

Under the covers at THE QUILT ASSOCIATION



Based in the small town of Llanidloes, Mid Wales, The Quilt Association promotes quilting and patchwork from its base at The Minerva Arts Centre.

Reliant on a team of volunteers, it concentrates on caring for its collection of antique quilts, many of which are from the local area; holding an annual summer exhibition, featuring antique and contemporary quilts and providing a programme of related workshops.

The Quilt Association has in its care, a collection of antique quilts, many from the Llanidloes and Mid Wales area. Most of the items in the collection, which include cushion covers and table covers as well as bed quilts, have been donated to the association over the years, although several have been bought. The Minerva Arts Centre has become renowned for patchwork, quilting and other textile arts as The Quilt Association has made its collection available

for personal study or research.

The collection features patchworks and quilts from the early 19th century to the 1970s and some of the highlights of the collection are featured here. The icing on the cake is that not only have the quilts been preserved for us to enjoy but a great deal of work has been done on researching the provenance of the quilts. Funding was obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund to document the items in the collection which now number over 140. A volunteer team completed this work in 2008. Since then another small grant was obtained in 2009 for The Quilt Detectives project, in which volunteers selected quilts from the collection to carry out further exciting research into their construction, fabrics, styles and the social history of their maker. 📖

Find out more about The Quilt Association by visiting their website www.quilt.org.uk

Right, Suiting Samples Quilt. This utilitarian quilt was made by Mrs Gethin of Cwm Belan near Llanidloes, between 1900 and 1920. She used suiting samples, perhaps from a sample book, a common practice when making everyday quilts for use around the home or for farmhands and other workers. The woollen fabrics are in purple, black, beige, grey, and other sombre colours, but are well preserved in this piece; many other such quilts would have been worn until they literally fell apart. The suiting fabrics used here were commonly made in the mills of Mid Wales in the late 19th century. The piece, while simple, has been organised in borders around the central medallion. It is machine pieced.



Above, Traditional Log Cabin Quilt (90 x 81in). This traditional log cabin quilt was owned by a well-known portrait painter, Mr Hill of Harrow. It was made in the late 19th century, and donated to The Quilt Association in 2002. The quilt is a log cabin patchwork made with plain weave printed cotton fabrics of various weights. Some of the fabrics are from the early 19th century, while others are later. The red squares in the middle of the blocks are of twill weave cotton. It has been hand quilted in a white cotton thread.



Left, Hexagon Quilt. This multi-coloured hexagon patchwork quilt with a central medallion was made for Lady Aberdare of Blaenau, near Ammanford, by Letitia Davies who lived in the Llandeilo area, in about 1880.

The printed fabrics which make up the patchwork are predominantly from the 1860s/70s. There are also some plain weave printed cottons, and four red hexagons which are twill weave (Turkey red was fashionable in the third quarter of the 19th century – this is typical of the fabric used for petticoats). Multi coloured prints include florals in pale blues, sprigs on drab grounds, fruit images, polka spots and ultramarine blue circles. However, pinks are dominant – these were produced after the introduction of the synthetic alizarin dye. At that time it was exciting to have pink dress fabrics that did not rely on cochineal dye – 18th-century pinks were very expensive and limited to young women. In the 19th century coral pink was worn by more mature women. The wadding is a wool blanket and hand quilting done with the paisley pear, and flowers. The white quilting lines are marked in blue on the reverse. The printed fabrics were studied in September 2009 at a workshop with Dr Philip Sykas, Research Associate at Manchester Metropolitan University.



Left, Pale Brown Wholecloth (81 x 65in). This beautifully hand quilted wholecloth quilt, now faded to pale brown, was probably originally mauve; the thread is still purple. Made of cotton sateen, with wool wadding, the quilting symbols are typically Welsh – there are spirals around the border, a central medallion, and fans. It has been finished with butted edges.



Left, Starfish Quilt (93 x 84in). This diamond-in-a-square style quilt was bought for the collection from a dealer who had acquired the quilt in Haverfordwest, south-west Wales. The quilt is made of worsted wool on the front, and linen on the reverse. Philip Sykas studied the quilt in September 2009 and explained that the worsted wool fabric was commonly used in women's petticoats in the 18th century. However, this is a 19th-century quilt because it is quilted with cotton thread, and it was probably made between 1830 and 1850. The wadding is a thin layer of carded wool between two layers of worsted fabric, and the quilting in cream cotton thread features flowers, spirals, starfish and cables. The decorative cable borders are typical Pembrokeshire designs. A tracing of the quilting has been made by three volunteers – it took them two whole days to trace the entire design.

Did you know? The Quilt Association provide the City and Guilds Level 2 Certificate in Patchwork and Appliqué. If you have done some patchwork and quilting, you should have the necessary skills. You don't have to be an expert!

Right, Patchwork Fragment. This is a patchwork fragment of hexagons pieced over paper – probably the centre from a larger quilt. Some of the fabrics date from the 1830s, 40s and 50s. The hexagons have been pieced over paper and handsewn together – one paper remains! The fragment was acquired from a charity shop in Llanidloes, found in poor condition, especially around the edges where it is torn and worn. Nevertheless it contains interesting fabrics from the mid 19th century, which provided the basis of workshop study in September 2009 with Dr Philip Sykas, Research Associate at Manchester School of Art. Chrome yellow and orange originate from about 1830. The central hexagon is very bright, and its centre of place implies that it was very special fabric. There are a number of other fabrics from the 1830s including fine roller prints. The Prussian blues are typical of the 1840s; the dye is applied more heavily and is not as susceptible to fading, thus it remains strong. There are single purple fabrics from the 1840s, which took over from indigo in popularity at this time. This fabric was worn as a day dress indoors by the middle classes – but not worn to go out in. There are also two purple fabrics, where the lighter shade is formed by stippling. In the 1830s the ability to apply two colours on a roller was developed by engraving more deeply.



Many of the quilts in the collection have been displayed and continue to be showcased at the annual summer exhibitions which are held at the centre every year. Visit www.quilt.org.uk for updates on events, including the Wool and Willow Festival and Christmas Fair.



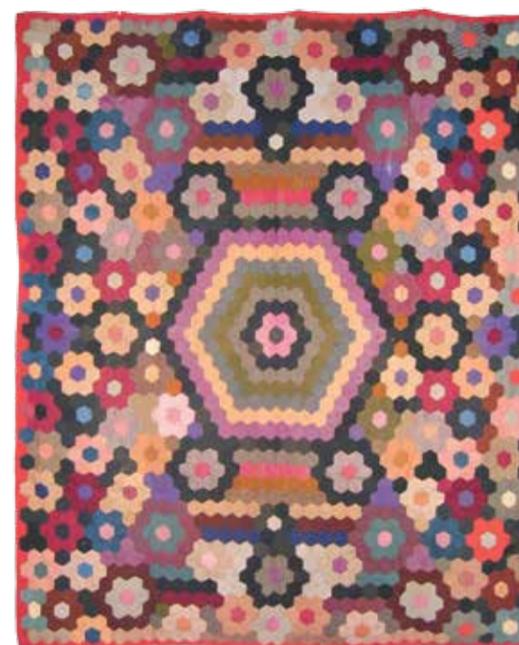
Left, Patchwork Tumbling Blocks Quilt (82 x 78in). This patchwork quilt was donated by a residential care home in Bishops Castle upon the death of the owner, Emily Matthews, in the late 1990s. It is made of a huge variety of silks including figures, printed, twills, ribbed and plains. Some of these have degraded – the piece probably dates from about 1880 – but considering its age it is in good condition. The filling is a woollen black fabric which could be a blanket, and a red and black border may be a later addition. The reverse red cotton sateen was certainly added later.



Left, Applique Flowers Quilt (84 x 73in). This is nine patch quilt was made by Ellen Ann Hamer (1896–1987) before she married, probably when she lived with her aunt and uncle in Beulah, Llidiartywaen, near Llanidloes. The design of red and white appliqué flowers was based upon an earlier quilt, made by her mother Mary Evans. This large nine patch is very striking, with its four petalled flowers in alternating red and white cotton twill and a star shaped centre to each of the flowers. The work is hand appliquéd, with hand quilting in pink thread, and reverse appliqué on the corners. The quilter, Ellen Hamer, was known as someone ‘always busy, doing something, turning collars, but never on a Sunday’. She did a lot of craftwork, including sewing, crochet and knitting. John Hamer, Ellen’s husband, was a farmer at Glynbrochan near Llanidloes, where they lived for 60 years, having a total of four children.

Right, Blue Cross Wool Flannel Quilt (83 x 80in).

This stunning flannel quilt was made by Elizabeth Ashton (1873–1930) of Ty Capel, Llawryglyn near Llanidloes between 1890–1900. It is a patchwork crosses design made of woollen fabrics, some of which have been fulled. Some fabrics are plain weave, others are twill. The quilt is held together with simple hand quilting and has a plain weave red flannel binding.



Left, Wool Hexagons Coverlet (76 x 64in). This wool hexagons coverlet is dated 1882 in the central hexagon, with the name ‘Jones’ also stitched in. It was probably made in Wales, and was donated to The Quilt Association. The coverlet is made of hexagons in cotton twills and plains, with a red flannel reverse folded to the front with the corners mitred and patchwork appliquéd over it. It has been hand quilted in a dark thread in straight lines in running stitch, and also machine stitched to the flannel around the edges. There are still papers in some of the hexagon pieces.

Right, Bowtie Quilt (89 x 86in).

Bought for the collection in 2002, this is a typical example of a bold patchwork in flannel fabrics produced in Mid Wales in the mid to late 19th century. It was made in the Llangurig area of Mid Powys, not far from Llanidloes, in about 1880. Locally produced Welsh flannel in plain and twill weave, and cotton fabrics, have been used in triangular pieces to create the bowtie effect across most of the quilt. The quilt has a border of ‘flying geese’ using the same fabrics. The entire piece is hand-quilted in black thread, and the wadding is a dark brown fleece. The machine stitched ribbon binding may have been added at a later date.

