



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](http://www.socantscot.org) or find us on Twitter [@socantscot](https://twitter.com/socantscot).

*'Remember Now Thy Creator'*



English Statute Miles  
0 10 20 30 40 50 60



WESTERN ISLANDS  
Lewis  
Harris  
Uist  
S. Uist  
Barra  
Tirey

ORKNEY ISLES  
S  
F  
S

SHEPPELL ISLANDS

GERMANY OR NORTH

IRELAND

ENGLAND

A  
NEW MAP  
of  
SCOTLAND,  
for Ladies  
NEEDLE WORK.

London.  
Published by LAURENCE WHITTLE,  
N. 33 Fleet Street, January 27.  
1797.

CATH  
NESS  
Wick  
SH  
SUTHER  
LAND  
SHIRE

ROSS  
SHIRE  
Dornoch  
Taine  
Firth of Dornoch  
Dingwall  
Inverness

INNER  
NESS  
SHIRE  
Rathven

MURRAY  
SHIRE  
Fife  
Firth of Murray  
BAMFF  
SHIRE  
Banch  
ABERDEEN  
Tivie  
Inverury  
New Aberdeen

MEARNS  
SHIRE  
Cowie

PERTH  
SHIRE  
Dunkeld  
Perth  
Firth of Tay

ANGUS  
SHIRE  
Brechin  
Montrose  
FIFE  
Craik  
FIRTH OF FORTH

DIABLOTON  
SHIRE  
Dunblane  
CLACKMANNAN  
SHIRE  
Stirling  
STIRLING  
SHIRE  
KIRKPATRICK  
SHIRE  
KILPATRICK  
SHIRE  
EDINBURGH  
SHIRE  
DUNDEE  
SHIRE  
DUNDEE  
SHIRE  
DUNDEE  
SHIRE

LANERK  
SHIRE  
Lanark  
PEEBLES  
SHIRE  
ROXBURGH  
SHIRE  
Jedburgh  
WICK  
SHIRE  
Berwick

AIR  
SHIRE  
air  
KIRK DUMFRIES  
SHIRE  
Dumfries

WIGTON  
SHIRE  
Kirkcubright  
Solway Firth

*‘Remember  
Now Thy Creator’*

SCOTTISH GIRLS’ SAMPLERS,  
1700–1872

---

Naomi E A Tarrant



Published in 2014 in Great Britain by the  
Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland  
National Museum of Scotland  
Chambers Street  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1JF

Tel: 0131 247 4115  
Fax: 0131 247 4163  
Email: [administration@socantscot.org](mailto:administration@socantscot.org)  
Website: [www.socantscot.org](http://www.socantscot.org)

The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is a  
registered Scottish charity no. SC01044.

ISBN 978 1 90833 207 3

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book is available  
from the British Library.

Copyright © the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland  
and Naomi E A Tarrant 2014

All rights reserved.

The author and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland  
gratefully acknowledge funding towards the publication  
of this volume from an anonymous donor.

Production by Lawrie Law and Alison Rae  
Design by Mark Blackadder

Manufactured in Slovenia

## PICTURE CREDITS

Leslie B Durst Collection: photographs by Ronda  
Haas-Huntze, reproduced by kind permission of  
Leslie B. Durst.

Feller Collection: photographs by Richard Holdsworth,  
reproduced by kind permission of Micheál and  
Elizabeth Feller: 2.8, 6.10, 6.46, 8.7, A2.5.

Glasgow Museums Collection: photographs by  
permission of CGS CIC Glasgow Museums  
Collection: 1.10, 2.3, 2.5.

Kildare Place Society Archives: photographs by the  
author, reproduced by permission of Church of  
Ireland College of Education: 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 5.11.

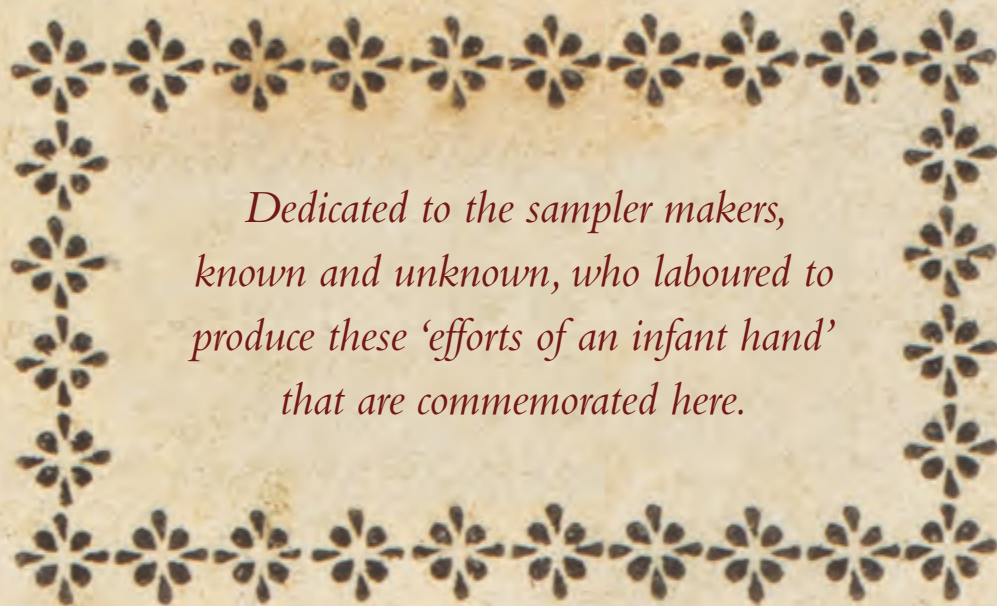
National Museums Scotland: all photographs by  
permission of the Trustees of National Museums  
Scotland.

National Trust for Scotland: photograph by permission of  
National Trust for Scotland: 5.10.

Photographs 1.1 and 1.2 of Lady Ann Duff's bag sampler,  
contained within the Seafield papers, are reproduced  
by kind permission of The Rt Hon The Earl of  
Seafield.

Photograph 5.12: by Ken Smith.

Photograph 6.7: reproduced by kind permission of John  
Bryan, Crab Tree Farm. From Titi Halle, Cora  
Ginsberg LLC, New York.



*Dedicated to the sampler makers,  
known and unknown, who laboured to  
produce these 'efforts of an infant hand'  
that are commemorated here.*



Detail from 6.35, sampler by Margaret Doig, Leslie B Durst Collection.

## CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>		ix
<i>Introduction</i>	What is a sampler?	i
Chapter 1	Scottish samplers	11
Chapter 2	Samplers in the schoolroom: education for girls	23
Chapter 3	Plain sewing samplers	45
Chapter 4	The elements of embroidered samplers	57
Chapter 5	Distinctive features of embroidered samplers	65
Chapter 6	Designs embroidered on Scottish samplers	75
Chapter 7	Tracing the girls	147
Chapter 8	Conclusion	175
<i>Appendix 1</i>	Hollie point samplers	185
<i>Appendix 2</i>	Verses on samplers and their sources	187
<i>Appendix 3</i>	Reproduction samplers	203
<i>Appendix 4</i>	Public collections with Scottish samplers	205
<i>Notes</i>		206
<i>Bibliography</i>		212
<i>Index</i>		215





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been a long time in the making but I hope the wait is worthwhile. It does not pretend to be the last word on the topic, merely an introduction to samplers from a particular area of the world in the hope that others will find them an equally enthralling subject to study. I look forward to others doing some more in-depth studies in the future.

I would like to thank the Publications Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and, in particular, Erin Osborne Martin and Alison Rae. Museum curators in Britain, Ireland and the USA have always been helpful in showing me the collections in their care. These include Dilys Blum, Clare Browne, Linda Eaton, Edwina Ehrman, Rosemary Harden, Carol Humphrey, Anthea Jarvis, Susan Payne, Pamela Parmal, Rebecca Quinton, Christine Rew, Alex Ward and Dr Susan M Parkes of the Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin. Since I left the National Museums Scotland my former colleagues have been helpful, and I thank them again for their courtesy and help. Many private owners have contacted me over the years about samplers in their care and to them I extend thanks for sending me photographs of their pieces. Margaret Swain's papers have also revealed a wealth of information on samplers that she saw, but these privately owned embroideries are not

readily available for others to see and it has been impossible to contact most owners to acquire photographs to use in this book. Dealers, those who sell antique pieces, and needlework dealers who reproduce old samplers have also been generous with their time and knowledge, and I thank Joy Jarrett and Rebecca Scott of Witney Antiques, Amy Finkel, Titi Halle, Erna Hiscock, Margriet Hogue and Jacqueline Holdsworth. Then there are the embroiderers whom I have met over the years at talks, on trips and at memorable meetings where discussion of samplers has ranged far and wide; I think particularly of the two held at Ackworth.

The Internet has been a rewarding hunting ground as most auction houses now have online catalogues with photographs; in the past printed catalogues did not have illustrations of all their lot numbers. EBay has also proved an interesting site to explore, and there are several blogs and some fascinating websites devoted to samplers. All these avenues have over the years produced an incredible number of interesting Scottish samplers, which has made the task of sorting them out and piecing the story together both exhausting and enjoyable. Others to whom thanks are due are Helen and Philip Bennett, Eileen Bennett, Hugh Cheape, Micheál and Elizabeth Feller, Linda Hadden of The Sampler Guild, Lisa Haisch, Ronda Haas-Huntze, Lorraine Mootz, Dorothy Bromily Phelan, Molly Rorke, Alison Rosie and Jennifer Scarce. Above

OPPOSITE. Detail of 1.4. NMS A.1994.1328.



IT 1815. 16 $\frac{1}{2}$  in (41.6 cm) x 12 in (30.5 cm). Micheál and Elizabeth Feller Collection.

all, thanks are due to Leslie B Durst, someone who has been collecting samplers for many years. She has a particular interest and love of those by Scottish girls and has carried out extensive research on the genealogy and background of the makers of the samplers in her collection. Special thanks go to the late Margaret Swain, an embroidery historian who also published widely on textiles and furniture and wrote the definitive

account of the embroideries of Mary, Queen of Scots. She always had something positive to say about even the scrappiest effort and taught me much about looking at samplers. Nor should I forget my mother, Annie Davies Tarrant, who first taught me how to embroider; I hope she would have approved of this book.

Naomi E A Tarrant