

# THE BURRELL COLLECTION

## European Needlework in The Burrell Collection

There are 462 items of European needlework and related textiles in The Burrell Collection. Sir William Burrell started collecting textiles at the beginning of the twentieth century and continued to add items to the collection until his death in 1958. The earliest item in the collection is a fragment of the Robe of St Louis IX of France from the mid-thirteenth century (29-1). The robe itself is still in the church of Santa Corona in Vicenza. When it was repaired in 1884 this fragment was removed and was subsequently purchased by Sir William Burrell on 25 November 1936 for £167. The latest items are examples of British and continental European lace from the nineteenth century.

The majority of the needlework that Burrell acquired is from seventeenth-century Britain and is a particular strength of this collection. He was not alone in this interest; other early twentieth-century collectors include J. Francis Mallett, who bequeathed his collection to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, William Hesketh Lever, 1st Lord Leverhulme, whose collection is in the Lady Lever Gallery, Liverpool, and Judge Irwin Untermeyer, who donated his collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Today the Trustees of the Burrell Collection continue to add items of significance to the needlework collection. Purchases have included a very rare early-seventeenth skirt panel (29-314) and a set of early seventeenth-century embroidered hangings from Lochleven Castle, Scotland (29-313) in 1996.

### Ecclesiastical Textiles

This is a small group of fifteen items. It includes five examples of English embroideries known as opus anglicanum. Although famed throughout Medieval Europe for their quality, many of these items were destroyed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the late 1530s and subsequent mid-sixteenth and seventeenth century purges. Surviving examples are therefore extremely rare today. A key item in the Burrell Collection is a chasuble (29-2) from a set originally belonging to Whalley Abbey, Lancashire, England. A matching dalmatic, chasuble and maniple are in the collection of Townley Hall, Lancashire. Other important items include the fragment of the Robe of St Louis (29-1) and a chalice veil from Queen Elizabeth I of England's Royal Household (29-9).

### Costume

There are thirty-two items of embroidered or knitted seventeenth century costume. The collection of embellished nightcaps includes examples said to have been worn by Charles II (29-133), Oliver Cromwell (29-139) and Major Buntine (29-315), who served under both the Royalists and Parliamentarians. Of particular significance is a Hawking set said to have belonged to James VI of Scotland and I of England (29-151). The glove and pouch are embroidered with a pattern of blackberries and brambles. The latter also has detailed enamel work, possibly by George Heriot of Edinburgh. This is one of the most expensive items of needlework purchased by Burrell for £1,100 in 1934. The previous year he had bought a Degas pastel for only £300.

### Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-century Needlework

This is one of the larger areas of the collection. It consists of English samplers, needlework panels and small objects, such as caskets and mirrors, some worked by girls as part of their education. The twenty-four samplers include spot motif, band and white work examples. There are just over a 100 embroidered panels including examples of canvas-work, silk-work, and raised-work panels. Thirty-eight panels from the mid-seventeenth century depict Biblical scenes or saints, such as Esther and Ahasuerus (29-64, 29-68 and 29-72). Many are comparable to examples in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the Lady Lever Art Gallery, the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The designs of these are often derived from the engraved illustrations in Gerald de Jode's *Thesaurus Sacrarum Historiarum Veteris Testamenti*, published in Antwerp, 1585. However some, such as a raised-work panel depicting David and

Bathsheba, with a raised-work spider crawling over the top (29-59), are unique. A further thirty panels from the late seventeenth and eighteenth century depict pastoral scenes with farmers or shepherdesses. In addition there are ten needlework boxes and caskets, three mirrors and a three intricate beadwork baskets.

### **Seventeenth-century Domestic Textiles**

Larger items in the needlework collection include various domestic textiles, some made by amateurs, others by professionals. There are seventeen velvet cushions, fifteen turkey or canvas-work seat covers, and fifty-seven crewelwork panels, valances or curtains. The eight needlework valances include one associated with Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn (29-178) and three with the Arms of Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchy, made in Scotland in the early 1550s (29-181, 29-182, 29-183). There are also seven panels from the Lochleven Hangings (29-313). Others from the set are in the National Museum of Scotland.

### **Lace**

There are 121 examples of European lace in the collection providing a comprehensive range of different needle and bobbin techniques. The items range from seventeenth-century Italian examples, including a piece from the Christening of Charles II of Spain (24-13), through eighteenth-century Brussels and Alecon (French) to nineteenth-century Honiton (English) lace.

### **Further reading**

Arthur, Liz, *Embroidery 1600-1700 at the Burrell Collection*, John Murray, 1995.

Quinton, Rebecca, *Patterns of Childhood: Samplers from Glasgow Museums*, The Herbert Press, an imprint of A&C Black, in association with Glasgow City Council (Museums), 2005.

Brooks, Mary, M, *English Embroideries*, Ashmolean Museum in association with Jonathan Home Publications, London, 2004.