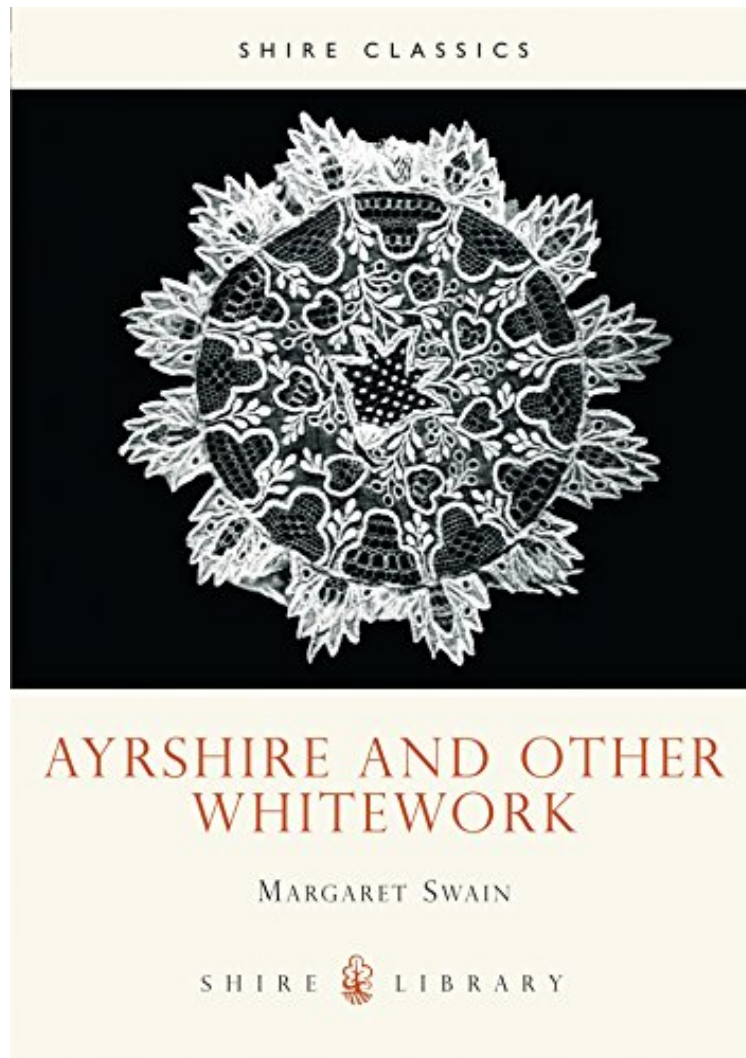


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Ayrshire and Other Whitework (Shire Library)

Margaret Swain

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Margaret Swain : Ayrshire and Other Whitework (Shire Library) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ayrshire and Other Whitework (Shire Library):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Who invented Ayrshire embroidery and how did the US Civil War cramp its style?By Jane in MilwaukeeThese and other questions are answered in this divine little book. Let me apologize in advance for a lengthy review...I really get caught up in the fine details of excellent books like this. I have almost everything Margaret Swain wrote including:Needlework of Mary, Queen of ScotsHistorical needlework: A study of influences in Scotland and Northern EnglandScottish Embroidery: Medieval to ModernEmbroidered Georgian Pictures (Shire Library)Figures on FabricA Devotional Miscellanyand I would love to get this but it's just

too expensive (or "dear" as they would say in the UK):

The needlework at Traquair Margaret H. Swain is one of my favorite needlework history authors and I was deeply saddened to learn she died in 2002. She was such a diligent researcher and expert author that she received an honorary M.A. from Edinburgh University and the highly prized MBE (Member of the British Empire) award for her contributions to needlework history. She was an Honorary Consultant to the Royal Museum of Scotland and was on the Council of the Embroiderers' Guild in the UK. My husband is from the Lake District (Carlisle, Cumbria) in northwest England and my grandfather was from Castle Douglas in Dumfries, southern Scotland. I belong to the Embroiderers' Guild of America and my chapter is currently researching whitework from around the world. This book slides right in to our studies. White linen is mentioned in the Bible and white-on-white embroidery predated lace. Ms. Swain points out that there are no known extant household fabrics from before 1700 but, rather, aristocratic samplers of some from the 17th century on with a few earlier examples in museums. She gives a handy list of over a dozen museums or castles with whitework among their holdings and warns the reader that this embroidery is usually somewhat sloughed off by curators as an accessory rather than fitting as main exhibits. So she suggests writing ahead to set up viewings. Very practical. Working chronologically, Ms. Swain first sets us straight about the difference between "drawn" and "pulled" whitework embroidery because many entire books use the terms interchangeably and incorrectly. Pulled work is drawn fabric, meaning no threads are cut from the ground fabric but fibers are introduced onto the work via a needle and the threads of the fabric are manipulated out of shape. The most basic stitch is the eyelet. "Drawn thread" usually refers to cutwork where threads from the ground fabric are cut and withdrawn and the edges are secured by weaving or satin stitches. Think of hemstitching. But the cutwork discussed in this treatise also includes Broderie Anglaise where a shape, usually circular, is reinforced with cotton thread, pierced with a stiletto and the shape carefully cut out with a fine scissors and the border further heavily secured. Indian (from India) whitework copied the look of Ayrshire but it employed the Indian "punch stitch." Another cutwork, "Richelieu guipure" is first described in the monumental 6-volume *The Dictionary of Needlework: An Encyclopaedia of Artistic, Plain and Fancy Needlework With over 800 Illustrations* written by Sophia Frances Anne Caulfield and Blanch C. Saward in 1870. It is a Victorian term for embroidery founded in antique "point coupe" or cutwork. In contrast, Dresden work and tambour are pulled work. In addition, hollie point and other needle laces are mentioned. Finally, Mountmellick and quilting both have a raised or puffy look. Mountmellick, Ireland is where Mrs. Joanna Carter invented a new type of embroidery using soft cotton and famous for padded satin stitch, stem and buttonhole stitch and French knots. Designs for this work were made popular in several volumes of Weldon's *Practical needlework* beginning publishing in 1886, in response to the call from the Industrial Society of Mountmellick founded to give work to women for profit in their homes, probably to lend relief from the Irish Famine of 1879. Just like Mountmellick, Ayrshire whitework was invented by one woman and named for her home. I have been in Ayr, Scotland, which is on the west coast. It is a fairly underpopulated place still and during the Napoleonic Wars from 1795 to 1815, a Mr. Jamieson was a cotton merchant. His wife invented this new form of whitework which is both cut- and pulled work. She mostly copied a French baby robe she borrowed from a local aristocratic lady and changed out the tambour and Dresden work for a firmer satin stitch and fine lace look most popularly used on fancy baby clothes like christening gowns and caps. Mrs. Jamieson and her two daughters set up a working system with male artists drawing the designs upon the muslin and local women stitching them at home. Their work had to be perfect or they wouldn't be paid for it and the high standards led to this embroidery being in high demand. The embroidered fabric would be sent up north to Glasgow to be bleached, made into clothes or other items, boxed up and mailed out to places in the UK and the US. The embroidery was nicknamed "sewed muslin" to distinguish it from plain or tamboured muslin. To answer the question in the title of this review, when the Northern states blockaded cotton from the South to go overseas, it really put a damper on cotton textile manufacturing in the UK. People turned back to the flax for linen and wool for the knitting. While England recovered once cotton was again available, Scotland did not. Ayrshire was also squeezed out by the much cheaper embroidered goods from France and Switzerland. I love the final piece shown in the book which Ms. Swain identifies as the greatest piece of whitework ever done in Britain: the Royal Arms embroidered by Lady Evelyn Stuart Murray around 1912 which is housed on Blair Castle in Perthshire, Scotland. See: *Lady Evelyn's Needlework Collection* And Ms. Swain in her inimitable style promises that any dedicated "neat-fingered" needlewoman can produce any of these embroideries on her own. How encouraging and charming!

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. History book By Jessica B. Rupp This is a very information-packed (although short) text. There are quite a few very good close-up photos as well as some pix of fashion plates from era magazines of how the embroidery would have been used/worn as well as some great examples of surviving high art. The text explains how each form began, how to distinguish it from the others, it's general decline and where you might see surviving examples or why you won't. You will have to find another book for any instruction as there is absolutely no indication as to how any specifics of the construction or instruction. It is useful, however, from a design view point if you are interested in either designing to a specific style or gathering ideas for mixing and matching. It was well worth the \$6.50 to \$8 that is the asking price to have the photos and info on hardcopy in my library.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Stonewall Cottage A must for the collector.

For a generation or more, white on white embroidery, a symbol of purity and elegance, once so desirable, has been neglected by needlewoman and collector alike. The growing importance of antique costume, in the saleroom and among serious students, has aroused interest in the embroidered white accessories that were an indispensable part of the whole ensemble. This book gives a concise summary of the various types of white needlework likely to be encountered. It shows details of the techniques and gives a readable and authoritative account of such diverse types as Dresden work, tamboured muslin, Ayrshire embroidery, Mountmellick and Richelieu work, broderie anglaise, quilting and stringwork. A useful section shows how to identify machine embroidery and Indian whitework. Above all, it will be an inspiration to the modern needlewoman attracted by white on white embroidery.

About the AuthorThe late Margaret Swain has written many books and articles as a result of her researches into the history of textiles. She did serve on the Council of the Embroiders' Guild and as Honorary Consultant to the National Museum of Scotland. In 1989 she was awarded an MBE for services to the history of embroidery.