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# ‘Remember Now Thy Creator’

Scottish Girls’ Samplers, 1700–1872

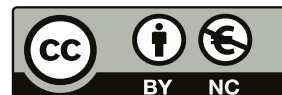
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ISBN: 978-1-908332-07-3 (hardback) • 978-1-908332-27-1 (PDF)

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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>

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A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T Y W X Y

Z A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y

A B C D E F G H I K L M N

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X Y \* K D M \* E V

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S C M \* C L \* A L \* K L  
A M \* K L \* W W \* M M \*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 \* 17 2 9 \*

Decorative border with small floral motifs.

Decorative border with small floral motifs.

Decorative border with larger floral motifs.

Decorative border with small floral motifs.

Decorative border with small floral motifs.



## CHAPTER 7

# Tracing the girls

### INITIALS AND FAMILY TRACING

One of the distinguishing features of many Scottish samplers is the use of family initials. Usually the parents of the maker are given, with the mother's maiden initial used, as women did not lose their maiden name on marriage in Scotland and were known by it all their lives. Initials are of little use if the sampler maker has not included her own name on their piece, as for example on HB's early eighteenth-century work. Sometimes it is known that teachers and other pupils' initials have been used, for example in the two samplers worked by the Holdway sisters at the Merchant Maiden Hospital and dated 1844 (see note 88). On others, there are so many that members of the maker's wider family must be included, but so far no sampler with a large number of initials has had all of them identified with certainty. The number of people commemorated on samplers appears to increase as the nineteenth century progresses but early eighteenth-century samplers can also include a fair number too, for example that of Isobel Lumisden, 1729 (see illus 7.1). Initials sometimes have 'Mr' or 'Ms' above them and this indicates the sex of the person, Mr standing for Mister and Ms for Mistress, for example on Isabel Hutton's, of about 1730–5 (see illus 6.5).

**OPPOSITE. 7.1** Isobel Lumisden, 1729. 12½ in (31.8 cm) x 8 in (20.3 cm). NMS.H.NT.242.28.

Initials on samplers have been used to identify girls and to try to discover something of their background. Given that some names are very common, it helps if the maker has included a detail that allows her to be placed in a specific area. It is not always clear, however, whether a place named on a sampler is the place where the girl lived or where she went to school. Some samplers can be ascribed to the same school or teacher but have place names on them, for example Peterhead and Hawick, that are far apart. Tracing the girls has been made easier by the digitisation and indexing of the surviving pre-1855 old parish registers of the Church of Scotland on the website [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk). This site is maintained by the National Records of Scotland and includes the census from 1841 to 1911 and the post-1855 registers of births, marriages and deaths, and it is the only site to have this material. But there remain problems. The burial registers in particular are not as complete as those for baptisms and marriages, and only the Church of Scotland's registers are online; there were many divisions in the church over time. The registers of the Episcopalian church are not included, although the Roman Catholic registers have been added. Other records are gradually being introduced, which should help researchers, but it is advisable for anyone not familiar with Scottish records to read one of the recent books on tracing Scottish ancestors so that they can understand what is possible and appreciate the difficulties.



7.2 Marion Raith, 1799. 20¼ in (52.7 cm) x 18¼ in (46.4 cm). NMS H.R.I 54.

Family record samplers, where the maker has worked a more detailed record, are rare for Scotland, but an interesting one is by Jane Sutherland, 1831, who includes some information on her father's life.<sup>206</sup> Usually the sampler includes the

marriage of the parents and the exact birth dates of children as well as deaths where relevant. Rachel Bruce was twenty when she embroidered a piece that appears more like a picture than a sampler and which was perhaps intended to be framed.<sup>207</sup> Marion Raith worked her sampler in 1799 but revisited it to include details of the death of her parents and her eldest daughter, but this is a rare instance (see illus 7.2).

The reason for working so many initials on samplers is not clear, as they cannot be regarded as a good record of a family. It may be relevant to see it in the context of working letters for marking linen and practising putting pairs of letters together. The pairs worked are usually in different colours so that it is clear where each name ends. Sometimes Mc names are indicated by an M as a middle initial, and sometimes a small c is worked as well. Any letters in black indicate that the person is deceased, which can be useful in fixing a date for a death.

A few samplers have come with a family history attached. Isobel Lumisden's, for example, was given to National Museums Scotland with other family items (illus 7.1). Isobel was born in 1719, the daughter of William Lumisden, a merchant burgess in Edinburgh, and Mary Bruce.<sup>208</sup> She was a Jacobite sympathiser and managed to get her brother Andrew and her fiancé Robert Strange involved in the 1745 rebellion. Her brother went into exile with Prince Charles Edward Stewart after the Battle of Culloden but Robert, an engraver, eventually became engraver to King George III and was knighted – a rather ironic situation for Isobel, who thus became Lady Strange. She died in 1806 aged eighty-six. A cousin of her father's, Thomas Lumisden, was a printer and left his fortune to the Orphan Hospital in Edinburgh, so through her family connections Isobel was related to various well-known families in and around Edinburgh. There are many initials on her sampler and it is difficult to determine whom they might represent. On the first row her parents are presumably WL and MB; AB might be her aunt, Ann Butler; and TD her uncle, Captain Dalzell, who was married to her aunt Margaret Lumisden. AL is possibly her grandfather, Andrew Lumisden, while KC might be her grandmother, Catherine Craig, and ML her aunt Margaret, but BL is unknown. On the third row CM is unknown; CL is possibly her uncle, Charles Lumisden, married to Ann Butler; AL her brother Andrew; and JL her cousin John, son of Charles. On the fourth row AM, WW and MI are unknown but IL might be her uncle, John Lumisden. Isobel includes labelled crowns and

the one for baron stands over the AL in the first line of initials. Isobel's grandfather Andrew was an Episcopalian and bishop of Edinburgh from 1727 to his death in 1733, so the B possibly stands for bishop as well in this instance. It is not clear, though, what the S over AM in the last line stands for.

Marion Raith's sampler, dated 1799, has no initials but recorded in black, in a space at the bottom right, are the deaths of her parents and her eldest daughter (see illus 7.2).<sup>209</sup> As Marion gives her age as thirteen, she was easy to trace as there was only one suitable girl, in Stow parish register: Marrion, daughter of James Raith, shepherd in Crumside, and Mary Stewart, born 10 March 1786 and baptised 14 April. On the sampler the date of her mother's death is noted as 2 April 1808 and that of her father as 25 July 1833. So far these have not been confirmed elsewhere. Marion herself married John Baillie on 10 June 1814 in Penicuik and they had four children: Mary, born in 1815, whose death on 14 October 1845 is recorded on the sampler; and Elizabeth, born 1815, Agnes, born 1822, and John, born 1825. John Baillie is described as a quarryman on his children's baptism entries. Marion's sampler has a representation of Oxenfoord Castle, which was in the parish of Cranston where her mother was born in 1760, her parents being David Stewart and Jane Durky. Oxenfoord Castle had a distinctive roofline with animal heads and this may have appealed to Marion, who may well have adopted the design from an engraving in a magazine. Where she went to school is less clear, as there does not appear to have been a private school in either Stow or Cranston at the time; the sampler is unlikely to have been worked at a parish school. Marion's father is described as a shepherd but it is unlikely that a shepherd, as we would understand the term today, could afford to have his daughter educated privately where she could work a large sampler in fairly expensive materials at an age, thirteen, when most children would already be working. Presumably James Raith had other means or the term shepherd had a wider meaning.<sup>210</sup>

Jesie Balfour's sampler was worked when she was eleven years old in 1828, and she helpfully





7.3 Jesie Balfour, 1828. 13½ in (34.3 cm) x 12¼ in (31.1 cm).  
NMS A.1944.642.

includes her home town, Arbroath, and her teacher's name, Mrs Sturrock (illus 7.3). Jesie's youngest daughter, Miss Jessie Munro, gave the sampler in 1944 to the Royal Scottish Museum, now part of National Museums Scotland, but she did not inform the Museum that her mother had worked it. With the information on the sampler

it was not difficult to find Jesie, baptised 4 June 1816 in Arbroath, the eldest daughter of Alexander Balfour, carrier, in Arbroath and Jess or Joice [the name varies] Hood. On the sampler are several large, elaborate initials at the top and a row of smaller ones along the bottom, together with 'Mrs Sturrock Techer'. Across the top are AB and IH, Jesie's parents, followed by AB in black, and IF, for her paternal grandparents, Alexander Balfour and Isabel Fraser. Next to these are MB, NB and BC, who are possibly the sisters of her parents. The initials of her maternal grandparents, John Hood and Jean Creighton, are worked below the top line either side of the panel that contains Jesie's name, age, place and date. The verse has not been traced. The initials along the bottom are Jesie's siblings, seven in all, of whom only Jane, apart from Jesie, appears to have survived to marry and have children. Jesie married twice: her first husband, whom she married in 1835, was James Reid, a master butcher in Arbroath, and they had ten children, including a set of twins. After the death of James, Jesie married John Munro, a commission agent some years her junior, in the Free Church, Arbroath, in 1859. They had two daughters, Ann Wallace Munro, who became an artist, and Jessie Hood Munro, a teacher of painting and music. John Munro died in 1890 and Jesie died on 20 May 1909 at 12.30am at her home, 275 High Street, Arbroath, of myocardial degeneration.<sup>211</sup> She is buried in the graveyard of Arbroath Abbey with John Munro and their two daughters, neither of whom married. But there are possibly descendants of Jesie's first marriage.

Margaret and Robina Taylor worked two of the Linlithgow samplers, which have the same design (illus 7.4). They give their mother's initials as ID in black, meaning that she was dead by this date, and also the initials IT, MD, ID, and their ages, ten and eight. Robina's sampler had the information written on the back that she was born on 24 April 1784, married on 15 October 1807 and died on 5 July 1848. This allowed an identification of the girls as the daughters of James Taylor, town clerk of Linlithgow, and Jean Dick, who were 'irregularly married' in January 1771.<sup>212</sup> Margaret was born on 24 February 1782

and Robina two years later. Both girls worked their samplers in 1792. Robina married David Mathie, a writer (lawyer), in Glasgow on 15 October 1807, and they had one surviving child, a daughter, Jane, whose sampler was also given to National Museums Scotland.<sup>213</sup> Jane's sampler is a plain text piece, beautifully worked in light brown silk with the verse 'True Dignity' and dated 1817. She married the Reverend John Laurie in 1835 and had eleven children. By a complicated inheritance Jane and her husband changed their name to Fogo in 1845, and she died in 1889.<sup>214</sup> There are three other samplers known with the same placing of motifs and though none have dates they can probably be dated on the basis of the Taylor sisters to the 1790s or early 1800s.<sup>215</sup>

Margaret Gray, Citadel, Leith worked one of the few multiplication samplers with a name and any indication of place (illus 7.5). This address refers to the citadel Oliver Cromwell had built in Leith, the port for Edinburgh, in the 1650s. From this it has been possible to work out that Margaret was the daughter of Alexander Gray, wright (carpenter) and later also an undertaker. Alexander was from the Aberdeen area but married as his second wife Mally Boon, of South Leith. They had nine children and Margaret was the sixth, born in October 1825. From the census Margaret can be traced working as a milliner in 1851 and living at home. Her sister Helen was a straw bonnet maker and another, Elizabeth, was a dressmaker. In 1861 the three sisters, still at home, were all dressmakers. Possibly they also made the burial clothes for their father's undertaking business. The date of Margaret's death is unknown but it was before 1908, and she did not marry, but appears to have worked as a dressmaker, living with various family members.<sup>216</sup> Her sampler is possibly the prettiest of the rather utilitarian multiplication tables, and was received by the museum in a rosewood frame of the kind popular around 1840, which is when she must have worked her piece. She obviously used her needlework skills during the rest of her life.

Mothers and daughters usually make very different samplers but sometimes the one appears to copy the other. An unusual pair of samplers





7.4 Robina Taylor, 1792, 12¾ in (32.4 cm) x 14½ in (32.4 cm). NMS A.1987.55, Margaret Taylor, NMS A.1987.56.

are those of Bethia Campbell, 1737, and her daughter Elizabeth Russell, 1764 (illus 7.6 and 7.7). Bethia includes her maternal grandparents by name, 'Thomas Tulloch' and 'Margaret Anderson', but her parents, Elizabeth Tulloch and Daniel Campbell, are only represented by initials and they are not highlighted in any way. Thomas Tulloch was a writer (lawyer) and his wife was the daughter of a merchant burgher in

Edinburgh.<sup>217</sup> Bethia's father was also a writer but by the time of her brother's birth in 1729 he was the Secretary to the Royal Bank of Scotland.<sup>218</sup> Bethia was born 14 September 1728 and married John Russell, a Writer to the Signet, on 13 October 1751 in Edinburgh, as Betty Campbell. So far no baptism record for Elizabeth Russell has been found. However, Elizabeth aged nine, puts on her sampler the names 'John Russell' and 'Bethia Campbell' as well as the initials DC and ET, who would appear to be her maternal grandparents. Dr J S Richardson, who lent samplers to the 1911 Glasgow Exhibition, gave both these samplers to





the Museum, so they are likely to have been acquired together by him. This pair are the closest to each other of any of the mother and daughter samplers so far seen. They are square with half the space taken up by alphabets, but they include different band patterns, the crowns are placed differently and there are more initials on the later sampler by Elizabeth.

Allison Ruddiman and her daughters made very different pieces, but all three daughters worked the same design, so were taught by the same person or attended the same school. Allison's is similar to Betty Pleanderleath's, showing

7.5 Margaret Gray, c. 1840. 12½ in (31.8 cm) x 15 in (38.1 cm). NMS A.1955.105.

bands with an Adam and Eve at the bottom, but she has no verse and only one alphabet, her name, the date 1740, and her parents' initials (illus 7.8). Her daughters, Anne Steuart in 1758, Alison in 1760 and Isobell (Bell) in 1762, all worked the same design with a twisted stem band, and a fountain below the verse: 'If you delight to worship God aright' (illus 7.9). Below this there are three green humps with a dog on the centre





7.6 Bethia Campbell, 1737. 10¼ in (27.3 cm) x 11¼ in (29.9 cm). NMS A.1987.91.

one, a peacock and a lily in a vase on the others. Each one also has several smaller motifs that are different, but they include family initials and describe their sampler as a 'bootcloth'. None of these girls married and their samplers, together with their mother's, were left to the Museum by a descendant of another sibling. Allison Ruddi-

man was the daughter of Thomas Ruddiman and his third wife, Anne Smith. He was a classical scholar and Keeper of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh. Allison married James Steuart of Edinburgh, a lawyer, in 1747, and the family founded a long-lived Edinburgh law firm.<sup>219</sup>

Three other sisters who worked very similar designs are the Eistons, Allison, Elizabeth and Margaret (illus 7.10, 7.11 and 7.12). They were the daughters of Walter Eiston, mason, and Margaret Houseton of Ayr, and worked their





samplers in 1797, 1806 and 1810. They all have the Gates of Heaven motif and a house, but each of them differs. Allison has a pedimented house, while Elizabeth has the same house style but with single-storey wings. Margaret, however, has a grand building, identified as Dalquarran Castle, Ayrshire, designed by the Scottish architect Robert Adam.<sup>220</sup> Each girl has individualised her sampler but those of Allison and Elizabeth are more alike. Margaret has added realistic flowers to her twisted stem motif and also has sprays at

7.7 Elizabeth Russell, 1764. 15 $\frac{3}{8}$  in (39.1cm) x 14 $\frac{3}{8}$  in (36.5 cm). NMS A.1987.47.

the side, as well as a lion and a griffin at the bottom where her sisters have more conventional rabbits and trees. Elizabeth also has GR above a crown, lion and unicorn.

The search for Jean Stevenson of Kirkintilloch's baptism revealed an unexpected story (illus 7.13). She was born in 1797 at Boghead in





ABOVE. 7.8 Allison Ruddiman, 1740.  $12\frac{1}{2}$  in (31.8 cm) x  $8\frac{3}{4}$  in (21 cm). NMS A.1993.103.

OPPOSITE. 7.9 Anne Steuart, 1758. The eldest daughter of Allison Ruddiman and James Steuart, she was born in 1748. Like her sisters she has marked her sampler 'Ann Steuart Her Bootcloth, ended in the year of our Lord 1758'.  $12\frac{1}{2}$  in (31.8 cm) x  $10\frac{3}{4}$  in (27.3 cm). NMS A.1993.104. Her sisters' samplers are NMS A.1993.105 and A.1993.106.





IF YOU DESIRE TO WORSHIP GOD PLEASE  
FIVE IN THE MORNINGS FROM NOW ON  
CRAVE FOR HIS BLESSINGS ON YOUR LABOURS AND  
ASKS IN DURESS FOR HIS ASSISTANCE CALL





7.10

7.11

7.10, 7.11, 7.12 The Eiston sisters. The Gates of Heaven motif is in the centre of the second band from the top on all three. The sisters are probably the daughters of Walter Eiston and Margaret Houseton of Ayr, but the parish registers record their name as Easton. Allison was born on 27 September 1790, so was seven when she worked her sampler, while Elizabeth, born is 1794, was twelve. Margaret's dates are unknown but based on those of her sisters it was probably about 1800.  
 Allison = 17 in (43.2 cm) x 12¾ in (32.4 cm).  
 Elizabeth = 20¾ in (52.7 cm) x 14¾ in (37.5 cm).  
 Margaret = 20¼ in (51.4 cm) x 15 in (38.1 cm).  
 Leslie B Durst Collection.





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Collection







Cadder Parish, her parents being Robert Stevenson, a farmer, and Elizabeth Marshall, who were married in 1785 and had nine children, their names all embroidered by Jean on her sampler, as are both sets of grandparents. The sampler is dated 1814 so she was about sixteen when she made it. Jean's baptism record in the parish register on 24 August 1797 is squeezed in after an entry on 13 August and before a long note describing how, on 22 August, two men with blackened faces and disguised in women's clothes had demanded the register book. It was found two months later in a barn, unharmed. This incident was sparked by the Militia Act (Scotland) of that year, which required a certain number of men from Scotland to be enrolled in militia companies in case of invasion by the French. It was bitterly resented, particularly by the middle classes, tradesmen and craftsmen, and there were some very ugly scenes with registers burnt and schoolmasters harassed. Fortunately someone remembered to enter Jean's name when the register was returned.<sup>221</sup>

A virtually identical sampler to Jean Stevenson's was worked by Jean Rankin in Glasgow in 1809.<sup>222</sup> She names her parents as John Rankin, who was a farmer in Inchbreak, and Janet Stirling, and like Jean Stevenson lists her brothers and sisters. All her siblings' baptisms can be traced in the parish register of Campsie between 1790 and 1803. Janet's is missing, so perhaps her baptism was also affected by the Militia Act, and went unrecorded. Janet's sampler is smaller than Jean's but the design shares the top half, with elaborate letters, the Lord's Prayer, the family names, but no grandparents, and a band of trellis work across the width and a fountain enclosed by a wreath. Jean's has many small motifs in the lower half, which Janet's lacks. Quite where the girls made their samplers is unclear. Jean has 'Kirkintilloch' on her sampler but Janet has 'Glasgow', so did Jean record her home parish and Janet where she made her sampler?<sup>223</sup>

OPPOSITE. 7.13 Jean Stevenson, 1814. 17¼ in (43.8 cm) x 12 in (30.5 cm). NMS A.1986.1 18.

## TEACHERS

Although several samplers also have the names of teachers, they are not so easy to trace because there are usually no other initials to help. 'Mrs' before a name does not mean the woman was married, because in Scotland any older woman or one who was in a position of trust or authority would be called 'Mistress'.<sup>224</sup> Mrs Seton, who taught Betty Pleanderleath, is possibly the 'Mrs Euphan Seton, Schoolmistress in Edinburgh', whose will is dated 24 April 1752, in which case she does not appear to have been married. She possibly taught Allison Ruddiman, whose sampler, dated 1740, shares some similarities with Betty's (illus 7.14; and illus 7.8).

Sometimes, by good fortune, the teacher may be found in an early census. A trawl through the 1841 census for Arbroath uncovered a possible Mrs Sturrock who taught Jesie Balfour (see illus 7.3). Sarah Sturrock was living with Helen Anderson, both described as teachers, and a girl of seven, also named Helen Anderson. In 1851 there is more information: Sarah is a widow, aged eighty-three, a pauper, formerly school mistress (teacher of sewing), born in Careston, Forfarshire. With her is her widowed sister, Helen Anderson, aged seventy, and her great-niece, also Helen Anderson, aged nineteen, born in Demerara. Both Helens are seamstresses, and they are all living at 13 Croals Wynd, Arbroath. Sarah's death is recorded on 15 March 1854 at the age of eighty-six and her maiden name is given as Ritchie, so it was possible to find her baptism in Careston on 23 February 1768, the daughter of John Ritchie, mason, and Helen Petrie. Sarah was buried in Arbroath churchyard next to the stone of William Sturrock, who turned out to be her husband, a manufacturer, who died in 1836. They were married in 1790 and appear to have had no children. Three other known samplers name Mrs Sturrock, Arbroath, as the teacher: an undated one by Margaret Hay aged eleven, one by eleven-year-old Elisabeth Williamson in 1816, and the third by Elizabeth Ritchie, who was fourteen in 1837 when she did her piece; they all share similarities with Jesie's. Elizabeth is probably a relative of Sarah Sturrock,





7.14 Betty Pleanderleath Janr 28 1745 Mrs Seton's. Betty was probably Elisabeth, the daughter of David Plenderleath, advocate and Jean Gordon, his second wife, but no baptism has been found for her. She married John Gourlay, merchant, in Haddington on 5 November 1758 at Edinburgh. Worked on bootcloth, the blue selvages can be seen at the top and bottom of her sampler. 12¼ in (31.1 cm) x 9 in (22.9 cm). NMS A.1939.122.

OPPOSITE. 7.15 Elisabeth Jenkins, 1836, was born in 1825, the daughter of John Jenkins, cooper, and Christian Jaffray, in St Ninians, Stirlingshire. 17 in (43.2 cm) x 17¼ in (43.8 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.





although her baptism record has not yet been found.<sup>225</sup>

Another teacher who has possibly been identified is Isabella McKenzie, who had a school in St Ninians, near Stirling.<sup>226</sup> There is a group of samplers, six so far known, with a very similar design, that name the school or resemble the others so closely they were almost certainly worked there. The first to name the school is Elisabeth Jenkins, who inscribed her sampler 'Elisa-

beth Jenkins sewed this in Is. McKenzie's school St Ninians, 1836' (illus 7.15). The main feature is a large three-bay grey stone pedimented house with a small circular path to the door, a shepherdess under a tree to the left and a low building, probably a barn or stable, to the right. Above are large decorative initials of family members and there are many initials below these. A verse, 'Favour is deceitful', is also included. In 1841 Jessie Mercer, aged eight, worked her sampler with the





7.16 Hellen McCubbin, 1843. 19¼ in (48.9 cm) x 22¼ in (56.5 cm). NMS K.2001.982.

same scene, except that the building was now a five-bay and white, but it also had the shepherdess and circular path, though on the right was a church with a tall spire. Across the top were family initials in the same style as Elisabeth's but the border was embroidered as if jewelled.<sup>227</sup> Hellen McCubbin's sampler of 1843 is virtually the same

pattern as Jessie's, but the large initials at the top are worked in a cursive script, and she also has the jewelled border (illus 7.16). No trace can be found of Hellen or her family in the census of 1841 and 1851, nor can any baptism record be found for her, but she apparently married David Galaghan on 30 July 1848 in St Ninians and had two children.

The other three samplers that fit this pattern start with one worked by Agnes Oliver, who describes working her sampler at Miss Reoch's school, St Ninians, in 1826 (illus 7.17). This has the shepherdess under a tree on the left with a





church and a small house, very like the barn in Elisabeth's sampler. There is a red and green alphabet at the top and below large letter initials and a verse, 'As cold winters to a thirsty soul'. It is most likely that Isabella McKenzie bought the school, or at least the goodwill, from Miss Reoch, as the census entry does not suggest she had a separate building and the house seen on the samplers is unlikely to be hers. The next oldest sampler is more like the others, with the same pedimented house, shepherdess to the left, and circular path, but on the right is a man in Turkish dress, probably taken from a Berlin woolwork

7.17 Agnes Oliver made her sampler at Miss Reoch's school, St Ninian's, in 1826. She was the daughter of William Oliver, a miller, and Margaret Baird, and was baptised on 4 November 1813 in St Ninian's. 18½ in (47 cm) x 13¾ in (34.6 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.

design; it was worked by Euphemia Liddell in 1830 and has the jewelled border and cursive script letters.<sup>228</sup> A later one is by Catherine Low in 1847, and while it shares some characteristics of the others there are many differences. It is a simpler design with red and green alphabets followed by large letter initials taking up half the





space. Below this is a three-bay grey pedimented house, a boy with dog under a tree to the left, and trees and a small figure to the right, with the figures taken from Berlin woolwork designs. Above the house is 'Catherine Low sew'd this in 1847' with RL to the left and MC in black to the right.<sup>229</sup> Catherine Low, aged seven, and her family can be found in the 1841 census at Murrishall, St Ninians. Her father, Robert, is a lime trader and together with her mother Margret are her brothers and sisters, Margret, Robert, John, William and Jean. In the next census, of 1851, Catherine is still at home, aged seventeen, and her father, a widower, is described as a lime burner, employing four labourers and nine lime stone miners, as well as farming and employing one farm labourer, so a man of some substance.

Other schools can be inferred from the similarity of design. One of the pedimented house patterns has an inverted V motif worked in blocks of colour like a rainbow that stretches above the

ABOVE. 7.18 Barbra Duff's sampler of 1811 shows some similarities with A McGilly's and Janet Anderson's samplers with neatly worked names of her parents at the bottom. She was the daughter of Alexander Duff, letter carrier, and Frances Reid, born in 1805 in Edinburgh. 20½ in (52 cm) x 18 in (45.7 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.

ABOVE. 7.19 A McGilly's sampler with the rainbow-coloured, inverted V-shape above the house. 19¼ in (48.9 cm) x 16 in (40.6 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.

OPPOSITE. 7.20 Janet Anderson in 1815 has a rainbow-coloured, inverted V-shape, very odd dogs to either side of the gate and names Mrs Muir, who was probably her teacher. 20½ in (52.1 cm) x 16½ in (41.9 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.

house. In the spaces to either side of this is an octagon with a flower in a vase and above the house 'The eyes of the Lord'. On each side of the house are trees with thick trunks and slender branches and leaves, and a reversing bunch of grapes border along the top. Along the bottom





FOR CHRISTY  
THE GIVER OF THE FOOD  
WE DO EVERY PLACE FOR  
GIVING THE EYE AND  
THE GOOD AND THE BEST AND  
THE BEST AND THE BEST AND  
1815

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is the girl's name and those of her parents, all very neatly worked. There are three samplers with this pattern, by Cathren Angus, about 1804, and Isobella Booklass and Isobel Ross, both so far undated.<sup>230</sup> Barbra Duff's of 1811 is very similar but lacks the inverted V. The trees and neat lettering are the same but the verse is different and it lacks the octagons, though it does have the very odd deer that are found on the other samplers (illus 7.18). An almost identical sampler to these was worked by A McGilliy, but although she has the house, inverted V, octagons and grape border, her trees are very cramped and her lettering is not nearly as neat, nor does it include the full names of herself and her parents, only initials (illus 7.19). Very similar to these samplers and also with an inverted V in rainbow colours is Janet Anderson's, worked in 1815, and naming Mrs Muir, who was perhaps her teacher (illus 7.20). Janet's sampler has a slightly different house but includes

ABOVE. 7.21 Mary Carse's sampler of about 1820 belongs to a group with a similar design of a large five-bay house with floral swags above and large trees to the sides worked in silks on wool. They also have a rather large parrotlike bird sitting in a tree. Mary was the daughter of Thomas Carse, a coachmaker, living in Edinburgh, and was twelve when she worked her piece. Others range in date from 1819 to 1837. 13½ in (34.3 cm) x 21½ in (54.6 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.

OPPOSITE. 7.22 Margt Adam, c. 1808. Margaret has included a scene below with a ship. She was born on 1 October 1796 and baptised on 20 November in Ratho, near Edinburgh, the daughter of John Adam and Helen Hastie. 16½ in (41.9 cm) x 13 in (33 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.

similar trees, the octagons and the same verse, but lacks the neat lettering. Possibly Mrs Muir took over an existing school where the other girls had worked their samplers.

Another group of samplers, all with the same



BEHOLD! the mountain of the Lord  
In latter days shall rise,  
On mountain tops above the hills,  
And draw the wandering eyes,  
To this the joyful nations round,  
All tribes and tongues shall flow,  
Up to the hill of God, they'll say,  
And to his house we'll go.



John Adam  
Farg' Adam

Helen Adam  
Her Work





7.23 Euphan Easton dates her sampler to 28 March 1817 and includes Hawick, a town in the Scottish Borders. She worked the same design as Jane Cruikshank a year earlier and many miles distant. See also Elisabeth Stewart's. It has not been possible to identify Euphan. 17 $\frac{7}{8}$  in (45.3 cm) x 12 $\frac{3}{8}$  in (31.4 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.

OPPOSITE. 7.24 This sampler is one of a group that appear to be from the same school or teacher but are from two different areas of the country. Jane Cruikshank worked her sampler in Aberdeen and dates it 22 March 1816. George Cruickshank and Lillias Mearns of Aberdeenshire were married in 1790, and Jean was born in 1798. 15 $\frac{3}{8}$  in (39.1 cm) x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$  in (34.9 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.



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ON VIRTUE

VIRTUE is the chiefest beauty of the mind  
The noblest ornament of humankind  
VIRTUE is our safeguard and our guiding star  
That stirs up reason when our senses err

EAH EM WAC



WC  
LC EC  
AC  
GC  
JC

ED  
GM XL  
ML  
XX

MARCH 22 1816

CHARLES SHAW

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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W

X Y Z \* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 ♦

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z ♦

A B C D E F G H I J K L M ♦

N O P Q R S T U V W ♦

A B C D E F G H I J K ♦

K L M N O P Q R S T U

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

MARGARET MITCHELL.  
DOLLAR INSTITUTION - 18 - MAY 1833

© Leslie B Durst Collection



basic design, have a large five-bay, three-storey house with chenille lawn and green and white fence, and they are mostly worked as rectangles rather than as squares. Above are three swags of flowers and drapery, and trees to each side. Mary Carse, in about 1820, and Margaret Buchanan, in 1818, both have the verse 'Disease and pain invade our health' and their names and ages are worked in neat little boxes on either side of the house (illus 7.21). Margaret Adam, in her piece worked in about 1808, has an unusual scene at the bottom, of a ship with small rowing boats surrounding it (illus 7.22). Her verse is 'Behold the mountain of the Lord'. After Margaret Adam's, the earliest of this design is by Janet Nimmo, in 1812, and the latest is by Elisabeth Ross in 1837, with others by Jannet Darling, 1819, Catherine Bett, 1825, and Janet Mcrorie 1830.<sup>231</sup>

A puzzling group is formed by several samplers with 'Hawick' after the girl's name, but another with the same design and verse has 'Fraserburgh' and a very similar one has 'Ab[er]d[ee]n'. Hawick is in the southern Borders and a good many miles from both Fraserburgh and Aberdeen, which are both in north-east Scotland. These samplers have a rather tall, narrow pedimented house of red brick and a blue slate roof, with a tree on either side, and a graceful swag of roses at the top over a verse 'On Virtue'.<sup>232</sup> The earliest of these samplers is by Jean Still of Aberdeen, dated 1775, with lines from Alexander Pope, 'The learned is happy nature to explore'; her swag is not as naturalistic as the later samplers, but the way her name is worked, the style of house and the fact that the central upstairs window is shown open, suggest it was made with someone who may well have taught the Hawick girls. These samplers are by Esther Smith, 1803, Agnes Turnbull, 1805, Jannet Douglas, 1806, Eliza

Henderson 1806, Agnes Wilson, 1811 and Euphan Easton, 1817, who has the verse 'Prayer' (illus 7.23). From the north-east are Jane Cruickshank, 1816, Aberdeen (illus 7.24) and Elisabeth Stewart, 1812, Fraserburgh, but they both have 'On Virtue'.<sup>233</sup>

## SCHOOLS

Samplers with school names are more common in the nineteenth century, especially after about 1820, and most of these samplers are from parish schools or schools supported by the parish in some way. They are usually fairly basic, consisting of alphabets and numerals, but proudly worked with the maker's name and school. Several are known from Dollar Institution, now Dollar Academy, founded in 1818 and co-educational from the start, Mrs Brydie being the teacher in charge of the girls there from 1818 to 1848.<sup>234</sup> Margaret Mitchell's sampler of 1835 has four alphabets worked in different styles but all in red and green, as well as 'Remember now thy creator', her name, school and date (illus 7.25). Margaret was born on 7 July 1824 and although nothing further is known of her, a brother, Henry Walker Mitchell, became a land surveyor who later emigrated to New Zealand.<sup>235</sup>

The ability to find connections between girls who produced samplers with similar patterns has brought up many intriguing possibilities about schools and teachers but very few answers. As more information becomes available perhaps some of the questions will be answered. Each sampler is individual to the child who created it and they have therefore left something of themselves behind. But the past always holds secrets that are impossible to unravel, so perhaps we should just enjoy these 'efforts of an infant hand'.

OPPOSITE. 7.25 Margaret Mitchell, Dollar Institution, 1835. 17 in (43.2 cm) x 12 in (30.5 cm). Leslie B Durst Collection.