

The Bath Textile Summer School 2019

The Gawthorpe Needlecase

With Jenny Adin-Christie

I am delighted to hear that you have secured an elusive place on my workshop at the Bath Textile Summer School and am very much looking forward to working with you there!

The following provides a little background information about the project we will cover in the year's classes, The Gawthorpe Needlecase.

Gawthorpe Hall and 'Miss Rachel':

Gawthorpe Hall is a beautiful Elizabethan house, which was redesigned by Sir Charles Barry in the 1850s. It is sometimes referred to as *'The Downton of the North'* as Sir Charles also designed Highclere Castle, the 'real' Downton, and Gawthorpe does have a similar feel....on a smaller scale.

The house sits beside the tranquil River Calder, a lovely setting. It is just on the outskirts of the Lancashire town of Padiham. This region is synonymous with the Britain's historical textile industry.



Gawthorpe is also the home for the **Gawthorpe Textile Collection**. This is a 30,000+ collection of textiles and embroidery of every type, and from around the world, which was amassed by the late Rachel Kay Shuttleworth (1886 – 1907).

'Miss Rachel' (as she is affectionately known at Gawthorpe), was the daughter of Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth and his wife Blanche. The family had owned Gawthorpe since the 14th century.

Miss Rachel was inspired to learn a love of needlework by her Mother, and from the age of 9 began collecting examples of different types of embroidery to feed her fascination, as well as practising stitching herself. The hall houses the fabulous original Jacobean four poster bed, which she was gifted by her parents for her 21st birthday, and for which she embroidered a set of crewel work hangings and matching curtains, bedspread, pelmets, seat covers and fire screen! It is estimated that the hangings alone took around 5 years to complete! Her notes mention that she was inspired by studying designs in the V&A and a 1650s bedcover from the RSN collection.

Her mother encouraged in her a sense of civic duty and compassion for those less fortunate. She developed a great sense of commitment to philanthropic enterprise, tirelessly devoting much her life to aiding others, and often being allied to causes which may not have always been considered 'respectable' or fashionable at the time amongst her class, such as supporting the local home for unmarried mothers, and assisting with the probation service.



She was also a friend of Lady Baden Powell and became instrumental in establishing the Guiding movement in the North West of England, playing a fully hands on roll in this organisation, which she believed to empower and educate young women.

One of her greatest missions in life, was to foster a love of handicraft, particularly embroidery and lace making, in as many people as possible. She believed in the value and power of creative work, using hands and minds for creative and artistic expression. Such work provided solace and healing to those in need or distress, and a means of comfort and enjoyment for all, at all levels of society. Her thinking was along similar lines to that of her contemporaries in the Arts and Crafts movement. She was very much ahead of her time and her theories strike a chord with today's thinking on the benefits of mindfulness.

Thus, over the years, she formed her vast collection of textiles and lace, mainly through donations and some purchases whilst on her travels. Her hope was that this would provide a unique resource of inspiration for all seeking or needing to learn and study these arts, thus keeping them alive.

She meticulously catalogued each piece in her own hand, preferring to use a rather beautiful shade of green ink! In 1952, she was able to fulfil a long-held dream to open Gawthorpe to the public as a place where all those interested in learning about embroidery and textiles, would be welcomed to study and to be inspired.

'Our hope is that the old home, so dearly loved, may soon become a centre for education, crafts, knowledge and beauty, a joy and benefit to many people.'

Miss Rachel

She was undoubtedly a force of nature, and I only wish I could have met her, as I feel we would have been kindred spirits! Her spirit lives on in the Textile Collection which remains a tremendous resource, looked after with great commitment and love by the collection team, which includes curators and volunteers. There is a great sense of their keenness to perpetuate Miss Rachel's commitment to using Gawthorpe as a resource for creative education and inspiration.

'I have a vision of a place of meeting where neighbours will come for many reasons to seek stimulating thought by meeting other active minds, to find refreshment and inspiration and a joy in beauty.'

Miss Rachel

The Gawthorpe Needlecase:

The needlecase was inspired by my visit to Gawthorpe Hall to study Miss Rachel's collection in 2017. I wanted to create a project for a course I would be running at the Hall the following year.

I had imagined that I would work a piece closely based on a historical textile in the collection. However, I never like to copy historical pieces.....

I feel these pieces belong to their own time and have been created by others' hands and minds, and that we should move things forward!!

The things that left the most lasting impression from my visit were the sheer size and eclectic nature of the collection, but more importantly the story, life and mission of Miss Rachel herself.



It was on reading Miss Rachel's biography on the long train ride home from Padiham to London, that I was inspired to produce a design which would bring together inspiration from the embroidery treasures, combined with a celebration of Miss Rachel's life and achievements.

Miss Rachel's rather lovely working desk is on display in the public gallery at Gawthorpe, and includes her own needlecase, each page numbered with needle size, a sign of her meticulous organisation! This is an item which so many embroiderers tell me they wish they could create, so that they may organise their needles better!!

The needlecase forms the shape of an 18th century 'pocket', the type worn around the waist, before pockets were inserted into the skirt itself, and of which there are some beautiful examples in the collection.



The embroidered panel on the front of the needlecase encompasses motifs inspired by some of the beautiful early embroideries in the collection, together with those inspired by Miss Rachel herself, most notably the fish symbol. She was awarded the highest honour which can be given to any woman in the Girl Guiding movement, 'The Silver Fish'. This award is symbolic of her, and the movement's, willingness to encourage women to swim upstream or against the tide.

I love this symbolism! It certainly sums up for me what my life as an embroiderer, (and a woman!) is about.....swimming against the tide of ordinary life to make it more empowering, more creative and inspiring, and even a little more fun and eccentric! I hope the symbolism will mean the same for you too!!

The design includes an eclectic range of stitch techniques, some clearly historical, and some of my own invention! The background is worked on natural linen, inspired by the textile weaving and spinning heritage of the Lancashire region. This is embroidered using counted satin and pulled work stitches commonly used in the whitework of the 18th century.

The fish uses darning into net as a link to Miss Rachel's love of lace and lace making. Areas of needle painting and satin stitch in silk perle, combine with delicate surface stitches, and are contrasted by pleated metal threads over highly raised padding, giving rich overall texture, with echoes of sumptuous 18th century silk and metal work aprons in the collection.

Silk ribbon and bound rayon tape, with beads and spangles, are used as a nod to the delightful pieces of ribbon and bead embroidery in the collection. Densely worked concentric rows of split stitch were commonly used to create intricate flat shaded designs in the 18th century, often on women's pockets. This technique is used here to create leaf motifs inspired by Miss Rachel's famed bedspread.

The needlecase has a wooden base and raised sides to give structure and stability. The lid lifts off to reveal the tiny needlecase and a space for a thread waxer. The needlecase and box lining are worked in traditional wool baize, woven in the UK.

The dominant colour in the design is green.....inspired by Miss Rachel's love of green ink!!! I really think this colour sums up her strength, passion for life and eccentricity!

The green is combined with subtle shades of mauve and ivory/white. 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918 which enabled all men and some women over the age of 30 to vote for the first time and paved the way for universal suffrage 10 years later. These three colours were used by Suffragette movement in the 19th century. When the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in England was looking for a

colour scheme to distinguish their political movement, they chose purple, white, and green. The editor of the weekly newspaper *Votes for Women* gave the explanation of the colour symbolism as:

“Purple, as everyone knows is the royal colour, it stands for the royal blood that flows in the veins of every suffragette, the instinct of freedom and dignity... white stands for purity in private and public life... green is the colour of hope and the emblem of spring.”

Although Miss Rachel was not a suffragette, she certainly held similar principles, and lived her life standing up for the rights of women and encouraging women from all backgrounds to fulfil their potential. This symbol is very personal for me too.....symbolic of the fact that learning embroidery gave me the skills to use a traditional craft skill, traditionally associated with women, to develop a career and business! Power to the embroiderers!!! ☺

I hope you will very much enjoy working this very special project!!

Your kit for the course:

- ALL the materials, threads and needles required to work the design and make this up into the needlecase, will be provided for you as a full working project pack .
- This will include a comprehensive illustrated instruction manual.
- The cost for this kit will be **£160**.
- **We would like you to bring a cash payment for your kit in a sealed, named envelope, to hand in on the morning of the first day of class.**
- You may also like to order one of the special **ceramic heart shaped ‘waxers’** which have been designed to fit in the upper section inside the needlecase. You can choose your design from a selection in class (all floral) but please let me know you would like one using the order form. £12.00 +VAT.

Equipment Required:

You will need to bring the following equipment with you to the class, to enable you to complete your design. However, those items marked ✂ can be available to purchase and those items marked 🖐 can be available to borrow, so there is **no need** to struggle to source these beforehand.

Please let us know as far as possible in advance of the class which items you wish to purchase/borrow, by completing and returning the form below.

**** Please note that ALL prices quotes are WITHOUT VAT. VAT at 20% will be added at the end of your invoice.**

Frame and Stands:

For working the fish:

- All students will require a 12 or 15cm shallow-edged, hand-held embroidery hoop. It is not important if this is bound or not.

For working the main design:

- 🖐 or ✂ **An 8”, deep edged, embroidery hoop** (the ‘*Elbesse*’ make of frames are highly recommended). BOTH rings of the frame should be bound with cotton tape as this will be essential to enable you to keep the work sufficiently tight.) Larger embroidery hoops do **not** keep the work sufficiently tight.
- 🖐 or ✂ **A suitable stand** to hold your embroidery hoop, therefore allowing both hands to be free for working. This is **essential** for this class – a hand held embroidery hoop is **not** suitable.

OR:

- ✂ If you prefer to work in a **small slate frame**, the design will fit into an 8” or 10” slate frame which can be framed up for you in advance of the course. Please request by completing the order form.
- 🖐 or ✂ You will need a ‘Lowery’ stand, or equivalent, to use with your slate frame. These can be borrowed if required.

General Equipment:

- ✎ or ✂ A pair of fine, sharp embroidery scissors. (Curved and straight tip scissors £14.50)
- ✎ or ✂ A second pair of fine, sharp embroidery scissors to use when cutting metal threads (metal threads will blunt your scissors over time so it is best to keep a pair to be used solely for cutting these – they must have nice fine blades however). Serrated ‘goldwork’ scissors are **not** recommended!! (Curved and straight tip scissors £14.50)
- ✎ or ✂ A mellor or similar blunt tipped laying tool. It is helpful but NOT essential to use a mellor. You could also use a blunt tool such as a large blunt tapestry needle, or I also use the tips (broken off to about 8cm) of old plastic knitting needles! (Hand-made mellors created by Jenny’s Father are £22. You may have initials or a quote engraved for a further £8).
- ✎ or ✂ A fine tipped awl or similar fine, sharp tipped tool for making holes. It is helpful but NOT essential to use an awl. You could also use a large pointed chenille needle. (Tulip fine beading awls £6.50)
- ✎ or ✂ A stiletto for making eyelets (Hand-made stilettos by Jenny’s Father are £24).
- ✎ or ✂ A pair of tweezers – ordinary eyebrow tweezers with a flat or slanted end are preferable to very fine pointed tweezers. (Curved tip tweezers £5.75)
- ✎ or ✂ A small velvet covered board or velvet lined tray. A jam jar lid lined with velvet works well....if you bring a magnet too, you can use this to attach the lid to your hoop! I also sell lovely hand turned wooden versions with magnet attachment if required. (Small 10cm diameter £15, large 15cm diameter £20, each available in deep red, raspberry, olive or duck egg)
- ✎ or ✂ A magnifier, if you like to use one
- ✎ or ✂ A spotlight and extension lead if you feel this would be helpful to you.
- ✎ Small, fine pins (Kinkame tiny superfine pins £6.50)
- ✎ A hard pencil (e.g. ‘H’) and pencil sharpener, or propelling pencil
- ✎ A screwdriver for tightening your ring frame.
- A clean cloth to place over your work surface to keep clean and tidy, if you fancy using this!! 😊
- A cushion if you like something squishy to sit on! 😊

If you have **any queries at all** regarding the course, **please feel free** to contact me using the details provided on the order form.

I will very much look forward to sharing this exciting event with you! xx



Booking Form and Order Form:

Please complete and return with your deposit to secure your booking.

Please return **BY 1st July 2019** at the latest

Jenny Adin-Christie Specialist Embroiderer, 197 Albury Rd, South Merstham, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 3LW.

Or email to: jenny.adin-christie@sky.com

Your name: _____

Contact tel. number: _____ Email Address: _____

Address: _____

Frames and stands to purchase: Please note that hoop and stand prices are subject to VAT.

Ring frames:

- Pre bound 6" 'Elbesse' embroidery ring with stem (to fit into stands below) £14.50+VAT
- Pre bound 8" 'Elbesse' embroidery ring with stem (to fit into stands below) £16.50+VAT

(NB. Remember that you will need one of the stands below to use with the above ring frames).

- Seat stand (sit upon stand which holds a ring frame with a stem) £13.50 + VAT
- Barrel clamp (clamps to the table and holds a ring frame with a stem) £11.50 + VAT
- Floor stand (deluxe hand crafted stand for holding a ring frame with a stem) £125.00 + VAT

Slate frames:

- 8" slate frame, (pre framed) £42.50 + VAT (add £22, + VAT)
- 10" slate frame, (pre framed) £44.50 + VAT (add £22, + VAT)
- 12" slate frame, (pre framed) £46.50 + VAT (add £24, + VAT)

Frames and stands to hire:

- I would prefer to hire a hoop and seat stand / table clamp, to use over the class £5.00 + VAT
- I would like to hire a Lowery stand to use over the class £5.00 + VAT

All-in-one magnifier lights to hire:

- I would like to hire an all-in-on magnifier light for use throughout the class £8.00 + VAT

Heart Waxers:

- I would like to purchase a heart waxer to fit with my needlecase £12.00 + VAT