

# Worshipful Company of Broiderers of Lochac

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Guild Newsletter, Issue 15 – 12<sup>th</sup> Night, AS XXXVI (January 2002)

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## From The Guildmaster

☞ Greetings to all, and I hope that the

festive season was safe and enjoyable for all of you. First up, I'd like to welcome our new Chronicler, Viscountess Morwynna Branwynt, and thank her for putting this issue together under difficult circumstances in the midst of her move to Politarchopolis.

The big news since the last issue is the outstanding success of the Accession Day Guilds' Event. All the attendees seemed to have a very good time, and the event has generated a great deal of enthusiasm for Company activities, as well as a number of new members. Welcome! There are certainly plans afoot to hold a similar event next year. Many thanks to Leonie de Gray for organising the event, and to those people who taught classes and otherwise contributed to the day.

At the Accession Day event, the pieces for the Kingdom kneeling carpet were distributed, and a number of people started work then and there. I understand that a number of pieces have already been returned to Mistress Rowan, a fantastic effort. There are no more carpet pieces available, but the cloak pieces will be available for distribution shortly - contact Bartolomeo on [amreid@qbe.com.au](mailto:amreid@qbe.com.au) for details or to register your interest if you haven't already done so.

A reminder too, that the next WCoB competition to be held at Crown Tourney at Rowany Festival will be 'something new' again. This means any style or technique of embroidery that you haven't tried before. This category was very successful last year, so we've decided to run it again (and having done it twice, that makes it a tradition). I hope that you will take the opportunity to branch out, and I hope to see lots of entries.

Yours in Service

Bess Haddon

## From the Guild Patron:

☞ Greetings to all the WCoB members.

I hope you all having had a fabulous time in the holiday season and got all your various stitching projects done. Well the last few months have been very eventful and exciting for the Company.

The Accession Day Guild's Feast was a very successful event. We had a great day of discussions and lessons and sharing info on silk and books and handy tips. The highlight was the construction and distribution of the kits for the kingdom carpet. Many pieces are now completed (I've finished mine). My only regret was that there was only 31 pieces to hand out since we had many more people want to be involved than there were kits to give out. Hopefully those in the Sydney region can get involved in the assembly of the pieces into the carpet. Don't forget that there will also be cloak kits soon.

Also at Accession Day, there was the feast, in tavern style, beginning with the procession and introduction of the guild members of the many and various guilds present. The food was great and we were able to hold Guild business. Thank you to Aelfryth of Saxony, who kindly donated a piece of embroidery to be inspected by the masters and then burned in judgement. It was quite spectacular in its demise.

Next year we hope the event will occur again. Indeed the broiderers in Rowany seemed keen to organise it. Hopefully it will be a bigger event and involve more recognition of ranks so we can really get into the guild feel of things.

For one year only, this festival will be a big one for the WCoB being as it is the Crown event and festival combined. So we will have the competition as well as many classes and the WCoB meeting. If there are any classes you want to see at Festival please contact Bess

and she can organise the appropriate guild member to make it happen.

Good luck with your progressing Coronation frocks.

mouse...

## Thanks to Mistress Mathilde

Thanks to Mistress Mathilde Adycote of Mynheniot for her kind donation of a copy of Kay Staniland's book *Embroiderers* in the Medieval Craftsmen series to the Company. This book, which is one of the best available on medieval embroidery, was given as an encouragement prize to Gwir ferch Madog for her entry in the headwear competition.

## Forthcoming Competitions

### AS XXXVII (Rowany Festival 2002 – Twelfth Night 2003)

Crown Tourney at Rowany Festival: Something New – Any embroidery in a style or technique you have not attempted before.

Midwinter Coronation: Islamic/Middle Eastern embroidery

November Crown Tourney: The Human Figure – Embroidery in any style depicting people.

Twelfth Night: German Whitework (*opus teutonicum*).

## Product Reviews

### Silk from an Unusual Source

Mistress Mathilde and Mistress Kiriell, who have been attending a gold work course run by a Politarchopolis embroidery shop, told me about the fine silk that they had been using which came from a fishing tackle shop! So, I went to investigate, and discovered a source almost as bizarre as Bartolomeo's experience in the shipping store in Sydney. Yes, my local fishing tackle shop does sell embroidery silk - it's used by anglers to tie flies. They had a relatively narrow range of colours, which were mostly bright (not surprisingly) but they included some lovely scarlets, purples, emerald

greens and bright blues, as well as black. There were several different varieties (not including the rayon threads) made by Pearsall's, an English company which has been making silk thread for over a century. The threads come on little wooden reels, and vary in weight and price. The finest thread is called 'gossamer' (which is presumably a brand name, since real gossamer is spider's silk, and not produced commercially to my knowledge). It is very fine indeed, and a small reel contains 45 metres, for a cost of \$4.15. The gossamer silk would be suitable mainly as a couching thread for fine laid work. Slightly heavier is a silk called 'naples', which is also sold on a 45 metre reel, for \$3.95. This could also be used for fine couching, but might also be suitable for very fine counted thread work. I also bought a reel of floss silk called 'marabou', which was much heavier and only contained 8 metres per reel. It is a plied, low twist silk, and quite nice, although similar to the Madiera silk and not as good a price at \$3.95.

As an experiment I also bought a reel of silver lamé. This is a thin strip of pliable metal, which from the feel of it I guess to be aluminium. It looks rather like the lametta that you hang on the Christmas tree. There is a piece of counted thread work in the Victoria and Albert Museum which uses flat strips of metal like this, so I thought I'd try it out some time. I'll report back if it works. There was no information on the reel about the maker or the length, but I think there may be about 5 metres, for a cost of \$2.95.

The fishing tackle shop I went to is Pratt's Tackle Box, 70 Josephson St, Belconnen, in Canberra. As an added bonus, they also sell solid brass rings which can be used for costume lacing. I would be interested to hear whether other fishing shops are similarly useful to the embroiderer.

Bess

## Information Sharing

The following information was taken from the CIETA Embroidery Group's newsletter, their website is found at

[www.annatextiles.ch/newslet](http://www.annatextiles.ch/newslet). The newsletter contains articles and book reviews. I thought this one was appropriate given the fact our very own Gawain will be invested as

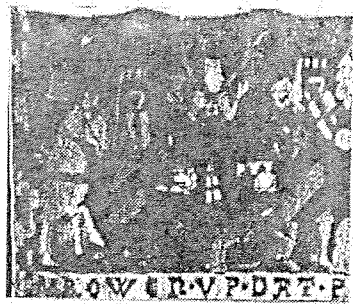
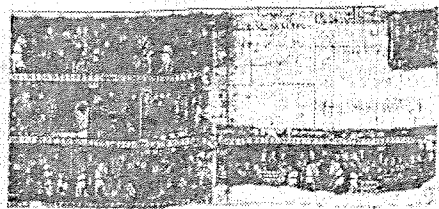
Prince this weekend. It may also provide some inspiration for those looking for "Something New" to try for the Festival Competition.

**Article by Dr. Leonie von Wilckens, Munich, Germany,** (the article is reprinted as found – including the interesting construction of a non-English speaker)

### **Die Bildfolge von Gawan auf dem gestickten Behang in Braunschweig,**

in: Niederdeutsche Beitrage zur Kunstgeschichte, 33. Bd., Berlin 1994, S. 41

The embroidery was formerly called Percival tapestry, since 1979 it is known as **picture story of Gawan**. Preserved in Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum. Wool embroidery on linen, around 1350-60. Fragmentarily preserved, originally 437 cm long. There are 3 rows with pictures and with inscriptions. In 1877 it was found sewn into a green cloth in the former convent of Heiligkreuz in Braunschweig.



Gawan Tapestry, 1350 – 1360, wool embroidery, Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum

The work can be compared with the wool embroideries from 14th c. of Wienhausen, it is probably the same time, origin, atelier. Gawan was a nephew of King Artus and together with Erec and Iwein he was one of the most famous Cavaliers of the Round Table.

The events are shown on a frontline and there is almost no evidence of space. The program of the picture story tells in great detail what Gawan had to do for his beloved Orgeluse. The embroidery shows rather the outer events and

not so much the sense behind, as can be found in the book of Wolfram von Eschenbach about 150 years earlier.

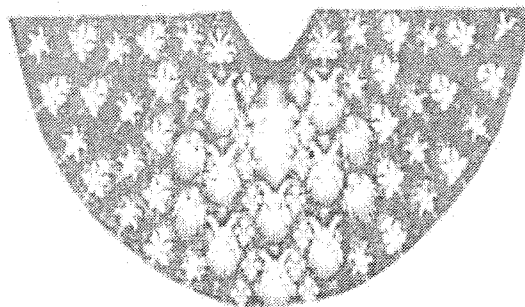
In the first row Orgeluse rejects Gawan's courting. In the second row he has to save the castle of Marveile and one of his tasks is to jump on a bed which rushes on rollers of ruby through the room, then he fights with a lion. He gets wounded, but as the castle is now saved, ladies find him and take care of him. In the lowest row Gawan has to pick a branch from a certain tree.

He then brings the branch to Orgeluse and now the wedding can take place. Representations of the castle of Marveile can also be found in contemporary ivory carvings and also in book illuminations of 14th c. In the latter the same kind of picture story in rows one above the other shows the growing delight in telling stories. But picture rows remained short lived, they can be found above all in Bohemia or in provincial austrian wall-painting.

### **English Medieval Cope, embroidery in the Textilmuseum**

Karen Stolleis kindly sent some copied pages from "Die christliche Kunst", 10, 1913/14. On page 45, a Cope from the Ikle collection at St Gallen is mentioned. Some years ago, an english student wrote an article about this Cope.

Cope, Textilmuseum St Gallen, TM 23809



**Penelope E. Wallis,** An English Medieval Cope in the Textilmuseum St.Gallen the description of the Cope is taken from the english version printed in german language in: *Textilkunst* 1/1984, p.19-21

Part of it is reproduced as follows: In the Textilmuseum St.Gallen is a splendid example of an English embroidered cope from the latter part of the Middle-ages. Dating from c. 1500 it shows several motifs, embroidered in silver-gilt and coloured silks, applied to a rich purple velvet background. Although the hood

and orphreys are lacking and some of the motifs have been restored (in a different coloured silk) the condition of the vestment is generally good. The main iconographical theme of the St.Gallen cope is that of the Virgin Mary's part in Christ's sacrifice for the Redemption of Mankind's original sin, and is summed up by the scene placed in the centre back of the vestment which shows the Assumption of the Virgin.- She is depicted, surrounded by a mandorla, being borne aloft by five demi-angels who rise from clouds. The overall design is similar to that of other English copes of this date; for example, that from Norrkoeping, now in Stockholm, that at Oscott College, and another in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The motifs, which powder the field of the cope, are three types of conventional flowers, fleur-de-lys and angels. The conventional flowers are so stylized that they do not resemble any known flora but, they can be seen to have Christian allegorical interpretations. It is likely that the scattering of the flowers over the cope may represent the flos campi, the flowers of the field, from the Old Testament. The angels which appear on the cope continue a tradition which was seen on the vestments of the great period of Opus Anglicanum. Apart from the five demi-angels bearing Mary to Heaven, twelve demi-angels are depicted on the St.Gallen cope, all emanating from clouds and surrounded by rays of light. Those angels closest to Mary - the three on either side and two below all have four wings. Of those to the side and the lowest one are in the orans attitude, whilst that immediately below the Assumption scene holds a crown of thorns, a symbol of the Passion and another reference to Christ's Sacrifice. The four angels placed outside the central group have each two wings and hold a scroll with the inscription "DA GLORIAM DEO" . In the central scene Mary's body is being carried into paradise; she is shown crowned as Queen of heaven.

## Book Review

Marrienne Ellis, *Embroideries and Samplers from Islamic Egypt*, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2001. Paperback and hardback, pp. 96 colour.

Unfortunately I don't own this beautiful book - yet. Leonie has kindly lent it to me so that I

could write a review, and I'll try to get the drool marks off it before I give it back.

The embroideries featured in this book are those in the Newberry collection in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. They all date from the SCA period, ranging from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries, although the majority date from the Mamluk period, between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Unusually, a number of the embroideries have been dated using radiocarbon techniques, which narrows down the date range, although it still isn't precise.

Medieval Islamic and Middle Eastern textiles are rarely produced in the standard books on textiles and embroidery, so it is fascinating to see a whole book devoted to the subject, and all but one of the photos were of embroideries I had not seen elsewhere. The photographs are superb - full colour, high resolution, and in sufficient detail that in most cases it's possible to see individual stitches quite clearly. The embroideries, there are also details of the reverse side!

There are a number of surprises in the embroideries. Many of them feature counted thread techniques and designs that we are more familiar with from the European sixteenth century, and provide a good argument that the designs and techniques of 'Holbein stitch' originated in the Middle East and came to Europe, probably by way of Islamic Spain.

The samplers mentioned in the title really are samplers, with both spot and band motifs, indicating that the history of the sampler is much older than is generally thought. Many of the embroideries show geometric designs, as might have been expected as a result of the Islamic prohibition on depicting living things, but there are also images of creatures, including stylised birds, lions and fish.

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There is also a wide range of techniques displayed. In addition to pattern darning, double running stitch, what looks like counted cross stitch but is in fact counted herringbone stitch, there are freehand stemstitch and couching designs, split stitch, drawn thread work, appliqué and even patchwork. Even better from the point of the SCA creator is the

fact that while some of the embroideries are fragments, making it hard to tell what the original purpose was, there are several pictures of parts of garments, a pouch and two hats.

The style of the text is scholarly, and the author does not indulge in unfounded speculation. Even better, from the point of view of an embroiderer, she provides the practical detail necessary to recreate the pieces, including the thread count, the fibre types, and the techniques. This book should serve as a model for anyone writing about textiles.

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The only downside about the book is that it isn't cheap or easy to get hold of. It is available from Amazon books in the UK, or directly from the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and the price is about \$A62, including postage. I will be ordering a copy from the Museum, and will happily make that a multiple order. If we buy enough copies we may be able to get a discount, or at least save a bit on postage. Let me know if you would like to order a copy.

If you have an Islamic or Middle Eastern persona, or are thinking about it, or know someone who might be thinking about it, this really is the book for you. It really made my fingers itch! And the WCOB competition for Midwinter Coronation next year is Islamic and Middle Eastern embroidery.

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*Bess Haddon of Cairo*

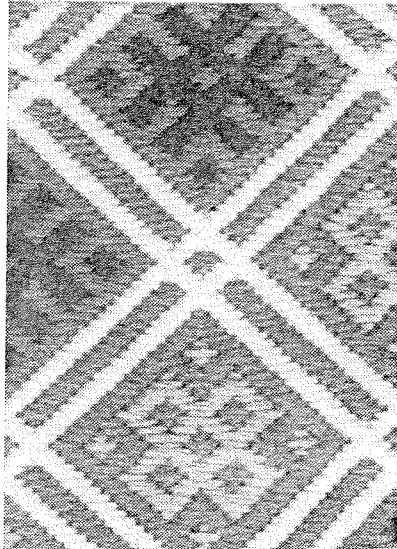
## **German 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century embroidery.**

Want to try something new for the Festival Competition? I was shown how to do German Brick Stitch and introduced to a wonderful pattern book. I'm now quarter way through an enormous cushion cover (I do like to give myself a challenge, perhaps I should have started with one of these small bags!) Timothy J Mitchell has a website where you can access his TI article and his [Compleat Anachronist A Stitch Out of Time :14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century German Counted Thread Embroidery.](#) Both of these items contain patterns for some truly amazing geometric patterns. Tomothy went through and researched the dyes and has provided a list of

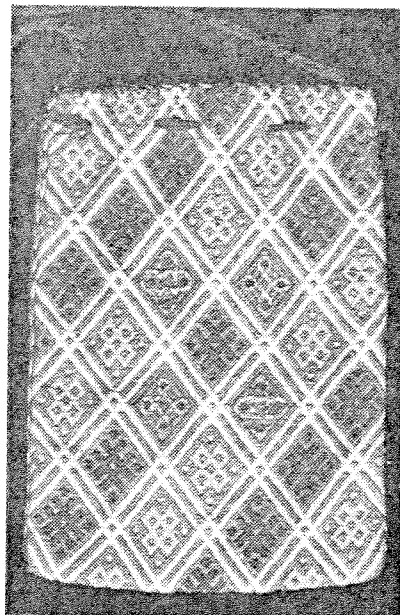
modern thread colours so you can reconstruct the original colours as well.

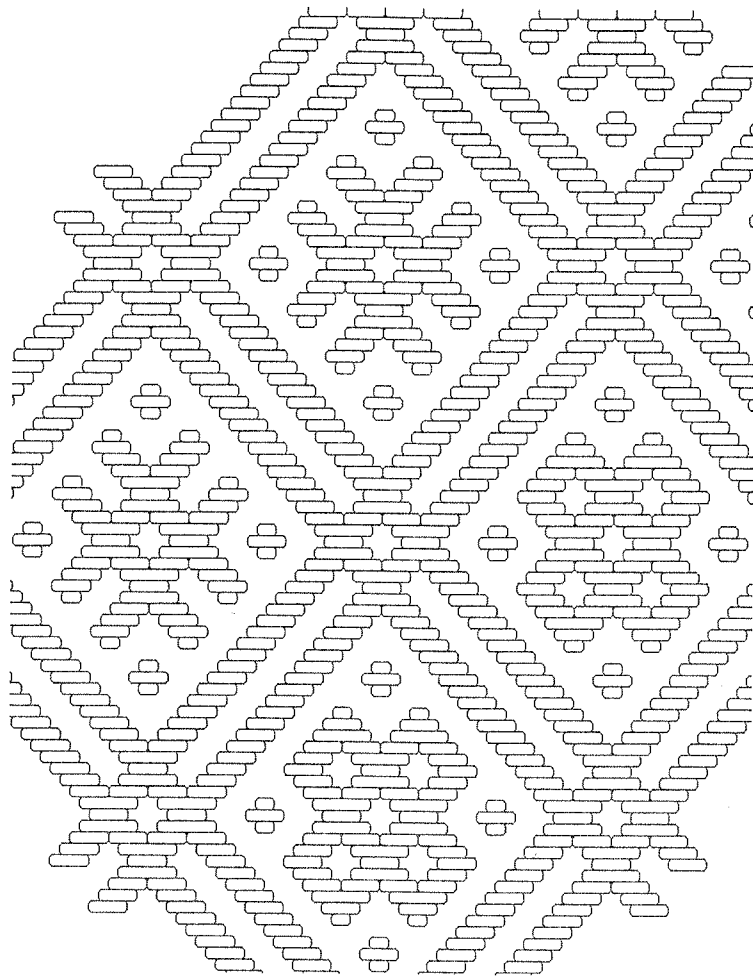
The stitch he uses is referred to as Brick Stitch and you can quickly cover a large area. It was mainly used for bags and cushion covers, though Kay Stanilard's [Embroidery](#) book also has a picture of what they believed to be a bed cover or hanging in the same stitch. What follows is a pattern for one of the items he reconstructed in the [Compleat Anachronist](#) booklet

The pattern used:



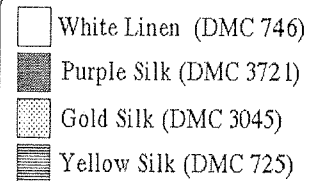
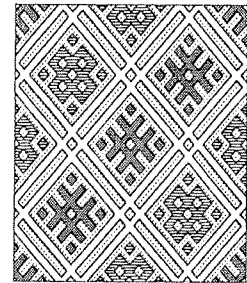
The original bag (these colours have faded over 400 or so years)



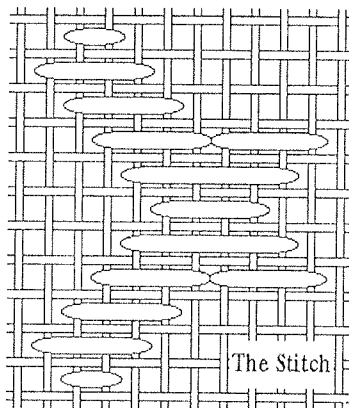


Bag, German, late 14th Century. Plied white linen thread, and coloured silks in satin stitch on linen. 37 threads per inch evenweave fabric.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London.  
Textiles department, Reference Collection,  
Cat # 8313-1863.



Color Key



NOTES:

1. Unlike all the examples studied so far, this bag is constructed such that the embroidery stitching runs horizontally instead of vertically. There is no obvious reason for this.
2. All the colors are faded somewhat, and would have been brighter originally.
3. The bag this pattern is taken from is 5" by 5 1/2", square bottomed, and lined with dark red silk. The fold is at the bottom with the sides stitched up. It closes with a double drawstring.
4. As in some of the other items on display in the V&A, the phrase "satin stitch" does not refer to the common modern embroidery stitch, but to any stitch that covers the fabric completely and smoothly.

14th & 15th Century German Counted Thread Embroidery XI:  
An Embroidered Bag.

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# Contacts

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## **Guild Patron**

Viscountess Mistress Keridwen the Mouse  
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## **Chronicler**

Viscountess Morwynna Branwynt  
(Shonna Robertson)  
somewhere in transit between St Florians and  
Politarchopolis (watch this space)

## **Webmaster**

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email: [aeron\\_lasair@yahoo.com](mailto:aeron_lasair@yahoo.com)

## **Other Resources**

### **West Kingdom Needlework Guild**

#### **Guild Mistress**

Sabrina de la Bere (Robin Berry)  
PO Box 1809  
El Granada CA 95501

Email: [rlberry@sprynet.com](mailto:rlberry@sprynet.com)

Guild Website <http://users.drak.net/needlework>

### **Historic Needlework List**

(For those who have e-mail.)

To subscribe mail

to: [majordomo@Ansteorra.org](mailto:majordomo@Ansteorra.org) with the  
message "subscribe h-needlework" or  
"subscribe h-needlework-digest" in the body of  
the message (do not include quotes).

To post messages to the HNW List:

mail to [h-needlework@Ansteorra.org](mailto:h-needlework@Ansteorra.org)

### **Worshipful Company of Broiderers List**

discussing issues relating to the Guild in  
Lochac: to subscribe, send an email to  
[majordomo@sca.org.au](mailto:majordomo@sca.org.au). Leave the subject  
line empty and put "subscribe wcob" in the  
text of your message. Once subscribed,  
you can email your messages to  
[wcob@sca.org.au](mailto:wcob@sca.org.au)

### **Final word**

The chronicler would like to thank Viscountess  
Keridwen and Mistress Bess for the assistance  
they have provided to me to get this issue out –  
it was handed to me nearly complete, making a  
tricky job while moving so much easier!! Also  
thanks to Toni and Tanja for finding filler  
articles. (Choccy frogs in the mail) . Any  
formatting glitches are my fault – swopping  
from Lotus Wordpro to Microsoft Word is not  
that simple!

**IF UNDELIVERED**

**Return to: 58 Redmyre Road,  
Strathfield NSW 2135.**