



Society of Antiquaries
of Scotland

‘Remember Now Thy Creator’

Scottish Girls’ Samplers, 1700–1872

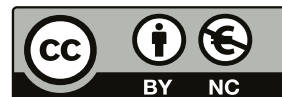
Naomi E A Tarrant

ISBN: 978-1-908332-07-3 (hardback) • 978-1-908332-27-1 (PDF)

The text in this work is published under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International](#) licence (CC BY-NC 4.0). This licence allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the work and to adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Tarrant, N E A (2014) *‘Remember Now Thy Creator’: Scottish Girls’ Samplers, 1700–1872*. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.
<https://doi.org/10.9750/9781908332271>

Important: The illustrations and figures in this work are not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence. Permissions must be obtained from third-party copyright holders to reproduce any of the illustrations.



Every effort has been made to obtain permissions from the copyright holders of third-party material reproduced in this work. The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland would be grateful to hear of any errors or omissions.

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is a registered Scottish charity number SC 010440. Visit our website at www.socantscot.org or find us on Twitter [@socantscot](https://twitter.com/socantscot).



APPENDIX I

Hollie point samplers

Hollie point is a type of white-on-white embroidery using needle lace stitches. No samplers of this type have been found that are definitely Scottish. However, one hollie point sampler in the NMS collection has proved a puzzle. Jenny Grant's sampler is a small, square, white-work sampler, 9¼ by 8½ inches (23.5 x 22.2 cm), worked with five rows of squares and circles in hollie point and openwork needle lace, with satin stitch borders and dividing bands (illus A1.1). It is reputed to have been worked by a daughter of Patrick Grant, Lord Elchies, a Scottish lawyer. However, to have worked her sampler in 1724/5, as she records on it, she must have been born by 1710 because, as we shall see, other known examples are not by very young girls. Patrick Grant does not appear to have married until 1713, and there is no daughter recorded with the name Janet or Jean; Jenny would have been a pet name. So can this piece really be classed as a Scottish sampler?

Hollie point was a popular white needle lace technique: this small square sampler is a the descendant of the long samplers of the seventeenth century worked in various white-work techniques, which fell out of fashion by the end of the century. Hollie point was used in the crowns of babies' caps and as insertions on shoul-

der seams in their shirts in the eighteenth century. It can also be found worked as a relieving gusset at the base of neck openings in men's shirts and women's shifts of the same period. Baby cap crowns and seam insertions usually had a decorative pattern worked into them and often initials, names or phrases such as 'Sweet Babe'. The small samplers like Jenny Grant's were demonstrations of the skill the girls had achieved in working this relatively difficult and time-consuming technique.

Jenny Grant's sampler belongs to a small group of hollie point and reticella samplers worked between 1724 and 1739 that share several characteristics and may well have been worked at the same school. Reticella was a popular form of needle lace in the early seventeenth century for collars and cuffs, but was very old-fashioned by the early eighteenth century, so quite what this type of lace was doing on samplers at this period is unclear. Most of the recorded samplers of this group have names and dates but no places, and fall into two date groups, 1724–9 and 1732–9. Many of the names are quite rare but so far only two, worked by sisters, have yielded any evidence that can be considered good enough to identify the makers. The two girls in question are Anna and Sarah Gerrey, who worked their samplers in 1727 and 1729. Because they also included initials, done in the English fashion with the surname above the parents' initials with father on the left and mother on the right, we can identify them as the daughters of Richard and Mary Gerrey of St

OPPOSITE. A1.1 Hollie point sampler by Jenny Grant, 1724–5. 9½ in (24.1 cm) x 8¼ in (22.2 cm). NMS A.1987.306.

George’s parish, Southwark, who were members of the Society of Friends, better known as Quakers. Anna was born on 25 July 1710 and Sarah on 4 June 1713, so they were seventeen and sixteen when they made their samplers.²³⁸

Anna was married on 12 January 1730 to Benjamin Sterry, a salter, but Sarah appears to have remained single.²³⁹ They also include a panel worked with AC, also found on the samplers of Mary Stroud, 1727, and Ursula Slade, 1728; AC may well be their teacher.

A trawl of the Quaker records so far has not revealed any other girls from this group, so it would be rash to conclude that this was a Quaker style of sampler or worked at a Quaker school. Tracing the concentration of surnames in particular parts of the country using census returns does reveal that most of those on the hollie point samplers can be found in London in 1841, not a particular surprise, but most are also southern English, none are Welsh, while the single Scottish name, Grant, does not belong to a rare or unusual surname group. It is possible that Jenny Grant’s father was working in the south and she was sent to school there.²⁴⁰ There is good evidence that girls from a relatively high social standing in Scotland would train to become milliners, as the girls might well have to earn their own living.²⁴¹ Based on the Gerrey sisters’ ages, it is clear that these samplers were made not by girls but by young women. They probably attended a school or had a tutor who specialised in this type of work. All the pieces are of a high quality and show that the girls were skilled needlewomen by the time they worked these pieces. It may also show that they were being trained to use their needle professionally rather than just to make their own baby clothes.

LIST OF RELATED HOLLIE POINT SAMPLERS

1724–9 group

Jenny Grant, 1724 and 1725; these may be the start and finish dates; NMS A.1987.306. PW, 1726; W over I & M; Fitzwilliam Museum, T.38.1928.

Anna Gerrey, 1727; G over R & M, and AC in a separate circle; Embroiderers’ Guild, EG 24–1987.

Ursula Slade, 1728; S over T & M, and AC in a separate circle. Fitzwilliam Museum, T.136–1928, illustrated in Humphrey 1997, p. 75.

Sarah Gerrey, 1729; G over R & M, and AC in a separate circle, and IB & EH; Goodhart Collection, The National Trust, Montacute, MON/G/072, illustrated in Bromiley Phelan, Hansson & Holdsworth 2008, pp. 200–1.

Mary Stroud, 1729; S over, possibly, B & A, and AC in a separate circle. Formerly in the collection of Sir William Lawrence, present whereabouts unknown. Illustrated in Ashton 1926, Fig 40.

1732–9 group

Mary Brown, 1732; has a large square with I & H at the top, B over I & K, below and ‘Mary Brown 1732’ below this; Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York, illustrated in Betty Ring, *Girlhood Embroidery. American Samplers and Pictorial Needlework, 1650–1850* (New York, 1993), vol 2, p. 345.

Martha Arron, 1734; MA; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 967.293, illustrated in Katharine B Brett, *English Embroidery* (Toronto, 1972).

SB, 1737; Fitzwilliam Museum, T.137–128, illustrated in Colby 1964, plate 105.

Sarah Leesley, 1739; IL & EL; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 38.11.37, illustrated in Parmal 2000, pp. 26–7.

Mary Tredwel, 1739; V&A, T.608–1974, illustrated in Browne & Weardon 1999, plate 47.

Mary Tredwel’s and Sarah Leesley’s samplers use the same designs, while that of SB is almost identical to them. All these have three larger squares across the centre rather than the four or five of the others, but are otherwise the same style. Two samplers in a private collection by Elizabeth and Mary Walford, probably sisters, are dated 1737, and would appear to be related to this group of hollie point samplers, but no illustrations were available to confirm this.