

PLAIN SEWING SAMPLES

Needlework was considered an essential part of every girl's education in the 18th and 19th centuries. Girls made miniature adult garments or plain sewing samplers to show their skills as a seamstress to prospective employers, or to display their household accomplishments as a future wife.

11. Examination pieces of plain sewing. Shirt, night shirt and bonnet made by Susannah Gunton in 1858.
12. Lady's shoes made of brocaded silk with matching overshoes or pattens to protect them from mud underfoot. Mid 18th century.
13. Parasol made of lavender silk with a carved ivory handle. 19th century.
14. Two beaded handbags and a coin purse.
Late 18th or early 19th century.

CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

15. Child's white muslin dress, decorated with tucks and frills. Early 19th century.
16. Child's white cambric chemise.
Early 19th century.
17. Boy's linen shirt. Early 19th century.
18. Child's embroidered dress, about 1880. Displayed with white chamois leather slippers.
19. Baby's bonnet made of fine lawn. The crown is made of hollie point, a type of English needlepoint lace often used to decorate babies' clothing. The patterns often show religious motifs. Mid 18th century.
20. Baby's bonnet made of fine lawn with a hollie point insertion. Mid 18th century.

NEEDLEWORK TOOLS

21. Walnut work-box containing a tray with compartments for sewing tools.
Probably English, early 19th century.
22. Pin-cushion with a knitted cover.
Second half of the 19th century.
23. Pair of pin-cushions in the form of shoes.
Second half of the 19th century.
24. Needlebook with a cover of punctured card work
Second half of the 19th century.
25. Needlebook.
Late 19th - early 20th century.
26. Silver head-dress pin found in Clavering. Used by women to fasten simple head-dresses to the hair. The fashion spread from the Netherlands across the North Sea to eastern England.
Stuart period, about 1610 - 1625.

Silver cufflink or button from Ashdon.
Georgian period, about 1715 - 1800.
27. Silver thimble, hallmarked 1904
28. Wooden pin-box in the form of a shoe.
Second half of the 19th century.
29. Wooden pin-box in the form of a boot.
Second half of the 19th century.
30. Thread-winder mounted on a wooden fitment,
19th century.
31. Needlework clamp, with a pin-cushion on top, inscribed 'A Sister's Gift'.
Second half of the 19th century.
32. Two sewing workboxes, one covered with paper and one of leather, decorated with metal fittings.
33. Bone needlework clamp with a reel inserted for thread winding. The clamp would originally have been one of a pair.
Early 19th century.
34. Work-box decorated with quills.
Late 18th - early 19th century.

EMBROIDERY SAMPLERS

Samplers are collections of stitches and patterns. They were originally used, instead of printed books, as a convenient form of reference for embroiderers. By the 19th century, the purpose of samplers was entirely decorative. Designs often included lettering and text worked in cross stitch. They were made by young girls for needlework practice.

36. Sampler made by Martha Smee aged 14 at Toppesfield School, Essex. Dated 1863.
37. Sampler with the initials H W, 1849.
38. Sampler by Eliza Sarah Gurney, 1846.

EMBROIDERY

41. Embroidered picture with raised stumpwork. It depicts Jacob's dream from the Bible, with clouds, sun and moon, buildings and animals. Possibly English from the mid 17th century.
42. Stumpwork casket with raised embroidery on the lid, showing flowers, foliage, animals, a castle and a figure in contemporary costume. 1660-1670.
43. Embroidered picture of roses worked in silks in freestyle stitches called needle-painting. Late 18th to early 19th century.
44. Glove case with satin quilted boards inside decorated with green braid and satin ribbons and bows. 19th century.
45. Gauntlet glove, traditionally associated with Mary, Queen of Scots. The glove is made of kid-skin and embroidered with metal thread. It is believed to have been given to Marmaduke Darrell, Master of the Household at Fotheringay Castle where Mary was imprisoned on the eve of her execution on February 8th 1587.

DECORATION AND TRIMMINGS

As well as hand and machine embroidery, many of the clothes and furnishings in this gallery are decorated with various forms of needlework, such as quilting and smocking.

Ayrshire work is a delicate form of white on white embroidery, usually worked on muslin. It incorporates cutwork, pierced and stiletto work, with embroidery and needlepoint fillings. It was used to decorate babies' robes and bonnets, and women's caps, collars and cuffs.

Broderie anglaise is a form of cut work that evolved from Ayrshire work, though not as delicate. It was much quicker to work, and with the invention of the sewing machine, lent itself to mass production. It was popular for children's clothing, and for scalloped edgings on nightclothes and underwear.

Crochet, tatting and netting were used like lace for edgings and inserts. They were thought suitable pastimes for young ladies. All are formed by looping and knotting fine thread with hooks, shuttles or needles to form patterns.

47. Lucet, used for making cords before this function was taken over by machinery.
Late 18th century.
48. Stilettoes, used for making eyelet holes for broderie anglaise.
Mid 19th century.
49. Child's dress of white lawn with hand-worked broderie anglaise decoration.
Mid 19th century.
50. Two caps decorated with broderie anglaise.
Mid 19th century.
51. Carrying dress for a baby boy made of cotton muslin decorated with Ayrshire embroidery.
About 1820-1850.
52. Two caps decorated with Ayrshire embroidery.
About 1820 - 1850.

SMOCKING, NETTING, TATTING, CROCHET

53. Smock made of brown twill made or worn in Ashdon around 1900.
54. Bone netting needle and gauge,
19th century.
55. Steel netting needles and gauge.
19th century.
56. Netted table mat made of white cotton with a knotted fringe.
Late 19th century.
57. Ivory tatting shuttle.
Second half of the 19th century.
58. Bone tatting shuttle.
Second half of 19th century.
59. Child's dress of white lawn with insertions of tatting.
Second half of the 19th century.
60. Crochet collar made of écru silk.
19th century.
61. Cases for crochet hooks and an ivory crochet hook.
Late 19th century
62. Coin purse of beaded crochet.
Early 19th century.
63. Table mat made from hairpin crochet.
Late 19th century.
64. Black bag of silk buttonholed rings lined with white satin. The crocheted rim is decorated with steel beads and tassels.
Early 19th century.
65. Crochet table mat.
Late 19th century.
66. Baby's bonnet of white cotton gathered into a crochet circle on the crown.
Second half of the 19th century.
67. Calico nightdress with crochet edging, marked F. D. 1884.

MACHINE SEWING

68. Singer treadle sewing machine. This is a lockstitch machine made at Kilbowie, Clydebank in Scotland between 1877 and 1880.
69. Open crotch drawers with machine embroidery on the cuff.
Late 19th century.
70. Machine sewn 'waspie' corset.
Late 19th century.
71. Wanzer sewing machine. This Canadian machine was marketed in England between 1864 and 1886.
72. Chain-stitch machine made by the American Sewing Machine Company about 1875.
73. Wilcox and Gibb's twisted chain-stitch machine. This type of sewing machine was one of the cheapest and most successful and was made until the 1930s. The chain-stitch, unlike other machine stitches, could only be unravelled in one direction. Dressmakers were therefore advised to sew from the waist to the hem, so that skirts would not come apart.

WASHING AND IRONING

Washing was normally done in cold water and the clothes were pounded by a dolly peg or possor. Before soap was readily available the cleaning agent used was lye. This was a mixture of wood ash and water that could also include pigeon or hen dung, bran or urine. Oak ash produced the strongest solution and apple wood produced the whitest wash.

The early smoothing irons were box irons, which were heated with hot charcoals inside or by placing a heated iron 'slug' into the hollow body. Flat irons were popular in the 19th century. They were used in pairs, one being heated while the other was in use. Crimping and goffering irons gave a decorative finish. Electric irons were not widely used until the 1920s and 1930s.

74. Trefoil Patent Washer, made in Halstead, Essex.
Late 19th - early 20th century.
75. Wooden wash-board used with either a wash-tub or a washing tray.
Probably 19th century.
76. Long-handled wooden possor from Essex used for pummelling washing.
19th century.
77. Washing dolly or dolly peg, used to pound and rotate a load of washing.
19th century.
78. Red Star washing machine made by the Canadian company Beatty Brothers. It worked on a mechanised dolly-peg principle. The handle was pulled from side to side to produce rotational movements, 1914.
79. Crimping machine. Used to give a corrugated or crimped finish to caps and collars.
Late 19th century.
80. Flat iron. Late 19th - early 20th century.
81. Goffering or 'Italian' iron used for finishing fine lace edges. A heated poker was placed in the cylinder.
19th century.
82. Goffering iron stand. The pokers are missing.
19th century.
83. Box iron. A heated metal 'slug' was placed inside the iron.
Late 19th - early 20th century.
84. Flat iron.
Late 19th - early 20th century.
85. Bedcover. A patchwork quilt made of pieces of cotton dating from about 1790 to 1890.

MILITARY CASE

1. Copy of a cartoon by an unknown hand from 1861. It apparently shows Saffron Walden Cadet Corps having a snowball fight on The Common. The figures 'on the bench' are Justices of the Peace: Nathaniel Catlin, T. Smith and A. N. Jones. The mare is the mayor: Joshua Clarke, brother of Joseph Clarke who raised and financed the Cadet Corps in 1861. The hare may be John Leverett, a tailor. The meaning of the cartoon is unclear today but presumably it is critical of the authorities, and suggests some scandal.
2. Light Dragoon helmet or 'Tarleton Cap', about 1820. This was probably the helmet of the Haverhill Volunteer Yeomanry Cavalry. This regiment was originally raised by Colonel Burgoyne of Mark Hall, Harlow, and joined the amalgamated 1st Essex Yeomanry Cavalry in 1813.
3. 'Other ranks' jacket of the 1st Essex Yeomanry Cavalry, originally worn by Mr C. Spicer of Saffron Walden. The regiment was disbanded in 1828.
4. 'Other ranks' bell-top shako of the 1st Essex Yeomanry Cavalry, originally worn by Mr C. Spicer, about 1825 - 1828.
5. Volunteer officer's sword . This is a Light Cavalry sword, manufactured in about 1800, possibly carried up to 1828.
6. Sash, cap and haversack, formerly worn by Colour Sergeant Barnard of the 17th Essex (Saffron Walden) Rifle Volunteers, about 1860 - 1865.
7. Photograph of a sergeant of the 17th Essex (Saffron Walden) Rifle volunteers.
8. Corporal's great-coat of 17th Essex (Saffron Walden) Rifle Volunteers with crossbelt and pouch, about 1860 - 1865.
9. Drum of the Saffron Walden Cadet Corps. Inscribed:

PRESENTED BY
JOSEPH MAYER F.S.A.
CAPTAIN COMMANDANT OF THE
LIVERPOOL BOROUGH GUARD
(66th LANCASHIRE RIFLE VOLUNTEERS)
TO
JOSEPH CLARKE F.S.A.
(AS THEIR CAPTAIN)
AND TO THE CADET CORPS OF
SAFFRON WALDEN VOLUNTEERS.

10. Crossbelt with badge and whistle of the Saffron Walden Cadet Corps, worn by Joseph Clarke.
11. Sword presented to Joseph Clarke as Captain of the Saffron Walden Cadet Corps. Inscribed:

"PRESENTED TO CAPT. JOSEPH CLARKE F.S.A.
BY HIS YOUNG FRIENDS
THE CADETS OF SAFFRON WALDEN"
1862

12. Musket with bayonet from 1847. This type of gun may have been used by the Saffron Walden Cadet Corps.
13. Sergeant's uniform, reservist of the 3rd Volunteer Battalion of the Essex Regiment, 1891 - 1896.
14. Helmet of the Essex Volunteer Cavalry, about 1870.
15. Officer's bell-top shako of the West Essex Yeomanry Cavalry, about 1840. This unit was raised in 1830 to help the authorities to deal with popular unrest prior to the Reform Act of 1832. The unit was disbanded in 1877.
16. Officer's full dress helmet of the Essex Volunteer Artillery, about 1865.