

MAKING THE AUSTRALIAN QUILT

1800-1950

Artwork labels

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Making the Australian Quilt: 1800–1950

This exhibition considers what and who defined quilting in Australia from 1800 to 1950. Eighty-eight works on display by fifty-seven known and numerous unknown makers, drawn from public and private collections across the country, showcase the aesthetic impact, technical skill and powerful storytelling capacity of this important textile form.

The story of the Australian quilt from 1800 to 1950 can be divided into two broad phases. The first, from the early to mid 1800s, saw Australian quilters reference and adapt well-established British quilting traditions. The second phase, from the late 1800s to the mid 1900s, saw Australian symbols used to affirm and commemorate a sense of home, demonstrating a growing pride and patriotism in the young nation.

continued overleaf...

Like their counterparts elsewhere, the overwhelming majority of Australian quilt makers have been women. With firm origins in the domestic sphere, the story of the Australian quilt is one of women's technical accomplishment and resourcefulness and reflects the significance of their creativity within broader historical and social contexts.

Making the Australian Quilt: 1800–1950 considers the idea of quilts in the broadest sense: bed quilts appear alongside tea-cosies, coverlets, rugs and wearable works. Each quilting form encompasses various techniques of cutting, layering, piecing, appliqué, patching and embroidery.

Marianna Lloyd (later Button)

born England 1796, arrived Australia 1833,
died 1880

Central medallion chintz quilt

c. 1810–25

cotton (chintz)

Private collection, Hobart

One of the earliest examples of English quilts brought to the colony in the early nineteenth century, this chintz quilt was made in England between 1810 and 1825 by Marianna Lloyd, wife of William Button. The Button family was extremely wealthy, and in 1853 William became the Lord Mayor of Launceston in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). They had immigrated to Launceston in 1833 and brought their entire belongings with them, including the chintz quilt. Lloyd's quilt brings together a collection of significantly expensive fabrics, and therefore may not have been a piece for everyday use.

Jane Judd

active in England and Australia early 19th century

Quilt (*Broderie Perse*)

early 19th century

cotton (chintz), linen

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Gift of Diana Tostvein, 1994

947A60

Made by Jane Judd in England during the early nineteenth century, this quilt contains very early fabrics of glazed cotton and linen. The blocks of baskets with floral printed fabric flowers have been sewn together using a technique known as *Broderie perse*. It is interesting to note that each basket is a single piece of fabric, while the flowers are made from several fabrics sewn together in true *Broderie perse* style. The quilt appears to have been brought to South Australia during the nineteenth century by Katherine Helroyd, a great-granddaughter of the maker. It remained in her family until it was donated to the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, in 1994. The green backing is a twentieth-century addition.

Mary Ann Wellen

active in Australia mid 19th century

Auntie Green's quilt

c. 1860

cotton

Private collection, Melbourne

This magnificent coverlet with hundreds of appliqué flowers and leaves is not made from any formal pattern. Each flower was individually cut out, creating a naive feel, and each block is different. The appliqué is finely sewn and the fabric edges have been whipped under before being finely appliquéd. Sewn without proper lighting, the quilt is a marvellous tribute to the sewing skills of women of this era. It was made by Mary Ann Wellen (called Auntie Green) in London around 1860 for her niece Annie Kirby. Annie later gave the quilt to her Australian niece.

Mary Chubb Tolman

England 1804–69

Tolman quilt

c. 1850

cotton (chintz)

Private collection, Tasmania

This quilt was sent to Australia in the mid nineteenth century. Mary Chubb Tolman made it for her brother James who had settled in Hobart. The quilt is mentioned in a letter to her brother in Australia, dated 10 April 1857: 'By the by James you never said whether your Female Friends admired the Counterpane I made for you or not. I have now begun another but do not like it so well as I did that as yet'. The quilt is made by hand and pieced over papers. It contains 120 stitches per hexagon, and contains a total of 6063 hexagons; meaning there are three-quarters of a million stitches in the quilt.

Prudence Jeffrey (nee Pascoe)

born England 1831, arrived Australia 1857,
died 1900

Miniature hexagons quilt

1857

cotton

Collection of Janene Ford, Melbourne

As well as being brought in the luggage of those immigrating to Australia, patchwork quilts were made en route, on board ships bound for the colonies. This quilt, made by Prudence Jeffery, was sewn on board *The Phoenix*, a sailing ship that left Liverpool on 14 June 1857 and arrived in Melbourne on 26 November 1857. The quilt is a masterpiece of workmanship, as each hexagon measures only one centimetre in diameter, and is pieced over papers in the English tradition. The stitches, as well as the hexagons, are remarkable for their tiny scale.

For Kids

This quilt is made in a shape with six sides named a hexagon. If you look closely you can see that each of the tiny pieces of fabric that have been stitched together is also the shape of a hexagon. The quilt was made by Prudence, who travelled to Australia from England when she was twenty-six years old. She travelled on a ship named *The Phoenix* and the journey took more than five months – so she had plenty of time to stitch her quilt!

Have you ever been on a boat? What is the longest journey you have been on?

Elizabeth Smith

England 1820–98

Coverlet

1830s–50s

cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Jocelyn Boardman in memory

of Joan Lavender Cumbrae-Stewart (nee Francis),

a direct descendent of the artist, 2012

2012.393

Elizabeth Smith was born in 1820 in Lancashire, England, which became the centre of the British cotton manufacturing industry during the Industrial Revolution. Elizabeth's father, Ferdinand Smith, is recorded in the 1841 census as a warehouseman residing in Deansgate, Manchester, with his family, which included twenty-year old Elizabeth. It seems likely the coverlet would have been started sometime in the 1830s when Elizabeth lived in England, and completed in the early 1850s in Melbourne after her arrival in June 1852. It is probable that with a father in the industry she may have had access to a good array of quality printed cottons.

Unknown, Australia / England

Quilt

c. 1840

cotton (chintz), linen, silk, wool

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Christopher J.R. Black, 2007

2007.46

The maker of this quilt is unknown but the reverse features an embroidered inscription in black cotton cross-stitch: 'E. Dickins / The Gift of Her Mother / Finished When 60 Years / Of Age'. The donor who gifted the quilt to the NGV in 2007 was given the quilt approximately twenty-five years previously by an elderly lady. She in turn had been given it by relatives who found the quilt in a shed in country Victoria following the death of a family member. The fact that it is signed also suggests it may have been sent to an early Australian settler as a gift. The fabrics in the quilt span c. 1815 to the 1840s.

Origins

Treasured family quilts and patchworked items brought to Australia from Britain, or sent over by relatives, were highly influential on early Australian quilting practices. Such quilts became exemplars of established techniques and conventions and were copied by early colonists, many of whom sought to affirm and reminisce about their cultural ties with Britain through their work.

Spectacular quilts that reached the shores of Australia in the nineteenth century inspired the next generation of Australian women to make their own patchwork creations. Because the same fabric used to make these nineteenth-century quilts was imported into the colony, the earliest Australian-made quilts look very similar to them in terms of design and materials.

Early colonial Australian quilts reflect extraordinary talent in needlework, and draw upon a repertoire of key designs that predominated in British homes. The most popular designs were the central medallion, tumbling blocks and hexagon forms, created using imported printed cottons.

Elizabeth Hardy

active in Australia mid 19th century

Medallion patchwork quilt

1840s–1850s

cotton (chintz) (appliqué)

Embroiderers' Guild of South Australia Museum, Adelaide

Gift of Elsie Brice, 1985

1985-004

This unfinished quilt top was made by free settler Elizabeth Hardy in England before she came to South Australia aboard the ship *Kangaroo* in the 1830s. It is not known whether it was intended as a marriage quilt. Magnificent early nineteenth-century fabrics have been used, including early chinoiserie examples that were in fashion in the late eighteenth century. Many pieces are roller-printed fabric, and some others are hand painted.

Henrietta Maria Roebuck

born India 1833, arrived Australia 1860/61,
died 1892

Margaret (Maggie) Roebuck

born India 1839, arrived Australia 1860/61,
died 1917

Eliza (Lizzie) Roebuck

born India 1843, arrived Australia 1860/61,
died 1925

Roebuck quilt no. 2

c. 1860

cotton (chintz)

Private collection, New South Wales

Henrietta Maria Roebuck

born India 1833, arrived Australia 1860/61,
died 1892

Margaret (Maggie) Roebuck

born India 1839, arrived Australia 1860/61,
died 1917

Roebuck quilt no. 1

c. 1860

cotton (chintz)

Private collection, New South Wales

Many beautiful quilts were made en route to Australia by women who came as free settlers. In 1830 Major George Douglas Roebuck married Henrietta Andrew in Edinburgh when he was home on leave from India. Together the couple had fourteen children, of whom only four survived. When Major Roebuck died in India in 1846, his widow and four children returned to Scotland before sailing to Australia and settling in Queensland. It is thought that this quilt was made on the long sea voyage to Australia by Henrietta Maria and her daughter Margaret (Maggie). Lizzie came to Australia later and was thought to have contributed to the second quilt.

Sarah Wall

Although conditions for female convict women arriving in the colonies in the late eighteenth century were reportedly terrible, many of these women were pardoned and free by the early nineteenth century.

At around the age of sixteen, Sarah Litherland was sentenced at Chester on 25 April 1797 to seven years transportation. She is described in documents from the time as being a lacemaker, and arrived in the Colony of New South Wales in 1801 aboard the *Earl Cornwallis*. In the General Muster of 1806 Litherland is listed as 'free', possessing a ticket of leave. On 9 February 1807 she married James Wall at St John's Parramatta.

Only two years after their marriage it seems that Litherland left her husband, and on 4 June 1809 James Wall of Richmond Hill placed a notice in *The Sydney Gazette* cautioning the public against giving credit on his account to her. No record has yet been found to indicate with whom Sarah eloped, or where she lived when she made her quilt which is dated 1811.

Sarah Wall (nee Litherland) (attributed to)

born England 1781, arrived Australia 1801,
died mid 19th century

Hexagon quilt

1811

cotton, paper

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

The Rajah quilt

The Rajah quilt was made by convict women en route to Australia in 1841 on board the *Rajah*. This is the only known example of a convict quilt made on the voyage to the colony. Its convict women makers came from London and had been sentenced to transportation to the colonies for life. While in prison prior to departure they were taught patchwork by the Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry. From 1817 to 1843 Fry supervised a total of 12,355 female convicts who would make the long voyage to Australia.

The making of such a complex quilt would have required supervision. It appears that the role of coordinating the convict women was taken on by free passenger Miss Kezia Hayter, who had been sent to the colony to assist Lady Jane Franklin in the formation of the Tasmanian Ladies' Society for the Reformation of Female Prisoners. *The Rajah quilt* was presented to the wife of the Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), Lady Franklin, on arrival. It is not known how or when the quilt was returned to England or presented to Elizabeth Fry and the Ladies of the Convict Committee.

Unknown (Convict women of the HMS Rajah) makers

Kezia Hayter designer

born England 1818, arrived Australia 1841,
died 1885

The Rajah quilt

1841

cotton, cotton (chintz), silk (embroidery and
appliqué)

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Gift of Les Hollings and the Australian Textiles Fund 1989 NGA 89.2285

Colonial lady

After its establishment as a penal colony in 1788, by the 1830s Sydney had become home to a broader range of immigrants. The women of the colony were no longer limited to the convict class but included the wives of government officials and free settlers.

Although access to quilting materials and leisure time was very restricted during this period, the urge to remain connected with British culture and to emulate the fashionable pastimes of their home country remained a powerful influence on women. This desire to recreate British style was not only confined to quilting but was also reflected in a wide variety of activities, from cooking to gardening and fashion. In the Australian colonies the creation of quilts and other domestic soft furnishings was driven by an emotional and symbolic desire, rather than by practical necessity.

Those who made the long journey to Australia in the first decades of the nineteenth century invariably brought with them all the articles of daily life, and had no immediate need to make their own quilts. As a result, few Australian quilts were made during this period, and even fewer survive.

Lady Mary FitzRoy

born England 1790, arrived Australia 1846,
died 1847

Hexagon quilt (unfinished)

c. 1845–47

cotton, silk

National Trust of Australia, New South Wales

Lady Mary FitzRoy came to the colony of New South Wales in 1846 as the wife of Sir Charles FitzRoy, who was appointed Governor of the colony from 1846 to 1855. Her workbag and unfinished hexagon patchwork quilt survive and were held within the family until her great-great-granddaughter donated them to the National Trust of Australia, New South Wales, in 1998. Created in forty-nine varying silks and printed cottons, the hexagonal pieces are hand-stitched over paper pattern pieces, many of which remain in place. The quilt was never completed as Lady Mary was tragically killed in a carriage accident in the grounds of Government House in late 1847.

Lady Mary FitzRoy

born England 1790, arrived Australia 1846,
died 1847

Work bag

18th century – 19th century
silk, cotton, linen

National Trust of Australia, New South Wales

Frederica Mary Josephson (nee Miller)

Australia 1833–1907

Quilt of diamonds and hexagons

c. 1850

cotton (chintz), linen

National Trust of Australia, New South Wales

Made in Sydney around 1850, this quilt is attributed to Frederica Mary Josephson. Her father was a convict upholsterer and she went on to marry Emmanuel Josephson, the son of convict silversmith Jacob Josephson. The quilt is pieced over paper templates in diamonds and hexagons of cotton, chintz and linen that would all have been imported from England; the complex radiating design of stars and diamonds is backed in cream cotton. It has no padding or additional quilting stitches, which was not unusual for Australian quilts of this period. Its scale indicates it would have been created to cover a bed.

Unknown, Australia

Early Tasmanian crib quilt

c. 1850

cotton

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

This crib quilt was made in Tasmania and reflects the fabrics typical of the era and also of those imported into Australia in the mid nineteenth century. It is a central medallion style, which was much more typical of English and Australian nineteenth-century quilts than those made in the United States. Originally these imported English fabrics would have been coloured purple with vegetable dye; they have faded to pale beige over the years.

Elizabeth Macarthur (attributed to)

born England 1766, arrived Australia 1790,
died 1850

Quilt

c. 1840

cotton, linen

National Trust of Australia, New South Wales
Gift of Mrs Doris Bowman, 1985

75014

This hexagon quilt has been attributed to Elizabeth Macarthur. It was handed down through five generations of her family before being given to the National Trust, New South Wales. Elizabeth was the wife of famed Australian wool industry pioneer John Macarthur and resident at Elizabeth Farm in Parramatta from 1793 onwards. The Macarthurs arrived in Sydney in 1790, when Elizabeth was aged twenty-five. She was the first free female settler to arrive in the colony and faced the daunting task of establishing a new life for herself and her young family. By the time this quilt was made, Elizabeth had borne nine children, seven of whom survived infancy, and her focus had shifted away from running the family estates towards a more domestic, social and family-oriented life.

Unknown, England

Hexagon quilt

1830s

cotton, paper

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Many early quilts made in Australia or brought to Australia from Britain were constructed using the English paper piecing method. This involves the hand-sewing of fabric pieces around paper shapes that have been carefully cut to the exact size required, with the fabric pieces then hand-sewn together. Hexagons and diamonds are the most usual shapes used, although squares, triangles and octagons are also found. In the nineteenth century paper was a valued resource and shapes were often made from recycled sources, such as newspapers, letters and school children's copperplate handwriting drills. Sometimes the paper shapes were removed and the quilts lined, but other examples survive with the templates intact.

Unknown, Australia

Rhomboid quilt

c. 1860

silk (satin)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

This is a very fine and unusual version of a silk rhomboid quilt. Although we do not know where it was made, several papers, which have been used as templates in the back of the quilt, mention Port Phillip, Sydney and Adelaide. One paper template states: 'Semi-Monthly Regular Clipper packets to New Zealand, Port Phillip, Sydney ... 2nd of each month ... Adelaide', suggesting the paper templates may have been from a shipping timetable.

Unknown, Australia / England

Sailor's tumbling block quilt

c. 1846

silk, paper

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

This magnificent quilt was made with tiny pieces of silks by a sailor on board a ship sailing from Australia around 1846. It was not unusual for European sailors of this period to engage in the art of quilting. They needed to be able to sew in order to mend their sails, and quilting was a way of passing time while developing their sewing technique. The quilt was made by hand using paper templates and given to Jane Williams of Somerset, England, by her sailor friend. She sent it to her brother James Williams and her sister-in-law Annie Smith, who were living in Sydney.

For Kids

This quilt was made by a sailor about 170 years ago. Men, as well as women, like to make quilts and there are two examples of quilts made by men in this exhibition. Sailors learned how to sew in order to mend tears in sails on their boats caused by rough weather. Before aeroplanes, people had to travel overseas for many months by boat, so it was handy to have something to keep you busy on the long voyage.

When you go on a long journey what do you like to do to keep from getting bored?

Unknown, Australia / England

Patchwork cover

c. 1890

silk, cotton, paper, pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Lady Cohen, 1970

D44-1970

Millicent Anne Cox (attributed to)

born Ireland 1831, arrived Australia 1855,
died 1902

Hexagon quilt

c. 1880

silk (velvet, brocade, satin)

Private collection, Sydney

This quilt, thought to be made around 1880, was discovered in a trunk in shearers' quarters at Newstead South Pastoral Company, New South Wales, more than forty years ago. Its attribution has been confirmed with the help of a workbag made from matching silks by Sydney woman Millicent Anne Cox. It is known that Millicent and her husband Edward King Cox went on a tour of Europe in 1879, and it is possible the quilt was worked while they were travelling. A surviving account from a fabric merchant, Lukey, Vaughan and Co. in London, documents the purchase of the crimson quilted satin that backs this quilt.

Millicent Anne Cox (attributed to)

active in Australia late 19th century

Hexagon work bag

c. 1880

silk (velvet, brocade, satin)

Private collection, Sydney

Gertrude Mary Day

active in Australia early 20th century

Hexagon quilt (Stars and tumbling blocks)

early 20th century

silk

Private collection, Melbourne

Unknown, England

Hexagon quilt

c. 1850–60

silk (brocade)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Unknown, Australia

Queen Victoria Jubilee, log cabin quilt

c. 1887

silk (embroidery)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Queen Victoria's Jubilee was a year of celebration in both England and Australia. Many patchwork quilts were made to celebrate the event. The centre of this log cabin quilt contains three ribbons, each with a crown, Queen Victoria and the date 1887. The four surrounding blocks contain the rose, the shamrock, the thistle and the leek, representing England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Many Australian quilts (mostly crazy quilts) made at this time also incorporated ribbons printed to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

Jeannette Dick (later Thomas)

born Ireland 1847, arrived Australia 1854,
died 1918

Log cabin quilt

c. 1867

silk (satin, velvet)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Jeannette Dick immigrated to Australia from Ireland with her parents, who established themselves in Sandhurst (now Bendigo) at the height of the Victorian gold rush. Jeannette worked in a drapers shop and was surrounded by bolts of imported silk satins and brocades. This log cabin quilt in graduated colour silks dates from just before her marriage in 1868 in St Kilda to Thomas Thomas, who owned a drapery shop in Emerald Hill, South Melbourne. It is believed Jeannette created this quilt as part of her trousseau, a key marker of leaving one's family to embark on starting a new life and creating a new family.

Pomp and ceremony

By the late nineteenth century a growing sense of belonging began to take hold in the colonies and to influence many aspects of daily life. During this period the population and prosperity of the Australian colonies boomed.

The gold rush in Victoria saw unprecedented wealth generated, and pastoral and entrepreneurial opportunities gave many the luxury of looking beyond mere survival to celebrate and enjoy their success. A growing national pride was being communicated through a more overtly Australian style of quilting and patchwork, which began to vary significantly from the work created in Britain at the same time. Quilters started to depict Australian flora, fauna and rural life, along with symbols such as flags and coats of arms.

Running parallel to the distinctively Australian style was an enduring connection and loyalty to Britain as the 'mother country'. Queen Victoria, who reigned from 1837 to 1901, was featured on many quilts, especially those made in celebration of her Golden Jubilee in 1887 and the centenary of British settlement in 1888.

Mrs William W. Dobbs

active in Australia 1860s

The Press dress

1866

silk (satin), linen

State Library of Victoria, Melbourne

Accessioned, 1951

H141541

Pieced together with panels of printed silk, this skirt and sash were part of an ensemble made for Melbourne woman Mrs Butters to wear to the Mayor's Fancy Dress Ball in September 1866 at the Melbourne Exhibition Building, with 1200 in attendance. Local dressmaker Mrs William Dobbs constructed the outfit from thirty-one pieces of custom-printed silk satin using printing plates from fourteen different Melbourne newspapers. Mrs Butters wore *The Press dress* again for the Return Fancy Dress Ball, and a third time in December 1867, by which time Mr Butters had become Lord Mayor of Melbourne.

For Kids

This dress was made a long time ago for a lady who was going to a fancy-dress party. She wanted her costume to look like the pages of a newspaper. Many people saw her dress at the fancy-dress ball, and some even wrote about it in the newspaper.

Do you like to dress up sometimes? If you could dress up as anything, what or who would it be?

Amelia Brown

born England 1817, arrived Australia 1857,
died 1905

Rooster medallion quilt

c. 1856–57

cotton

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney
Purchased 2004

2004/74/1

Amelia Brown

born England 1817, arrived Australia 1857,
died 1905

Australian coat of arms (logo) quilt

c. 1870–80

cotton

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney
Purchased 1990

90/732

This quilt was created by Amelia Brown of Bowring, New South Wales. Amelia was born in Exeter, England, in 1817 and arrived in Australia with her husband, John, and their seven children in 1857. This example, one of two surviving quilts made by Brown, features an unofficial coat of arms arranged in the popular central medallion design. The quilt was given by Brown to Margaret Swann, whose family had a deep interest in Australian history and was actively involved in civic activities in their community.

Catherine Fraser Munro

born England 1866, arrived Australia 1870/80s,
died 1941

Coverlet

1880s

cotton

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

This unusual coverlet was made by Catherine Fraser Munro in the late nineteenth century. Its construction is uncommon, and it is thought the lustrous red fabric may have been repurposed from an evening dress or performance costume – Munro was a musician and actress. The coat of arms in the centre is a form that was commonly found between 1880 and 1890, and was certainly in use by the 1888 centenary. It is possible this quilt was either made around that time, to celebrate the centenary, or sent back to relatives in England to mark Munro's marriage in 1889.

Christina Blyth (attributed to)

active in Australia late 19th century

The Jubilee quilt

c. 1887–90

cotton, silk (appliqué and embroidery)

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

Presented by CR Radcliffe, 1936

S36

Attributed to Hobart resident Christina Blyth, this large medallion-style quilt combines a complex and visually stunning array of decorative and emblematic motifs that speak to a deep connection and loyalty to the British Empire; contemporary fashionable influences, such as the Japonism characteristic of the Aesthetic movement; as well as very specific local and national references. A band of decorated oriental fans encircles the design, followed by a series of delicately embroidered butterflies and colonial flags, including those representing Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania. It is speculated that Blyth must have had access to the latest English women's journals, as her work reflects quilting fashions of the time.

Misses Hampson

active in Australia early 20th century

The Westbury quilt (Sampler quilt)

c. 1900–03

cotton (flannel) (embroidery and appliqué)

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased through the Australian Textiles Fund 1990

NGA 90.450

Australia formally became a nation in 1901, but for many people an emotional connection to Britain and loyalty to the British Empire remained strong long afterwards. *The Westbury quilt*, made by members of the Hampson family, documents this duality within its fifty-two individual blocks executed in striking white embroidery and appliqué on a red cotton. It depicts endearing scenes of rural life in the Tasmanian village of Westbury, along with a detailed portrait of Queen Victoria. The quilt appears to have been originally intended as a raffle prize: one of the squares is embroidered with the words 'Good luck to the winner of this [quilt], October 11th 1902'.

Mary Ann Bruton

Australia 1851–1930

Quilt

c. 1873–87

cotton

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased 1990

NGA 90.1587

Mary Ann Bruton commenced work on her quilt in 1873. She was the child of an English immigrant and was born in Deloraine, Tasmania, in 1851. After marrying farmer William Bruton she settled in Sandhurst (now Bendigo) in Victoria. Brunton became the local dressmaker and many of the smaller printed cotton pieces at the centre of her quilt were leftover scraps from her work. The quilt was not completed until 1887, by which time Mary Ann was living in Swan Hill. The backing fabric features portraits of Queen Victoria along with the rose, shamrock and thistle, and would have been produced for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887.

Crazy patchwork

The crazy patchwork technique was adopted in Australia from the 1880s onwards and continued to be a popular form of quilt making well into the 1930s. The late nineteenth century marked the height of this style, which involved incorporating multiple fabric types, colours and shapes in irregular 'crazed' formations, completely covering a lightweight ground cloth. In addition to the patchwork, it was typical for a series of motifs and embellishments to be embroidered or appliquéd as an integral part of the design.

The emergence of the crazy quilt allowed far greater scope for individuality and expression. These rich quilts were often laden with personal meaning, quirky humour and commemorative messages. The style was also adopted across a range of textile formats, not only flat textiles. Garments, accessories and soft furnishings such as tea-cosies, firescreens, cushion covers and even piano covers were subject to crazy quilting.

The range of fabrics and motifs used in crazy patchwork was far broader and seemingly more random than more formal quilt designs; silks, plush velvets, rich brocades and lace were all commonplace.

Christina Brown (nee Henderson)

born Scotland 1815, arrived Australia 1841,
died 1895

Crazy quilt

c. 1890

silk (grosgrain, velvet), cotton

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1989

NGA 89.179

Popular symbols associated with the British Aesthetic movement, such as the sunflower and pansy, also commonly appeared in crazy quilt designs and can be seen in this example by Christina Brown from the late nineteenth century.

Clara Bate (nee Hughes)

Australia 1859–1914

Aunt Clara's quilt

1890–1915

silk (satin, velvet)

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney

Gift of the Hughes family, 2004

2004/160/1

This work is a visually stunning example of an Australian quilt maker adapting and blending two different styles. Its form is influenced by the crazy patchwork style but consists of a pieced pattern with regular geometric templates that form a honeycomb design with central red velvet square. The maker lived at the Jenolan Caves, New South Wales, and embroidered on the quilt are instruments used on her family's property, as well as many Victorian symbols fashionable at the time.

Martha Bingley

active in Australia 1880s

Crazy quilt

c. 1883

silk (satin, brocade, grosgrain ribbon)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

At the end of the nineteenth century Japanese-inspired motifs were a recurrent feature of Australian crazy quilt design. Makers sometimes used ready-made motifs or embroidered their own images from nature, such as chrysanthemums, cranes, dragonflies and butterflies, onto the surface of their quilts. Characters, usually children at play, created by English children's book writer and illustrator Kate Greenaway were also used in this manner, including several embroideries of children copied from her book *Under the Window* (1878). This quilt may have been made as a present, as it contains a horseshoe – symbol of good luck.

Sarah Louisa Lording (nee Counsel)

born England 1836, arrived Australia 1856,
died 1927

Crazy quilt

1888

silk (satin, velvet)

Private collection, Sydney

Sarah Louisa Lording was born in Westminster, London, in 1836. Listed as a milliner, she arrived in Australia on the *Fairlie* in June 1856 as an assisted passenger. The quilt was made when she and her family were living in Windsor, Melbourne. It features many popular elements of crazy patchwork designs from this period, such as the large sunflower embroidered in chenille thread at the centre of the quilt and the initials of family members, along with popular phrases including 'Home Sweet Home', 'Forget Me Not' and 'Advance Australia'.

Marianne Gibson

born Ireland 1837, arrived Australia 1862,
died 1911

Crazy quilt

c. 1891

silk (velvet), lace (embroidery)

Collection of Wangaratta Historical Society, Wangaratta

Gibson's husband owned a general store in Wangaratta that sold furnishing fabrics, as well as a shop next door which sold dressmaking fabrics. It is likely she sourced her fabrics from these two places, along with scraps saved from her home. Gibson's quilt was never used and became an honoured heirloom shown to special guests. Inherited by Marianne's two daughters Edith and Clara after her death in 1911, it was then passed on to their mother's housekeeper who gifted it to the Wangaratta Historical Society. It was the first quilt to be included on the Victorian Heritage Register in recognition of its exemplary quality and cultural heritage significance.

For Kids

This quilt was made as a special treasure to display when friends came to visit. It was never used to cover a bed or to snuggle under. The quilt has hundreds of different fabrics carefully stitched together. Its maker, Marianne, made nine separate squares and stitched them together into one big quilt. Luckily for Marianne, her husband Alexander owned a shop that sold fabrics!

Marianne and Alexander had five children and a dog named Carlos. Can you find his picture in the quilt?

Emily Thirza

active in Australia early 20th century

Crazy patchwork tea cosy

1909

silk (velvet) (appliqué and embroidery)

Embroiderers' Guild of South Australia Museum, Adelaide

Gift of Thirza Reid, 2008

2008-045

Left to right

Unknown, Australia

**Crazy patchwork night gown
sachet**

c. 1900

silk (velvet), cotton (lace)

Unknown, Australia

Crazy patchwork purse

c. 1900

silk (velvet)

Unknown, Australia

**Crazy patchwork nightgown
sachet**

c. 1890

silk (velvet)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Unknown, Australia

Bag

c. 1890

silk (velvet, chenille), cotton, glass (beads), metal (beads), cardboard (appliqué and embroidery)

Embroiderers' Guild of South Australia Museum, Adelaide

Gift of Elizabeth Silsbury, c. 1984

1984-270

Mary Elizabeth Nicholls (nee Moore)

active in Australia late 19th century

Cushion cover

1892

silk (velvet, brocade), cotton (appliqué and embroidery)

Embroiderers' Guild of South Australia Museum, Adelaide
Gift of A and E. M. Nicholls, before 1984

1984-247

May Ryder (nee MacKenzie)

Australia 1850/51–1949

Henriette Ryder (nee Lynch)

Australia c. 1850 – early 20th century

Florence Henrietta Ryder (nee Owen)

Australia 1852–1931

Margaret Ryder (nee Cudlip)

Australia c. 1857–1908

Calga quilt squares

1886

silk (velvet), wool

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Australian crazy patchwork designs reflected local as well as international influences. In the work of the Ryder sisters of Calga, New South Wales, crazy patchwork blocks were never assembled into a finished quilt. They provide insights into the farming and family lives of these four graziers' wives. Alongside generic motifs popular at the time, such as bluebirds, horseshoes and sunflowers, the squares are embellished with embroidered wattle, kangaroos, sheep, horses, cicadas, a fence line and homestead complete with iconic veranda.

Unknown, Australia

Possum skin rug

late 19th century – early 20th century

possum skin

Private collection, Sydney

Early nineteenth-century explorers found parties of Aboriginal peoples in possession of small rugs made of many possum skins, and cloaks made from numerous possum pelts sewn together with kangaroo sinew. They were often decorated with significant incisions on the inside, such as clan insignias. An adapted version of this type of pieced animal pelt patchwork became fashionable among the colonists in the late nineteenth century when possum and platypus skin patchwork rugs made by the women of New South Wales were displayed by the Australian courts at the Philadelphia 1876 Exposition and the 1893 Chicago World Columbian Exhibition.

Margery Harvey

born England 1817, arrived Australia 1838,
died 1909

Quilt

c. 1890–1900

wool, linen, cotton (appliqué and embroidery)

Private collection, New South Wales

Created by Margery Harvey in the last decade of the nineteenth century, this quilt has been passed down through generations of the family and now resides with the maker's great-great-granddaughter. Harvey was a skilled quilt maker and is thought to have made a quilt for each of her daughters some years after they were married. Three quilts have survived, and this one is a fine example of Harvey's preferred style. She worked using existing fabric scraps and without adhering to a formal template. While the overall format is based on the popular nineteenth-century central medallion design, the choice of fabrics, colour palette, irregular shapes and free form of the border design all combine in a quilt of great vitality.

Elizabeth Roberts

active in Australia late 19th century – early 20th century

Amy Roberts

active in Australia late 19th century – early 20th century

Essie Roberts

active in Australia late 19th century – early 20th century

Annie Roberts

active in Australia late 19th century – early 20th century

Harriet Hickey

active in Australia late 19th century – early 20th century

Log cabin quilt

early 20th century

cotton (chintz, calico) (embroidery)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Elizabeth Lilian Neilson Lindsay

Australia 1873–1948

Crazy quilt (1898 fabric samples)

c. 1900

cotton

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

This large, unbacked quilt was made by Elizabeth Lilian Neilson Lindsay of North Melbourne at the turn of the twentieth century. It features several hundred triangles of printed cotton pieced in a regular pattern. Lindsay's husband worked as a storeman at J. Connell and Sons, Melbourne, a company whose business was importing fabrics. The textiles in this quilt are likely to be samples from his workplace, as some of the designs appear in more than twenty different colourways. Three of the couple's daughters became dressmakers, and one became a tailor whose own daughter in turn became a dressmaker and eventually inherited the quilt from her grandmother.

Annie Percival (nee Tait)

Australia 1887–1990

Patchwork table cover

c. 1903

printed cigar silk, cotton, silk (thread)

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Gift of Jean Cook, 1987

874A6A

Born in a tent in Silverton, New South Wales, in 1887, Annie was the third of seven children of her Scottish migrant parents Thomas and Catherine. Her father built and managed four hotels in Broken Hill, where Annie was well placed to collect cigar ribbons, which were at the time used to package-up cigars sold to patrons of the hotels. The technique of using cigar ribbons in quilts and other domestic textiles was a well-established form of fancywork.

Golda Jean Ellis (later Neall)

Australia 1917–22 –2003

Cheer Up Society cape

c. 1941–42

wool (flannel, felt), cotton, silk, metal, enamel,
transparent synthetic polymer resin

Australian War Memorial, Canberra
Donated, 2004

REL32369

In August 1914, soon after the outbreak of the First World War, the Cheer Up Society was formed in Adelaide. The society's volunteer women members aimed to provide comfort, welfare and entertainment to soldiers and sailors. The Cheer Up Society was revived during the Second World War, when volunteers again provided meals, along with concerts, dances, picture shows and 'home comforts' to troops. This cape was worn by nurse Golda Jean Ellis of the Murray Bridge branch of the society. Ellis stitched the cloth badges of servicemen she met to the inside of her cape.

Corporal Clifford Gatenby

Australia 1915–92

Embroidered blanket

1941–45

cotton, wool

Australian War Memorial, Canberra
Donated, 2004

REL33287

It has only recently been established that prisoners of war (POWs) often made fabric patchwork items while interned. In 2000 one such quilt was found made by Corporal Clifford Alexander Gatenby, from Coffs Harbour, while he was a prisoner in a German POW camp (Stalag 383). He sewed images onto his army blanket with pieces of wool and cotton taken from discarded garments in the camp, and used needles fashioned from the frames of eyeglasses, ground-down toothbrushes and other items. It took Gatenby two-and-a-half years to complete. He escaped from the camp in 1945, taking the army blanket quilt with him – saying that it represented too much hard work to leave behind.

Unknown, Australia

Spectator Publishing signature quilt

c. 1940–42

cotton, silk (embroidery)

Collection of Red Cross, Victoria

Created during the Second World War, the *Spectator Publishing signature quilt* was made by the staff of the publishing company that published a weekly Methodist journal. Many of the names featured on the quilt belong to families and friends of the staff, most of whom attended the Fairfield Methodist Church in Melbourne.

Unknown, Australia

Romsey quilt

c. 1916–18

calico, cotton (thread)

Collection of Australian Red Cross, Melbourne

The *Romsey quilt* was also made during the First World War and features signatures from the community alongside the Red Cross symbol, the Union Jack, a map of Australia and rousing phrases such as 'Onward and Upward', 'For Australia' and 'Honour the King'.

Unknown, Australia

The Cheltenham State School quilt

1916

cotton

Collection of Australian Red Cross, Melbourne

The signature quilts created in Australia during the first and second world wars were a heartfelt expression of patriotism and community spirit. The Red Cross, through its many branches in towns and suburbs, organised quilts to be created to communicate patriotism and as a means of raising desperately needed funds to assist the war effort. The Cheltenham State School quilt dates from 1916 and bears names from the entire community, grouped under titles at the front, such as bowling club, post office, tennis club, council, bank, bakery, children's home, senior girls, scholars and men.

Chalmer's Church congregation

Chalmer's Church signature quilt

1894

cotton (embroidery)

Private collection, Adelaide

This large red and white signature quilt was created by the congregation of Chalmer's Church in East Melbourne in 1894 to present to the departing Reverend Henry Jones. The quilt comprises 213 signed squares of white cotton worked in red embroidery thread, and a central panel that features the Reverend's name, the name of the church and the date. Henry Jones was a graduate of Glasgow University who travelled to Australia in 1891 to take a lead role in the local Welsh Presbyterian community. The quilt has remained a treasured heirloom in his family since his death in 1904.

St Augustine's Anglican Church Congregation, Moreland

active in Australia 1890s

Quilt

1895

silk, cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the congregation of

St Augustine's Anglican Church, Moreland, 2012

2012.394

The St Augustine's Anglican Church signature quilt was created in 1895 by the church choir for their serving Reverend, William Jordan. An Irish immigrant, Jordan was appointed in March 1894, just three years after the church was established in Moreland, Victoria. Upon his retirement in 1903 due to ill health, the Reverend took the quilt back to Ireland. It was returned to St Augustine's by his descendants in 2009 after being discovered in an attic in late 2007.

Mary Jane Hannaford

The story of Mary Jane Hannaford and her appliqué quilts has captivated the imagination of quilt makers and historians for more than thirty years. Three of her works were first acquired by the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, in 1982. At the time of their acquisition these works were attributed to an anonymous maker identified only by the initials M. J. H.

Since then much research has been undertaken, and contact with Hannaford's descendants has provided more detail about the life and work of this distinctive quilt maker who developed and maintained a unique style over a short period before her death in 1930. We now know that Hannaford was an English immigrant from Devon who arrived in New South Wales with her parents and brother in 1842. Though unmarried, Mary Jane had a daughter, Emily, in 1869 and went on to have nine grandchildren, for whom it is understood Hannaford made a number of quilts.

All of Hannaford's quilts are made using the appliqué method, where a design is created by cutting and stitching fabric shapes to a backing fabric. This free-form technique suited her pictorial approach to quilt making.

Mary Jane Hannaford (attributed to)

born England 1840, arrived Australia 1842,
died 1930

Quilt

c. 1922–23

cotton, wool

Private collection, Sydney

Mary Jane Hannaford

born England 1840, arrived Australia 1842,
died 1930

Wedding quilt

1922

cotton, wool, glass (beads), sequins (appliqué)

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Miss Swanson 1997

NGA 97.1336

Mary Jane Hannaford

born England 1840, arrived Australia 1842,
died 1930

Advance Australia quilt

1920–21

cotton, printed cotton, wool, silk, beads, sequins
(embroidery and appliqué)

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1983

NGA 82.1975

Mary Jane Hannaford

born England 1840, arrived Australia 1842,
died 1930

Good night quilt

1921

cotton (chintz), wool, silk, beads (embroidery and
appliqué)

Private collection, New South Wales

The *Good night quilt* was made for one of Hannaford's grandsons, Dudley Cady, when he was eleven years old. It is one of her earliest quilts, dating from 1921, and features a rich array of imagery, including a brightly coloured rosella, lyrebird and cockatoo, along with a man walking a dog, a girl playing a harp and the figure of a couple titled 'unhappy honeymoon'. In the lower left-hand corner Hannaford has hand-embroidered an excerpt from a sorrowful poem entitled 'The Sin of Omission' by popular American poet and author Margaret Elizabeth Sangster.

Waggas

During the late 1800s a more rudimentary style of Australian quilt emerged in the form of the wagga. This term was used from the 1890s onwards to refer to quilts, blankets and bedcoverings constructed from found materials, such as grain bags and flour sacks. Although the wagga had become part of Australia's colloquial dialect much earlier, recent research suggests that the word itself was not part of our written history before the 1890s.

This uniquely Australian interpretation of the quilt is associated with rural workmen and households experiencing poverty and hardship, and reflects the adaptive nature of quilt making across socioeconomic boundaries. It was common for families to 'make do' by sewing quilts with scraps and old garments. By the 1930s old clothing and woollen suiting swatches from salesman's sample books were regularly used to create quilts.

During the Depression and years of the first and second world wars waggas were often community-made quilts. Groups such as the Red Cross, the Country Women's Association (CWA) and St Vincent de Paul made waggas to aid the needy. Many of the waggas that survive today were covered and re-covered as they wore out, leaving a myriad of different cotton layers and striking patchwork patterns.

Amy Amelia Earl

born England 1867, arrived Australia 1884,
died mid 20th century

Child's nursery rhyme quilt

1925

wool, cotton (cretonne), hessian

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
Presented by Mrs Margaret Kent, 1995

P1995.27

During the 1920s, Sydney woman Amy Amelia Earl made a child's nursery rhyme quilt in pieced, embroidered and appliquéd furnishing fabric scraps. Along with the classic characters of childhood, such as Mother Goose, Little Bo Peep, Puss in Boots and Humpty Dumpty, she has thoughtfully included creatures from closer to home, including a possum, Tasmanian tiger, rosella, kookaburra, kangaroo and emu all rendered in careful detail.

For Kids

Children really love to hear fairytale stories about magical animals and funny characters. This quilt was made for a child and has lots of animals and storybook characters on it.

Do you recognise any of the animals on this quilt? What is your favourite nursery rhyme or fairy story?

Unknown, Australia

Wedding bunny rug

c. 1948

rabbit skin, felt

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Lizzie Corrie

born England c. 1872, arrived Australia 1926,
died c. 1950

Dressing gown

1943

cotton, rayon, plastic

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Margaret Rolfe, 2013

2013.77

In the early 1940s Lizzie Corrie created a dressing gown for her step-granddaughter who was five years old. It seems likely the delicate printed cottons from which it is made were sourced from a children's clothing factory where Lizzie's youngest daughter was working at the time.

Annie Ellis

Australia 1870–1967

Dressing gown

1935

silk, wool, cotton, viscose, rayon, metallic thread

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs Annie C. Champion, 1989

CT136.a-b-1989

This full-length gown was created as part of Mrs Annie Champion's wedding trousseau. It was given to her by her aunt Mrs Annie Ellis, who was a dressmaker in Geelong, Victoria. Ellis saved leftover fabric scraps from her work to make floor rugs, but the more precious and luxurious of the remnants were saved to incorporate into this special dressing gown. Many of the pre-made decorative motifs that adorn the garment came from a store owned by Mr Morris Jacobs, above whose premises Ellis and her family lived. Combining thrift and affection, this wonderfully idiosyncratic work is testament to the resourcefulness and playful design sense of its maker.

Unknown, Australia

Nursery rhyme quilt

c. 1940

cotton, lace

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Scenes from forty-two different nursery rhymes and children's stories are depicted on this quilt, including the Queen of Hearts, Humpty Dumpty, Baa Baa Black Sheep, Mary Had a Little Lamb and Cinderella. Many used dress fabrics have been appliquéd onto the quilt using blanket stitch and appear to have had a previous life. The centre block represents the book *Amelia Anne and the Green Umbrella*, which was first published in the 1930s.

Unknown, Australia

Wagga from furnishing fabrics

c. 1935

wool, cotton

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Caroline West

Australia 1872–1947

Wagga

1925–35

wool, cotton

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney
Gift of Ian Foster, 1985

85/371

Unknown, Australia

Quilt of salesman's samples

c. 1920

felt, wool

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2015

2015.80

Agnes Isabella Fraser

Australia 1884–1956

Wagga

1930s

wool

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

This wagga is patched with many examples of suiting and red wool dress fabrics. It was made by Miss Agnes Isabella Fraser, a tailor from Melbourne, who had access to new woollen leftover fabrics from her business. Agnes was the eldest of seven children of John and Elizabeth Fraser who were farmers near Horsham in Victoria. Agnes made at least two other waggas and probably many more in the early twentieth century.

Edie Chignall

active in Australia early 20th century

Medallion depression quilt

c. 1930–40

wool

Private collection, New South Wales

Lillian Head

active in Australia early 20th century

Wagga from suiting samples

c. 1930

wool

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

'The back room of our house was turned into a sewing room with two sewing machines. We used to go to Blackmore's Tailors near St Peters [Sydney] and pick up pre-cut men's vests, which we took home to sew. The tailor often gave us swatches and offcuts, from which we produced waggas – we gave many away. They were often lined with sugar bags, which we got from the grocers.'

LILIAN HEAD, 1986

Unknown, Australia

Butcher's wagga

c. 1914

wool, hessian

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

This wagga was made around 1914 by the wife of a butcher early in her married life in Barraba, country New South Wales. The daughter of the butcher inherited the wagga from her family and used it for her children until it was found between the bed springs and mattress in their house in 1986. The wagga is made from two layers of old First World War army blankets and has a backing fabric of hessian bags – the kind in which sausage meal was purchased – a logical fabric for a butcher's wife to use. Waggas such as this one are typical of the bed coverings made during the First World War when there was a shortage of real blankets.

Emma Ingles

active in Australia early 20th century

Dressing gown wagga

c. 1920

cotton, wool

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

This wagga was made around 1920 by Mrs Emma Ingles of Bellfields, Tasmania, for her middle son, Jim, who prospected on the west coast of Tasmania where bad winter weather would have made its many layers appreciated. The inner layer of brocade and strong patterned cotton has been covered with tailor's samples, which suggests this would have been the original covering. It would seem the dressing gown patches are a later repair from the mid 1930s. It is not known why the wagga is so small. Many years later, and with some further patching, Jim's wagga was used by four of Mrs Ingles's great-grandchildren.

Zumma Carraro

born Italy 1915, arrived Australia 1926,
died 2012

Patchwork dressing gown

c. 1935

wool, cotton

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

In high school, Zumma Carraro would stay the night at friends' homes and observe her girlfriends in beautiful silk dressing gowns. As she could not afford a silk gown, Carraro decided to make her own from a patchwork of old dress fabrics. It was so special to her that around 1949 she had a portrait painted by Isaac Isaacson of herself wearing it. Carraro lived until the age of ninety-three and kept her single wagga and dressing gown her whole life.

For Kids

When she was a teenager, Zumma made this dressing gown especially for a sleepover at a friend's house. It is made of lots of small pieces of pretty fabric scraps left over from making her dresses. Instead of buying a new dressing gown, she made a very special one all of her own.

Have you ever made something from leftover bits and pieces of fabric? When you go to a friend's house for a sleepover is there something special you like to take with you?

Zumma Carraro

born Italy 1915, arrived Australia 1926,
died 2012

Nara Carraro

born Italy 1920, arrived Australia 1926,
died 2009

Emma Carraro

born Italy late 19th century, arrived Australia
1926, died 1949

Wagga from suiting samples

c. 1930–35

wool, cotton

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

In 1921 restrictions were imposed on European migration by the United States, and Italian migration to Australia increased considerably. One such immigrant family were the Carraros, who arrived in Sydney in 1926 and settled in Marsfield, New South Wales. The family heard from their Australian neighbours that it was usual to sleep under waggas, and to demonstrate their willingness to assimilate the two daughters visited their tailor uncles in Bligh Street, Sydney, to source the pure wool books of sample suiting

fabrics commonly used to make waggas. The daughters made four waggas, one for each of the three children and a double blanket for their parents.

Emily Forward

active in Australia early 20th century

Wagga from woollen scraps

c. 1935–40

wool

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Fanny Jenkins

active in Australia early 20th century

Wagga

c. 1910

cotton (cretonne), linen, wool

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Fanny Jenkins was a dressmaker from Daylesford, Victoria, who made several fine crazy quilts in the nineteenth century, as well as this twentieth-century wagga. This cretonne-covered wagga, dated around 1910, is quilted in squares from the centre outwards. The stuffing consists of many layers of blanket pieces, a few food sacks and patches of woollen clothes tacked flat. The cretonne, which is the floral green fabric on the reverse, and the red fabric on the front, cost three pennies per yard. A strong printed cotton cloth, it is sturdier than chintz but used for the same purposes, such as furniture upholstery.

Ethel May Woodman (nee Yeend)

Australia 1897–1978

Rabbiter's wagga

1950s–60s

wool (brocade), cotton (cretonne, chintz, corduroy)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Ethel May Woodman lived at Magill, in Adelaide. She married Herbert Roy Woodman and moved to Burra. Ethel loved the bush life and lived fifty miles from town on a sheep station named Murkaby. She made this wagga for her son Ted for when he went out to catch rabbits. It was part of a working man's swag for many years.

Emily McKay

active in Australia 1930s

Chronicle quilt

1934

cotton (embroidery)

Embroiderers' Guild of South Australia Museum, Adelaide

Gift of Wendy Springbett, 2013

2013-003

In an effort to create a distraction and creative outlet for women during the Depression, weekly newspaper *The Adelaide Chronicle* launched a quilt-making competition in its women's pages. The first pattern was based on an American design illustrating farm life. In subsequent years readers were invited to complete the *Australian Wildflower* quilt (1933) and the *Native Bird* quilt (1934), featuring exclusively Australian species. In 1934 Mrs Emily McKay won first prize in the *Chronicle's* Native Bird Quilt competition at the Royal Adelaide Show with her interpretation of the published design.

Elizabeth Mary Evans

Australia 1902–85

Hexagon quilt

c. 1942–44

silk (satin, thread), rayon, cotton (chintz, thread)

Private collection, New South Wales

By 1941 the likelihood that Japan would enter the Second World War had increased. Australian state governments ordered blackout drills, during which suburbs or even a whole city would be blacked-out. People were required to hang blackout fabric over their windows to prevent light from being seen outside. Several quilts have been found backed with this fabric. Elizabeth Evans, who had a dairy farm at Casino, on the north coast of New South Wales, made two such quilts in the 1940s. The fronts of both quilts are made from crepe de Chine dress fabrics, which would have been swapped with other women of the area.

Elizabeth Mary Evans

Australia 1902–85

Diamond quilt

c. 1944–45

cotton

Collection of Elaine McKee, New South Wales

Alicia Tye (nee McMillan)

Australia 1863–1959

Grandmother's flower garden (Hexagon quilt)

c. 1935

cotton (chintz)

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

During the twentieth century there was a growing American influence on Australian quilting as Australian women started to travel to the United States, and US ladies' magazines became available locally. Alicia Tye, who was interested in fabrics and dress designing, became an apprentice to the head dressmaker at Buckley and Nunn and her husband George set up a successful furniture business, Tye & Co., in Bourke Street, Melbourne. After her husband died in 1934, Alicia travelled to the United States to visit relatives in Oxford, Ohio, who taught her to make patchwork quilts in the American style.

Flora Eggers

active in Australia mid 20th century

Hexagon quilt

c. 1950

cotton

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney

Flora Eggers grew up with her Lutheran parents on a farm in the Barossa Valley, South Australia. Her grandparents had emigrated from Germany to the Barossa around 1850. In the 1930s Eggers moved to Adelaide, where she taught and won several prizes for embroidery. Needlework was part of the Lutheran culture and the practice of textile skills acted as a bonding ritual for women. Two existing quilts made by Flora are heavily influenced by American patterns. As a professional sewer she would have had access to women's magazines from the United States, including *The Evening School*, a German-language magazine regularly posted to Australian Lutheran housewives.

Unknown, Australia

Wagga from dress fabrics

c. 1950

wool, cotton

Collection of Dr Annette Gero, Sydney