



Ann West Quilt

In January this year, I received a letter from the Victoria & Albert Museum asking the Contributing and Life Members to help save the Ann West quilt from being exported. This quilt was made in 1820 and signed Ann West. It is of a type that was usually made by male tailors, of wool and is unique in having this female signature.

Quilters Newsletter Magazine reported that last June “two telephone bidders drove the selling price of an antique coverlet to a record-breaking £29,640” at Sothebys. And although the buyers’ identity was kept confidential, the seller, Kerry Taylor of Kerry Taylor Auctions, confirmed that the piece was purchased by a museum in the United States. She said that “the quilt was in surprisingly fresh condition given that her client, who inherited the coverlet more than 25 years ago, had kept it folded in a trunk stored in his garage. He sold the piece to pay for himself, his family, and his friends to attend the 2006 World Cup Soccer series.

I found a report to the committee who object to export licenses which gave a lot of information. It said that it was rare that these domestic pieces were

signed or even dated. “This pictorial coverlet bears both a signature and date of 1820, making it the earliest example of an appliqué figurative coverlet in wool, made by a lady, known to survive in Britain. We are not aware of any example of this style in a British collection, nor has such a piece been recorded in any of the standard texts outlining the history of patchwork and quilting in the United Kingdom. It was worked in the Somerset area and was supposed to have a connection with a Warminster house. The family were said to be linked in some way with the Baths of Longleat.” The report concluded “The Ann West coverlet is a unique English textile treasure and every effort should be made to acquire this coverlet for a collection in Britain. Anything less would be a tragedy.”

In February, the V & A website announced that they had managed to acquire the quilt, and it would be on display in the Members’ Room from February 2007 for three months and subsequently featured in the V & A’s major international Quilts exhibition being planned for 2020. I also received a letter thanking me for my contribution, and inviting me to see it on 23rd February, when Sue Pritchard, the curator would talk about it.

It is being displayed in a case – folded so a section about 2 ft x 3ft can be seen. It shows naïve biblical scenes and scenes from daily life (such as children and a kite; what appears to be a chimney sweep) embroidered and appliquéd on blocks about 4” square. The border seemed to have appliquéd fishes. The whole quilt is 87” x 96” (and the QNM website: <http://qnm.com/issue/new/news3901> has a picture of it. It shows there is a large central medallion with a tree surrounded by animals. The section I saw was about 4 rows deep, and half the width, but not the larger biblical blocks; Charming little pictures – it would be lovely to see the whole quilt,

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and one Sue Pritchard said there was more research to be done; to find out about Ann West.

The quilt was in amazing condition, considering it had been stored in a garage for so long, but obviously it would need conservation, and was going to be displayed in the case, revealing different sections, because hanging it would put too much strain on it.

The Quilts exhibition planned for 2010 sounds as though it will be a really major exhibition, with a book to go with it, so that is something to look forward to.

© Margaret Isaacs

Quilts at the Victoria and Albert Museum

A big Thank You to Judith for arranging and organising the 'London Quilter's' visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the afternoon session for our private 'lecture' in the textile department, where we were privileged to see some quilt tops from the museum's collection.

The V&A museum owns 80 Quilts in all, most of them are of English heritage, but only four American items.

At the moment there is not one Quilt on public exhibition at the museum, but the curator told us that an exhibition was planned for 2010/2011. Judging from what we saw during our private presentation, the event should be a feast for the eyes.

The oldest Patchwork Quilt the museum has in storage is from the year 1797. A beautiful masterpiece, made we are sure by an intelligent and educated lady, as the unknown maker embroidered world globes and maps of England and Scotland onto the Quilt. The work is very neat and the pattern design thoroughly thought out with a huge amount of detail overall.

The Quilts we were viewing were donated to the museum and very little is known about them. The fabrics used to sew the Quilts were sometimes the only help for the textile expert to determine the age of the piece.

Many Patchwork quilts of the early 19th century were essentially utilitarian and could be described as 'scrap' quilts, using the fabric recycled from other projects. Despite this, many of them show a high standard of design and execution in the quilting. By far the most popular style of quilts then was a central medallion or a square surrounded by a series of borders, sometimes called a 'frame quilt'.

The first piece unfolded was a "Commemorative Quilt", which had a centre medallion of printed fabric displaying Queen Victoria's coronation. The coverlet was made in the typically frame style and was thin without wadding. It is dated 1837 and was donated to the museum in 1965 by someone from Burton on Trent.

Secondly, we admired an American Pineapple Quilt, dated 1860/70 and donated in 1936, with an array of colourful fabrics and quilted in the ditch. We learned that in those times the American Quilts had edge bindings, whilst English Quilts were very rarely finished off that way.

The next Quilt, a superb example of the English craftsmanship was dated 1820s, but probably not finished until 1840s. It had the most extraordinary quilting, better visible on the backing and just as beautiful as on the front.

However, quite often a Quilt top would be floral and the back a solid colour; some said that the floral side was for 'every day' since it would less likely show any dirt and wear, whereas the plain side, displaying the full beauty of the quilting pattern, would be reserved for 'best'.

An appliqué quilt top made from a stunning furnishing fabric of large birds dating from the 1820s was our next joy. The blanket stitch/satin stitch around the appliqué was sewn perfectly evenly and the thread matched the colour of the motif everywhere.

Evelyn and Fran reminded me that this sort of work is called Broderie Perse. This is a style of appliqué in which patterns are cut out of printed motifs and then sewn on a background to create a new design. Usually chintz fabric was used, but it was expensive and therefore precious and not wasted. Borderie Perse can be traced back to the 17th century in Europe.

Although unfinished with no backing the following Quilt top showed us an interesting type of patchwork. It is assumed that the middle circle and the borders were put in at a later date, as the centre clearly did not fit into the design of the patchwork. A lot of work went into making this top dated between 1820 to 1850.

Another Quilt with a stitched and painted panel featured the visit of George III to a military academy, which was recorded as an historic event in 1803. Around the border were embroidered plaques depicting scenes of the Napoleonic War, with beautifully stitched illustrations of men and women.

Our last and the oldest Quilt, the 'pièce de resistance', was most fascinating. We were very absorbed by the many details of the design and marvelled about the quality of the Quilt. I noticed the muted colours, the browns and the beiges of the Quilts, not the bright dyes of today, and the patches in the 'Scrap Quilts' were certainly cut out from dress fabrics.

I was impressed by the work these women accomplished, particularly as it must have been completed by candlelight; stitch for stitch and lovingly put together.

We are grateful that the museum is keeping these valuable and wonderful Patchworks conserved and allow this period of quilting history to live on for the future generation to see.

Henriette Saxon

Don't Forget

A comprehensive list of LQ library books is available online at: www.londonquilters.org.uk. Keep in mind about one third of the books are on loan at any given time.



Chairman's Chat

What do people say to you when you show them a particularly special quilt you have made? If your experience is like mine, the conversation begins with asking how much time it took to make the quilt, and ends with 'I wish I had the time'. This statement assumes that we have loads of spare time and since the viewer does not, she could never make a beautiful quilt. End of conversation.

I seldom challenge these predictable comments, but I know that belief in the lack of time prevents people from embarking on many of life's satisfactions, quilting included. Admirers need to know that quiltmakers do not just *have* time, time is made.

I think we all treat time much like a quilt, gathering snippets of time and putting them together into small units of quilt work. We think about a quilt pattern as we go hither and thither, we plan borders as we do the housework, we imagine colour choices as we go for walks. And as we drift off to sleep, I am sure you are like me and do mental manipulations of block settings or, more often, redesign the whole quilt! Like patches of a quilt block, eventually our thoughts add up to something meaningful.

We need bigger blocks of time to sew the quilts. We will make time for those activities that are most important to us and quilting has a high priority in our lives. So we organise things to earn a little time to sew. Maybe some chores do not really need to be done or some requests can be answered with a 'no'.

So, we have the same time as everyone else, but we make the time to do what we really love.

Quilting on the Web



Quilts on the web: SAQA

For a bit of eye candy, or inspiration, visit the Galleries section of www.saqa.com, where you'll find a slideshow of members' quilts that changes every month.

February's virtual exhibition,
"The Cutting Edge",
is at

www.saqa.com/galleries/mini_gallery.aspx?galid=16.

The guest curator, Jill Rumoshosky Werner, says she chose these quilts "because they are great works of contemporary art, worthy of exhibit in the best galleries in the world."

March has the title "winter into spring" – curator Elizabeth Barton says of her selection: "I'm interested in the light as winter turns into early spring..it glistens along lines and outlines...there is a thin yellow warm glow. The light is low and shadows are long and mauve. At sunset the sky is often in layers of peach and turquoise - warm to cold. I did not read the names the artists had assigned their quilts - rather I responded to the light that they had achieved within the piece."

Other virtual exhibitions – "Water"; "Movement"; and "Seductive Fibers" — can be accessed in the box on the left of the web page.

SAQA is an American-based site; is there a UK site that can come up with a changing quilt exhibition every month?

Margaret Cooter

On the small screen

Now we can watch the American tv programme Simply Quilts on our computer.

Go to

www.hgtv.com/hgtv/shows_qlt

for the details and links. The list of programmes, at time of writing, has 16 to choose from, including "quilt in a weekend", "freeform patchwork", "mother and son quilters", and "wearable art quilt".

When I went to the "Simply Quilts video center", it only took a few seconds for "European Quilt Blocks", a programme about using cathedral floors as inspiration, to load and play. As these programmes come from American television, be prepared for "as short message from our sponsor" to appear at regular intervals if you play the programme straight through. The programme is divided into 4 segments, so you can watch just part of it at a time.

Margaret Cooter

LQ Committee Members

Chairman

Judy Roose jroose.highgate@virgin.net

Vice Chairman

Tracy Fogarty tracy@mahonkin.com

Treasurer

Janne Bell jannebell@hotmail.com

Minute Secretary

Margaret Mavay jsbach99@blueyonder.co.uk

Membership Secretary

Evelyn Hurst evelyn21@btinternet.com

Newsletter Editor

Tricia Harwood shipwreckbt@hotmail.com

Librarians

Fran Katkar frkatkar@homechoice.co.uk

Lucy Poloniecka lucy.poloniecka@db.com

Hospitality

Yzabel Field yzabel@tree78.fsnet.co.uk

Raffle

Sheila McQuaid Sheila.mcquaid@camden.gov.uk

Hello London Quilters,

Here is your friendly exhibition co-ordinator again. It has now been two years since our highly successful exhibition at Swiss Cottage library. (In case you forget, or you have joined us since then look at our website: www.londonquilters.org.uk for pictures of the quilts).

We are now in the pleasant situation of having a new exhibition to look forward to, with lots of time to get creative. (Remember that in 2005 we had about 2 months to get it together.) We have a place booked at the Swiss Cottage Library exhibition room for May 2008. The dates are not concrete yet as it is for next year, but Piers Masterson, the co-ordinator, has assured me that we are in his books. Piers is excited at the prospect of having us there and has suggested various options that we could consider to augment the exhibition. For example: selling quilting goods at a stand at the French Market on a Saturday, having mini quilting classes at the library, providing Habitat with some quilts to display etc. These are all a result of a tiny brain-storming session with him. The options are limitless!

So, now your duty is:

1. to not forget about it because it is 15 months away. Get creative. We would love a selection of : classic and contemporary patchwork, hand and machine appliqué, hand and machine quilting, pastels and brilliant colours. Smaller sizes are easier to hang, but we also need to show the world that we can make bed quilts too. We can guarantee that each member will have at least one quilt in the show.
2. to finish the squares for the group quilt. The exhibition is a fantastic opportunity to sell tickets.
3. to consider being a part of the exhibition committee. I have had a couple of volunteers , but will need a few more (could those who have approached me already give me your names again?). Will you consider it? The meetings are fun and you can get to know a few more people. We do have a lot of the details worked out and well documented from the last one, so this one may be a breeze!

Kathy Thiessen

Spring 2007 Newsletter

In Praise of the Needle by John Taylor 1580 - 1653

To all dispersed sorts of Arts and Crafts
I write the needle's prayse that never fades
So long as children shall be got and borne
So long as garments shall be made and worn
So long as hemp and flax or sheep shall bear
Their linnen, woollen fleeces, year by year
So long as silkworms with exhausted spoile
Of their own entrails for man's gain shall toyle
Yea till the world is quite dissolved and past
So long at least the needles voice shall last.

Kathleen McMahon

Exhibitions

22 - 25 March 2007

Stitch and Craft, Olympia 2 London.
Details from www.twistedthread.com

22-25 March

Quilters Guild AGM 2007, Scarborough
Details from www.quiltersguild.org.uk

17 - 20 May 2007 Quilts UK

Seven Hall, Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcs. Theme 'Farmyard Fun'. Details from Grosvenor Exhibitions 01775 712100/01775 722900 Email: emma.cooling@btconnect.com

26 - 28 May 2007

Oast Quilters Showcase
Westgate Hall, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2TB

9 June 2007

Region 1 of the Quilters Guild 'Handwork in Action'. Details from Jane Steward (steward.jane@btinternet.com)

22 - 24 June 2007

National Quilt Championships, Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey. Theme Log Cabin Frenzy. Closing date for entries 1 May 2007. Details from Grosvenor Exhibitions (as above)

2007 Calendar of Events

19 March - Susan Chapman

“By Design”

16 April - Angela Maddon

“Pictorial Patchwork from Family Photos”

21 May - Barbara Chainey

“Tentmakers of Cairo”

18 June - Clare Benn

“Cloth as a catalyst

16 July - Sewing Evening

August - No meeting

17 September - tba

15 October - Sandra Meech

“Journeys”

19 November - AGM with trader

17 December - Christmas Party

Meetings are held at 7.30 for 8pm in
Crossfield Centre Halls
8 Fairhazel Gardens
London NW6 3SG



0207 625 4815

The hall is located between Fairfax Place and
Goldhurst Terrace.

If you are travelling from Swiss Cottage station,
there is an exit that will take you down
steps onto Belzise Road.

The London Quilters web site address is:
www.longquilters.org.uk

It is run and maintained by Tricia Revest
Email: p.a.revest@qmul.ac.uk

A hello from your new librarian

I grew up with Patchwork ...

I have always had patchwork around me. My great aunt and godmother, Evelyn Stuart, turned her hand to many aspects of needlework (she made smocked dresses for a very young Princess Anne) but patchwork was her great love. She even had a Punch cartoon on her bedroom wall of a woman sitting in a hospital bed making a patchwork quilt and her visitors leaving with squares cut out of their clothes. Eve's later works were beautifully sewn cushions and pin cushions made from hexagons

and diamonds over paper - all “fussy cut” from glazed chintz fabrics to create beautiful designs. Meanwhile, my parents were famous for their patchwork curtains which they made together. One set made from randomly placed 5" square scraps is back in use 40 years later as a bedspread in their eldest grandson's flat - it is quite fun to see those old summer dresses again!

In the early 1980s I made patchwork duvet covers from Laura Ashley printed cottons for my spare bedroom (still in use). However, it was Kaffe Fassett's Patchwork book combined with a visit to the American Museum in Bath in 1998 that proved the turning point for me. My “diamonds” bed quilt made with rows of diamonds from 24 different floral dress and furnishing fabrics has faded a little but is still on my bed. After that it all escalated, I learned to use a rotary cutter, bought a quarter inch foot for my sewing machine, started attending workshops ... and gradually the hobby became an obsession. I still prefer the piecing to the quilting and finishing which is probably why I have so many projects on the go at any one time!

And now patchwork is going to become an even greater part of my life. After 35 years of corporate life, 20 years in finance (I am a chartered accountant) and 15 in Human Resources, I am ready to hang up my city suit and start some new ventures following my retirement at the end of March:

Venture #1 is finally having some “me time” to visit galleries and exhibitions and pursue my hobbies. I live 300 yards from the V&A but never get to go there and could not even take time off work for the LQ visit. I am also looking forward to being more involved with other activities including London Quilters: I have joined the committee to help Fran with the library and have also volunteered to help with setting up the 2008 exhibition. I will even try to write up of any quilt workshops I attend for the quarterly newsletter.

Venture #2 will take me into even more exciting territory setting up a small business making and selling silk cushions and throws. I have started to set up the infrastructure, have some design ideas and some materials but there is so very much still to learn about - especially how to market and distribute the products once they are made. Any advice from other LQ members will be very much appreciated.

Regards, Lucy

PS If anyone has that Punch cartoon ...