into her research career, to develop her understanding of embroidery and communicate her passion for the subject she started a podcast to celebrate historic needlework. She returned to her essay and her work on samplers and decided to include it in her broadcast (Rosner 2021). She explored the idea of girls producing work as a method of "othering" and colonising of the girls, to alter their behaviour towards the needs expected norm behaviours of the time with a focus on the words and designs used on the pieces.