



17thC embroidery, 'The Judgement of Paris'. *Tring Market Auctions, Herts. Jan 02. HP: £3,800. ABP: £4,469.*



19thC sailor's woolwork ship portrait, 34 gun 'Ship of the Line', furling sails, decked in review order; harbour & warehousing to foreground, 18 x 21in, original maple frame, glazed. *Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent. Apr 07. HP: £3,800. ABP: £4,469.*



Late 17thC embroidered silk panel. *Dreweatt Neate, Godalming. Mar 06. HP: £2,600. ABP: £3,058.*



George III sampler dated 1814, by Augusta Sophia Munday, with verse, flowers, birds, Adam and Eve, other side with two pockets and a house, animals and flowers, 11in. *Gorringes, Lewes. Mar 09. HP: £1,800. ABP: £2,117.*



Hand embroidered tapestry wall hanging, Arts and Crafts style, cornfield and scrolling acanthus leaves, green ground, floral and foliate border, 407 x 300cm. *Halls Fine Art, Shrewsbury. Mar 08. HP: £1,000. ABP: £1,176.*



Early 19thC silkwork/embroidered picture, young lady with child, 8 x 6.25in, & companion, lady attending a tomb, marked 'Werter', 7.5 x 5.75in, gilt slips/frames. *Diamond Mills & Co, Felixstowe. Oct 06. HP: £500. ABP: £588.*



18thC embroidered frieze of obelisks, flowers, fruit over swags/cartouches, Hogarth frame, 14.5 x 50cm. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Nov 05. HP: £480. ABP: £564.*



18thC silk embroidered picture, 2 cavalry men, their steeds on a rendezvous with a maiden, 11.5 x 14.5in, gilt & black verre eglomise mount, gilt frame. *Dee, Atkinson & Harrison, Driffield. Sep 08. HP: £420. ABP: £494.*



19thC Berlin needlework picture of flowers within a carved and moulded walnut frame, glazed, 26 x 19in. *Tring Market Auctions, Herts. May 04. HP: £354. ABP: £416.*



Framed sampler, a castle surrounded by gardens with birds and figures, letters of the alphabet and other items and figures, by Elisabeth Goodall, dated 1723. *Biddle & Webb, Birmingham. Jan 09. HP: £350. ABP: £411.*

A history and price guide to British embroidery from 1500-1900s

by Zita Thornton

Until the Reformation most embroidery was ecclesiastical in nature. However afterwards, embroidery moved into the home and became an every day part of almost every woman and girl's life. Girls were taught by their mothers or by professional tutors, if they were wealthy. Embroidery was a practical, creative pastime which provided companionship and raised their status. The familiar sampler provided a method for girls as young as eight to practise their stitches whilst learning their alphabet, and the texts and motifs chosen formed part of their education. Turning a seventeenth century sampler over allows us to fully appreciate the skill involved as British samplers at this time were usually reversible.

Embroidery was used to decorate all kinds of flat domestic textiles, including sheets, coverlets, table cloths, and cushions. A surge in house building in the seventeenth century provided more scope for embroidered decorative furnishings to provide comfort and warmth and as a display of the family's wealth and skill. Small functional items such as book covers, needlecases and book marks were also decorated with embroidery. Lavishly embroidered dress items and accessories were worn by men and women, for instance, gloves, sleeves, coifs, stomachers, jackets and skirts. Wealthy households could engage professional embroiderers who produced complicated designs using expensive threads such as metal thread which would reflect the candlelight. One way of identifying these is to look on the reverse, as amateur examples, with more time spent on them, are usually much neater. Some households, such as Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire had their own team of embroiderers. Most amateurs copied their motifs from herbals, natural history books or actual examples, but the wealthy could commission a pattern draughtsman to produce a pattern for a design which could be copied. By the seventeenth century these were printed on to the fabric itself but before then they would have to be copied or transferred on to the fabric by the stitcher. In Europe pattern books were in common usage from the sixteenth century with 150 titles recorded from 1523-1700, but only four titles have been recorded in Britain during the same time, largely due to publishing restrictions.

Pouncing was a common method of transferring a pattern to fabric. This involved pricking the outline, then laying on the fabric and rubbing with soot or charcoal so the pattern would be left behind when the pattern was removed. Another method which allowed more flexibility with scale was to copy a pattern which had been drawn onto squared paper. In the seventeenth century a large number of sewing stitches were used for embroidery, including satin stitches in silk on a silk ground, tent, cross and gobelin stitches on a linen canvas mesh. Special effects were used including appliqué where tent stitches were used on linen for motifs which were then applied to velvet, and stumpwork which created a raised 3D effect using padding. Embroidery could be monochrome in blues, greens and browns and blackwork or polychrome using multicoloured silks, metal threads and sequins. Motifs were based on English garden flowers, birds, beasts and butterflies as a way to bring the garden into the home. Allegorical motifs were popular from 1660-1680. The introduction of chintz from India inspired an amalgam of Eastern and English designs as well as Chinese influences. By the eighteenth century, embroideries were seen as valuable household items, included on inventories. Popular styles from the previous decade continued and there was a fashion for Florentine embroidery. This uses vertical, straight stitches of varying lengths to cover the entire fabric with a running, repeated pattern.

Quilting was popular in the seventeenth century but became an absolute craze in the eighteenth century. Quilting was seen on stomachers, skirts, dresses, coats and baby's layettes. By the 1770s chenille was used, favoured for its vivid colours and 3D effect, but as it was difficult to work it was mostly for professional use. The lighter, more delicate fashion fabrics of the end of the

century were reflected in the same type of embroidery. Tambour work, using a hook to form motifs from running chains was worked in white thread on white muslin. There was massive production of tambour work from the Edinburgh workrooms of Luigi Ruffini, established in 1782. By this time you could also buy embroidered pieces of a garment such as a waistcoat, to be sewn together at home or sent to a tailor.

In the nineteenth century three important things happened in the history of embroidery: the embroidery machine was invented, Berlin woolwork became fashionable and Arts and Crafts designers reacted against these two events.

The first machine invented for embroidery around 1828/29 could only tackle small floral sprigs. However improved quality and scope soon devastated the hand embroidery industry. Around the same time, Berlin woolwork, also called needle painting, using vividly coloured wools dyed in Berlin, introduced at the end of the previous century, became the most popular form of hand embroidery. A design on a coloured chart was simply copied onto canvas so there was little creativity involved on the part of the stitcher.

By the end of the century under the influence of Arts and Crafts designers such as William Morris, freehand embroidery termed Art Needlework, was reintroduced as a popular style. Although based on designs of the past the technique used fine satin and other stitches to produce delicate shading. Designs produced by Morris, his wife Jane and daughter May, as well as others in his company could be purchased as completed items or in kit form. With their help and others such as Burne Jones, the Royal School of Needlework was established in 1872 by Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Helena. Today based at Hampton Court it holds an archive of thousands of images and examples of historic needlework styles.

In Glasgow, at the turn of the century artists such as Jessie Newbery working in the Scottish style popularised by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, his wife and others, were developing the use of appliqué in embroidery once again. This was a speedy new approach for the start of a new century.

Floral motifs in embroidery

Flowers have always been a popular choice for embroiderers. The rose has been used since the earliest embroidery times when it was the heraldic symbol of England in Tudor times, to the stylised rose that was typical of the Glasgow school in the early twentieth century. The Victorians loved to use full blown garden roses, often embellished with beading. Trailing convolvulus or Morning Glory, which lasts only a day symbolised the transience of life made everlasting in embroidery. Pansies, ubiquitous in British embroidery stood for loving thoughts and fond memories. Daisies symbolised forever beautiful and were popular in the late nineteenth century.



Pair of Regency silkwork pictures, embroidered in monochrome, pastoral scenes, one purportedly with Kenilworth Castle, verre eglomise & gilt wooden frames, 17 x 19cm. (2) Rosebery's, London. Mar 06. HP: £300. ABP: £352.



Early 19thC English gentleman's waistcoat, ivory silk fronts embroidered in satin stitch with coloured silks with rose/carnation sprigs, linen back and lining. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet.* Nov 07. HP: £280. ABP: £329.



Pair of late Georgian silk needlework 'En Grisaille', oval panels depicting country houses by river (one possibly Richmond), ovals 9.5 x 11.5in, discoloured, contemporary gilt moulded frames, glazed. *Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent.* Feb 07. HP: £240. ABP: £282.



Silk on linen sampler, 18thC style 'Martha Lloyd made this in 1819', angels, birds & trees around embroidered pastoral scene of a shepherd paying court to a seated lady, with verse, 13.5 x 18.5in. *Brightwells, Leominster.* Aug 06. HP: £220. ABP: £258.



Victorian Berlinwork panel in colours, historical scene of a wounded Knight surrounded by Archbishop & other figures, 26 x 35in, birdseye maple frame and glazed. *Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent.* Feb 07. HP: £170. ABP: £199.



Regency silk/embroidered picture of lady and gentleman washed ashore on an island, ships in the background, 14.5 x 17.75in, unframed. *Hartleys, Ilkley.* Feb 07. HP: £170. ABP: £199.



Georgian painted silkwork picture, oval form embroidered in coloured silks with a young shepherd, 5 x 6in, an early Victorian woolwork picture of a huntsman with his dog, 6in square, and a painted silkwork picture painted with embroidered highlights 'Where are you going to my pretty maid?', 7 x 5.5in. (3) *Hartleys, Ilkley.* Apr 08. HP: £160. ABP: £188.



Late 19thC tambour net flounce, rose/foamate decoration with collection of various textiles, incl. lace and crochet remnants, tablecloths, mats, dusky pink quilted bedspread, tapestry on rosewood footstool, First World War commemorative embroidery, etc, all dating late 19thC onwards. (qty). *Rosebery's, London.* Mar 06. HP: £160. ABP: £188.



Victorian blue silk dress, mandarin collar, button front, pleated edge skirt, button back, embroidered with gold foliage, 3/4 length sleeves. *Hartleys, Ilkley.* Aug 06. HP: £150. ABP: £176.



Rosewood pole screen, thatched cottage & garden in painted & embroidered linen, baluster turned stem with gadrooned collars, screen early 20thC, pole 19thC, 52.5in high. *Hartleys, Ilkley.* Apr 08. HP: £150. ABP: £176.



Victorian petit point embroidery of a girl and parrot, swept rosewood frame, 11in square. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet.* Jul 01. HP: £130. ABP: £152.



Pair of early 18thC satin embroidered shoes, need repairing. *Hy. Duke & Son, Dorchester.* May 08. HP: £130. ABP: £152.



Victorian needlework cushion cover; green parrot, 17in square, modern ebonised frame, glazed. *Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent.* Feb 07. HP: £110. ABP: £129.



Silk embroidered tablecloth, William Morris style. *Black Country Auctions, Dudley.* Sep 05. HP: £56. ABP: £65.



19thC Berlin woolwork picture of a highlander leading a child on a pony, 42 x 54.5cm. *Rosebery's, London.* Apr 07. HP: £25. ABP: £29.