

TEXTILE RESEARCH CENTRE LEIDEN

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2020



Detail of the hand-made pin at 57x magnification ([TRC 2020.4528](#)).

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Director's Comments

Due to the Corona virus pandemic of 2020 this annual report is shorter than normal. This is not to say we have been any less busy! Instead we have focussed on the digital footprint of the TRC, rather than actual events.

In particular, thanks to the generosity of various individuals and *stichtingen* (foundations) the TRC has been able to weather the traumatic year that became 2020. In fact, we are still looking to see how we can expand our public face!

One of the highlights of 2020 was working with the Dutch Mennonite community and portraying how quilts and comforters provided warmth, colour feelings of friendship and solidarity in the very hard times after the Second World War. More about this co-operation can be found under Gallery Exhibitions.

The TRC Collection now stands at over 32,000 registered items that are online in an open access format so that everyone can use the images and information. This is an amazing resource that should and does inspire a wide range of textile enthusiasts, users and makers.

Although physical teaching in the form of courses, workshops and lectures have had to be considerably reduced in size, the number of events has actually increased! Some workshops had to be repeated five times in order to satisfy the demand for 'something interesting to do'. This is a field that we want to encourage and expand upon in 2021.

2020 has also been spent sorting out, tidying up and generally organising the TRC Collection. Details of nearly 6,000 items have been added and well over 8,000 extra details have been added to those items that are already in the database. This is an astonishing achievement and thanks goes to all those who have typed, catalogued, photographed and worked in the depot (storage).

The TRC Collection and all the activities in 2020 mean that we are now one of the top textile collections and knowledge centres in Europe. We are providing knowledge, skills and inspiration to many people from a wide range of backgrounds. This is something positive we are proud of and intend to maintain for many years to come!

In order to achieve this, however, we will need your help! The limited number of workshops and courses provided us with more time for cataloguing, but less funds to pay the rent! Financial donations are very welcome.

ING Bank account no:
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The Stichting Textile Research Centre, Leiden

The Stichting ('Foundation') Textile Research Centre was established in 1991 with the stated aim of supporting the academic research of archaeological and anthropological textiles and dress, and their presentation to a general public. The most important part of our work is the building up and study of a textile and dress collection. These garments are available for research and exhibition purposes.

The Board

Per 1 January 2020 the board is made up of the following:

Chairman: Prof. Bas ter Haar Romeny

Treasurer: Prof. Olaf Kaper

Secretary: Dr. Karel Innemée

General board members: Prof. Lammert Leertouwer, Mrs. V. Drabbe and Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood (Director).

International Advisory Board

The International Advisory Board includes: Dr. Ruth Barnes (Yale University, USA); Carol Bier (Berkeley, USA); Prof. J. Eicher,

(University of Minnesota, USA), Prof. John Fossey (Montreal Museum of Fine Art, Canada), Dr. Dale Gluckman (San Francisco, USA), Prof. Michael Hahn (Leeds University, England, ret), Mrs. Layla Pio (Amman, Jordan), Sandra Sardjono (Berkeley, USA), Mrs. Widad Kawar (Amman, Jordan) and Dr. John Peter Wild (Manchester, England).

Permanent staff and volunteers

Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood continues as the director of the TRC. She is a specialist in Near Eastern textiles and dress. For 2020, the volunteers included: Zam Abassanova, Shelley Anderson, Beverley Bennett, Susan Cave, Augusta de Gunzbourg, Olga Ieromina, Loren Mealey, Francesco Montuori, Sophie Muter, Marieke Roosenboom, Heidi Stanionyte, Erika Riccobon, Tchi Ridley, Kaja Sobczyk, Dorinda Terhoeve, Joshua Verkerk Lies van de Wege, and Karin Winkel.

The TRC is a cultural ANBI

In 2013 the TRC was recognised as a cultural ANBI (“Culturele ANBI”). It means that individual gifts are tax deductible for 125% for a private person and 150% for a company.

The status of *Culturele ANBI* means that any donations to the TRC made from January 2013 onwards are tax deductible at the rates given above.

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501(c)(3)

For many of us, the code 501(c)(3) means nothing, but in the USA it is very important. It means that financial and object donations to a registered charity can be tax deductible for American tax payers.

From May 2019, the Textile Research Centre, Leiden (TRC Leiden) and the *Tracing Patterns Foundation*, Berkeley (TPF) are working together to raise funds among American citizens for textile studies and textile craftspeople worldwide.



The Tracing Patterns Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit cultural organisation based in California and headed by textile scholar and curator Dr. Sandra Sardjono. All financial and object donations made through the TPF are tax deductible for US tax payers. With this wonderful partnership, donors are now able to support the TRC Leiden in two main ways:

- US-based donors may donate via the TPF: the relevant donation forms can be found [here](#). Go to ‘Designations’ where you will find the name of the TRC
- Donations of actual objects through the Tracing Patterns Foundation, and with 501(c)(3), must be pre-arranged through the TRC Leiden (info@trc-leiden.nl).

2020 saw the donation of a wide range of embroidered and woven garments from Mexico and Guatemala as a result of this arrangement. And we would like to thank Charles and Carolyn Knobler for their generosity.

The 501(c)(3) status has also seen a number of financial donations to the TRC. Again, we really appreciate the generosity of these donors, especially given the strange times we live in.

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TRC Gallery

The TRC Gallery is used to hold temporary exhibitions about textiles and dress. Access to the exhibitions is free of charge, in order to attract as wide a range of people as possible.

In 2020 two exhibitions were held in the TRC Gallery, namely *200 years if American Quilts* and *Textile Tales from WW2*, plus a new feature of mini-exhibitions about Wissa Wassef (Egypt), about Tenerife lace and about the donation of some 18th century embroidered samplers.

Further details about these and other exhibitions can be found below.

The TRC Shop

The TRC Shop occupies a small area at the rear of the Gallery. It is not the main business of the TRC, but allows us to sell some items that would either not be suitable to keep in the main collection or are duplications of items we already hold. As well as being an important source of income for the activities of the TRC.

Due to the Corona situation the TRC Shop has not been as well visited as we would have liked. But this has not prevented Beverley Bennet, who runs the shop, from producing beautifully made bags, pictures, lavender sachets, etc., for sale in the shop. These will be available for the general public when we re-open in 2021.

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The TRC Website

The Stichting has its own [website](#), which was designed and is being maintained by Joost Kolkman and in doing so he is supported by Coen van de Geest. The site carries a wide range of information about the TRC, including its aims, annual reports, donation information, possibilities to loan objects or to hire complete exhibitions, and short items of current interest. The website information is given in both Dutch and English .

It also houses the [online catalogue](#) of the huge TRC collection, the [TRC Library catalogue](#), a series of [online exhibitions](#), and the [TRC blog](#) pages, with items of interest being added almost daily.

The website is kept up-to-date by Willem Vogelsang who, throughout 2019 has been continually adding new items, removing old items and working on the TRC's big digital project [TRCNeedles](#) (see below).

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TRC, Facebook and Pinterest

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Shelley Anderson, interest in the TRC on Facebook is growing rapidly and every week brings more and more subscribers to the TRC Facebook page. By the end of 2020 there were over 11000 followers of TRC Facebook. The site is in Dutch and English and includes news about all the recent developments and events at the TRC, plus some personal comments about items on display or in the TRC collection.

During 2020, Shelley Anderson also ran Pinterest for the TRC. Pinterest features images of textiles and garments from the TRC's collection and activities.

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Textile Moments

The TRC has its own [blog page](#) called *Textile Moments*. This page is used by members of the TRC or indeed anyone else, who has a story to tell about textiles, clothing, exhibitions, pictures, and so forth.

Items in 2020 ranged from curious items of dress from nineteenth century Afghanistan to fascinating face masks, and about textiles being made and used. It also contains specific TRC news and information about upcoming TRC events.

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2020 and the Corona Virus

2020 events at the TRC were dominated by the Corona virus pandemic. Between 15 March and 2 June 2020, the TRC was closed to the

public and all public events were cancelled or postponed.

This included our participation in the long-awaited national Textile Festival of May 2020. We had planned a week of activities based on the theme of quilting. In addition, a conference that had been organised with IIAS, Leiden and *Tracing Patterns Foundation*, Berkeley, California (October) has had to be indefinitely postponed. Although as an alternative we did have four-days of online lectures, films and various question times (see below).



An 'orrible Christmas jumper with a corona theme (2020; [TRC 2020.5178](#))

We opened again on the 2nd June, but it was on an appointment basis only. In advance we had developed a TRC visitors' protocol, outlining the rules and regulations for those visiting the TRC. Throughout our premises there were bottles of soaps and hand cleaners. Face masks were also available.

Still, the TRC continued, although with necessarily limited numbers of visitors: with only a few people in the Gallery, six people maximum for workshops and courses and the suspension of all lectures. Nevertheless, a wide range of activities did take place.

Because of these limited numbers we repeated various workshops on different days and many events were quickly filled up. We were able to offer various workshops and courses, including the 5-day intensive textile course (in August and September, see below).

Then by mid-December we had to shut again and we are not allowed to re-open until at least the 19th January 2021.

During the various lockdowns the TRC sent out and put on its Facebook page a [TRC Blog](#) nearly every day. At first we were hesitant about writing so many blogs, but we had numerous emails telling how much people enjoyed this daily form of communication.

A wide range of subjects were discussed and numerous items about specific and unusual items to the TRC collection were highlighted. Some of these blogs have been added below.

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A face mask to everyone's taste



Tartan face mask with lacing for the Gothic/Punk market, China/UK, 2020 ([TRC 2020.3997](#)).

A little while ago TRC volunteer, Shelley Anderson, wrote a [blog](#) about a number of corona face masks that she had donated to the TRC Leiden. She described them within the context of different social, economic, ethnic and cultural groups. One of the masks comes from Japan and is made from kimono material ([TRC 2020.3771](#)). Another one has a pattern of black and white stripes of a zebra. This mask originates from Kenya ([TRC 2020.3759](#)). There are also several 'Black Lives Matter' examples from the USA ([TRC 2020.3769](#)).

Then Gillian Vogelsang wrote a [blog](#) about the forthcoming paisley motif exhibition to be held at the TRC in the spring of 2021. In particular, she talked about some Steampunk garments, notably a corset, shirt and coat, which we had acquired for the exhibition. These items were made from different forms of paisley cloth and

will be used in an exhibition about the history of the paisley (buteh) motif that will be held in 2021 in the TRC Gallery.

The TRC and Online Activities

The TRC has been very busy in 2020 making various parts of the TRC activities, collection and databases available online. These included:

TRC Collection: Work is progressing on bringing the [TRC Collection fully online](#). By December 2020, over 32,000 objects were included in the catalogue, and the vast majority of them have been described and photographed. It is taking us a little longer than anticipated, but the database is already proving to be an asset to everyone concerned.

TRC Library: Thanks to the hard work of the library team [TRC Library catalogue](#) went online to the general public in August 2015. By late December 2020, well over 4000 titles are included in the library catalogue, with cross-references, book reviews and recommendations. The library team has worked very hard getting this all ready and the list of books in the collection is being up-dated on a regular basis (more details are given below about the Library). See more below.

TRC Images: We now have another group working on *TRC Images*, which is a much smaller database that includes the TRC's collection of images (postcards, photographs, even stamps) relating to textiles and costume from around the world. If you have any suitable items that you are willing to donate to the TRC please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

TRC Needles: [TRC Needles](#) is a digital encyclopaedia of decorative needlework and has now been online for just over some three years. *Needles* currently includes nearly 3000 entries and more and more information and partners are agreeing to help with the entries and providing information and/or photographs. We range from the modern stitch poetry of Janet M. McDonald Davies (New Zealand) to

early archaeological finds of embroidery from China.

The Library

Over the years the TRC has built up a collection of over 4,000 registered books relating to textiles and dress. Thanks to the generosity of people there are about another 1,000 books that need to be registered. Many of these books were catalogued in 2020 thanks to the efforts of various volunteers, especially Marieke Roozeboom and Karin Winkel.

The library is divided into the following sections:

- General reference book
- Museum collections, displays, conservation and so forth
- Textile techniques
- Textiles, fashion and dress theory
- Regional
- Dutch regional

The library list came on-line in August 2015 and since then new books to the library have been added automatically to the on-line catalogue as they are registered.

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Donation of a quilt library

In January 2020 we were contacted by Caroline Evenhuis-Ruys about her mother's, Marieke Ruys's quilt library. Mrs. Ruys was fanatic quilter and apparently many people in her life were given one of many beautiful quilts she had made. In addition, she had a large quilt library filled with books about quilts, patchworks and applique, both historical forms and techniques, which she had bought in the USA as well as in many other places

A little later the quilt library arrived and it turned out to be over 350 books, many of

which we did not have in the TRC Library. These are gradually being added and will form an invaluable resource for many people.

NewTextileBooks

There are many books on textiles, clothing and accessories and related subjects now available, and we are often asked to recommend books for students, academics and the general public. So in 2014 the TRC started a webpage ('NewTextileBooks') with an annotated list of some recent acquisitions for our library that we feel are of interest to 'textile' people. Some of these books are of general interest, others intended for specialists. Not all books will be new to the market, but they form an important part of the TRC's ever expanding library.

Various books were described for the 2020 lists and an PDF list of these and other books can be found under the TRC Library 'ladder'. In addition, the list of TRC recommended books has been cross-referenced to the on-line catalogue of books in the TRC library.

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Book donations and the TRC Shop

Throughout 2020 the TRC was given donations of books. In some cases, these were duplicates and the donors kindly agreed that these might be sold in the TRC shop in order to support the activities of the TRC.

Acquisitions, purchases and gifts

The TRC now regards it as normal for people to pop in or contact us otherwise every week with items for the collection or things to appear in the post. But what is the TRC's collection policy?

Considerable time was spent in 2020 thinking about and defining the nature of the collection, how it is to be used and the collection policy in

general. The phrase that most closely catches the 'spirit' of the collection is 'a broad-based encyclopedic collection', which means we do not specialise in one small area of textile and dress studies, but we reflect textiles and dress in all their glorious depth and width. A large and complicated task, but one that is filled with inspiration.

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The TRC broad based encyclopedic collection

There are two main factors that make the [TRC Collection](#) a little different from some traditional museum collections. Firstly, it is an active collection and people are encouraged to come and look, photograph and use the items, rather than them being stored 'for ever' in boxes. Secondly, we are not concerned with only collecting beautiful items, we are interested in the story behind. Something that may look 'ordinary' takes on a new dimension when its social and economic context – the story behind – is taken into consideration.

To help people understand the diversity of the TRC Collection, the database of the collection has gone online on 1st July 2016. Since then we have added thousands (literally) of items. Not every item is described in great detail (there are over 32,000 items after all), nor are there photographs of everything. But every week new details and images are added and within two years, all the items will be fully described and provided with one or more photographs.

The following descriptions of some of the items added to the TRC Collection in 2020 have been given in a chronological order, rather than based on geographical or cultural considerations. The descriptions and comments about these objects is intended to give an idea of why these items were accepted into the collection and how they will be used. Most of th descriptions are also reflected in the various TRC blogs.

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Some fashionable garments from Communist Romania

What can you do if you want to be fashionable, but cannot afford the prices or even see the garments in the first place? One solution has just been donated to the TRC Leiden! The lady in question was Eva Radu (1932-2019) from Romania, who was a professional hand knitter. She was brought up in a poor family during the Communist period when Western fashion items were not widely available.



A hand knitted dress made by Eva Radu (1970's, Romania, [TRC 2020.0340a](#))

Since she was twelve Eva Radu had been knitting and selling the garments she had produced. Later in life she made a range of garments copying and adapting Western fashion. Some of these garments she sold, other items she wore. Ideas for these garments came from East German and Hungarian fashion magazines. Mrs. Radu died in 2019 leaving various items, including pieces from her wardrobe such as dresses, skirts, jumpers, cardigans, etc., to various family members.

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An 18th century man's waistcoat

The TRC Leiden has been given an intriguing 18th century waistcoat for a man ([TRC 2020.0879](#)). As with so many pieces, this garment found its way to the TRC in Leiden via a friend of a friend.

The waistcoat is of interest for various reasons, structurally, decoration-wise, as well as for the indications it gives about the original owner's economic means!



An 18th century man's waistcoat ([TRC 2020.0879](#)).

The waistcoat is made from a twill silk and silver metal thread cloth with small flowers, which was woven using a supplementary wefts technique with **floss silk** of various colours. The flowers were set on a silver thread ground (now nearly black due to oxidation). In addition, the garment has been decorated with applied, very small silver **spangles**, metal thread (**passing** and **purl** forms), as well as small shapes in red coloured metal foil. When it was first made and worn the waistcoat must have been a piece of male bling!

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A WW2 wedding dress from the USA

At the TRC Leiden we really like having the 'story behind' an object. What does it tell us, for example, about social and economic conditions? There is an intriguing story behind the donation of an American wedding dress ([TRC 2020.2126](#)) from 1942, which

was designed, made and worn by Verda Ione Grove DeCoursey (1918-2014). The following account is based on information given by Rita DeCoursey, her daughter.

This floor-length ivory coloured gown was designed and sewn by my mother, Verda Grove DeCoursey, in 1942 for her wedding on February 14, 1942 to Wesley DeCoursey (1918-2015). After graduating from McPherson College (in Kansas) in 1940 with a Bachelor's in home economics, she taught at a small-town Kansas high school, saving enough money the first year to purchase a portable electric Singer sewing machine



American wedding dress, 1942 ([TRC 2020.2126](#)).

After completing the autumn 1941 semester of teaching, she returned to her parents' farm in south-central Iowa to prepare for her marriage to Wesley F. DeCoursey, whom she had met at McPherson College. It was at the farm that she sewed her gown. Money was scarce at that time, so the wedding was a very simple affair at their local country church. Verda continued to sew many of her own clothes the rest of her life. This gown is probably not representative of fashion at the time, because my mother always had unconventional ideas about style, and always looked attractive in what she chose to wear.”

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Donation of embroideries by the Bijbels Museum, Amsterdam



An officer's Salvation Army bonnet (20th century, The Netherlands, [TRC 2020.3332a](#))

Before Covid-19 turned the world upside down the TRC Leiden was in discussion with the Bijbels (Bible) Museum, Amsterdam, about a group of objects they were de-accessioning. They were reorganising their whole structure and way of working and numerous items were looking for new homes, including a variety of textiles and garments.



An 18th century silk embroidered sampler (England, [TRC 2020.3317](#)).

The items include several 18th century samplers, notably a beautiful example (TRC 2020.3317) that dates to 1737 and has a central design of two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments (in English, and with embroidered corrections of the spelling), which are surrounded by embroidered flowers in silk.

The other sampler dates to 1793 (TRC 2020.3321) and depicts a range of plants, animals, birds and the image of two men carrying a large bunch of grapes (King James version, *Numbers* 13:23: “And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs.”).



A 19th century embroidered picture (TRC 2020.3320)

One panel is especially large (135 x 105 cm) and depicts a lady in a low cut, ornate dress with an elderly woman carrying a white bag (TRC 2020.3320). The woman is pointing to a city on a hill top and a series of tents just below the city walls.

The panel was described as reflecting the Biblical story of a Moabite woman called Ruth who was married to Mahlon, one of the

sons of Naomi, a Hebrew woman originally from Bethlehem (*Book of Ruth*).

Following the death of Naomi’s husband and her son Mahlon, the two women agree to return to Bethlehem together. Ruth changes her religion, family and people, thereby completely giving up her Moabite identity, in order to follow and be with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth later marries the Hebrew, Boaz, and becomes the ancestor of King David and ultimately of Jesus.

But back to the embroidery. Somehow the imagery, the style of clothing and the relative status of the two women as depicted in the embroidery do not fit with the idea of a modest, dutiful daughter-in-law and her ‘mother’. Does the embroidery reflect another story?

After looking at some early Swiss embroideries while preparing the next volume of the Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Embroidery ([Vol. 3, Scandinavia and Western Europe](#)), the penny dropped! It was not Ruth and Naomi being depicted, but two protagonists from another Biblical story, namely Judith and her servant.

The story of Judith and her servant (called Abra) can be found in the apocryphal *Book of Judith*. It tells how Judith, a beautiful (but chaste) widow, uses her charms to enter the tent of Holofernes, an Assyrian general who is about to destroy the city of Bethulia, in what is now Israel, and Judith’s home town. Judith’s (personal) mission was to kill Holofernes and save the city. She does so by getting him drunk and then beheading him with his own sword. She then returns to Bethulia with her servant, who is depicted in many medieval and later paintings as carrying a basket or bag containing Holofernes’s head.

The imagery in the TRC embroidery now makes more sense. There is Judith in her finest, seductive apparel, and her servant carrying a white bag with the head of

Holofernes. The servant is also pointing to a town on the hill top, apparently Bethulia, and to the tents below the city walls, which would refer to the Assyrian army of Holofernes who was besieging the place. The same subject was very popular in Renaissance paintings from Florence. A good example is a small painting by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), now housed in the *Uffizi* in Florence. Another painting, actually showing the beheading of Holofernes, is by Caravaggio, painted c. 1600 and now in the *Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica*, Rome.

The embroidered picture in the TRC Collection is not about Ruth and her modest self-denial, as first suggested, but about an action woman prepared to do anything to help her city and its people! A very different interpretation!

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An interesting *pronkstuk* (*pronkrol*)

In July 2020 the TRC Leiden was given a *pronkstuk* (also known as *pronkrol*; [TRC 2020.3535a](#)) that has opened up various discussions.



*Berendina Bennink (1890-1918) who made the *pronkstuk* (1905-1906, [TRC 2020.3535a](#) and [3535b](#)).*

A *pronkstuk* is a long length of cloth, usually made up of smaller panels, that traces the needlework development of a schoolgirl (see [TRC Blog](#)). Such rolls were used as a form of diploma to show prospective employers that the girl could do a wide range of plain and decorative needlework.

This particular roll was donated to the TRC by Marjo Bennink, and it was originally made by her great-aunt, called Anna Berendina Bennink (1890-1918), who came from Brummen, near Arnhem, in the east of The Netherlands. The roll is dated to 1905 and 1906, indicating that she would have been 15-16 when she made it. It is 890 cm long and 26 cm wide!

Berendina Bennink died as a result of the pandemic called Spanish flu' that caused the death of millions at the end of the First World War. An event that has taken on much deeper resonances as a result of the 2020 pandemic.

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Unexpected donation of a *feestrok*



The feestrok made by Mrs. Kuiper (1947, [TRC 2020.3753](#)).

On the 16th September 2020 the TRC saw the opening of a new exhibition (*Textile Tales from the Second World War see below*) and, to top it all, an unexpected parcel with a wonderful surprise. It was a *feestrok*! These are unique Dutch items from the late 1940's and were made from a colourful patchwork

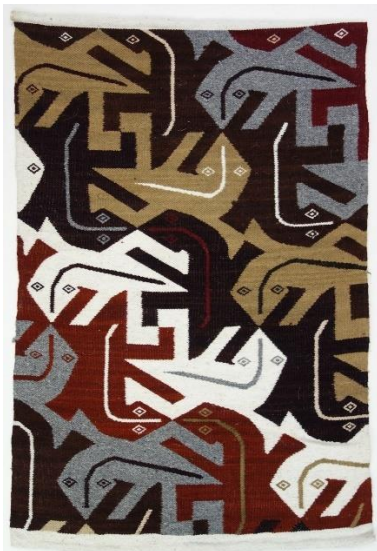
of cloth pieces. They were made at home to celebrate the liberation of the country after the Second World War. Over the last few years we have published several **TRC blogs** about these garments.

This particular example was made by Cornelia Sybrandina Kuiper (1898-1981), who was born on the island of Texel in the province of Noord-Holland, but lived for a while in Leiden. It was finished on the 8th January 1947 and registered shortly afterwards. The skirt was then worn on various festive occasions in the 1940's. Many skirts have an orange background, but this example has a blue one, perhaps there was not enough orange material available or she simply preferred blue.

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Donation of items in the name of Constance Whitehead

In September 2020 we were given various textiles and garments by Ann Cabl that used to belong to her mother, Constance Whitehead (see a blog on the **18 September 2020**)



A wall hanging with a woven design of Escher's 'Reptiles' (mid-20th century, [TRC 2020.3742](#)).

One of the items is a woollen wall hanging with a design based on 'Reptiles' by the famous Dutch artist, Maurits Escher. Where this textile was woven and whether Escher knew about it are very difficult to answer. In addition there was a white tablecloth ([TRC 2020.3744](#)) with deep, crochet border.

Initially Ann was not going to donate the tablecloth, which she remembers as always being at her mother's home and which was, perhaps, a little too 'ordinary', but we had said to bring everything and to decide together what the TRC would be interested in, so she brought the tablecloth anyway.



Tablecloth with a crochet border depicting the flags of Britain, France and Belgium (c. 1914-1917, [TRC 2020.3744](#)).

It turned out the tablecloth is a patriotic item dating to the First World War. More specifically, the border of the cloth had a design of the British, French and Belgium flags, which suggests that it was created prior to the arrival of the Americans in the First World War, so between 1914-1917.

We are really glad that she did, as this cloth appears to reflect a dramatic episode in European history, as well as a link to the TRC's exhibition about **textiles and war** (see below).

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An Italian wedding dress from 1927

At the end of September 2020 the TRC Leiden was given a wedding dress that was

worn in Italy on 26 September 1926 (TRC 2020.3882a). As with so many other textiles and garments, it is far more than a garment that was worn at a festive occasion many years ago. It unveils a family history that goes back for a hundred years, and in a wider context testifies to the sometimes tumultuous history of Italy in the 20th century. Extensive information was provided by Francesco Montuori, a TRC volunteer who writes about his great-grandmother, whose wedding dress is now a precious item in the TRC Collection (TRC 2020.3882a).

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Postcard donations

Early this year we were contacted by Padma Rubiales, California, about a collection she had made of early postcards that depict spinning wheels. She had offered the cards to various museums in the USA, but sadly no one wanted them. Were we at the TRC Leiden interested in having them as a donation?

We were intrigued and said yes, partly because we want to increase the TRC's collection of old prints, postcards and photographs (these are really useful in illustrating publications and exhibitions).

The donation was made via the TRC Leiden and the Tracing Patterns Foundation's 501(c)(3) procedure, which gives tax benefits to American tax payers (see above), who wish to help and support various charities, including those involved in cultural activities.

It turned out there were over 150 postcards from all over the world that depict hand spinning with drop spindles, as well as spindle wheels and spinning wheels (TRC 2020.4327 – TRC 2020.4402). In addition, Padma Rubiales also sent a number of knitting, crochet and lace patterns, as well as items of equipment.

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Two uniforms

In November 2020 we added two Dutch army uniforms to the TRC Collection. One of them (TRC 2020.5144a-c) was for a captain (*ritmeester*) in the Dutch cavalry, which was worn by Boudewijn Wilmer (1943-2019) and given to the TRC Leiden by his family. The other uniform (TRC 2020.5149a-f), for a corporal in the reserves, was worn by Kees van der Zwan, who in 1995 accompanied veteran Allied airmen when they toured Holland.

As a result of these donations we have been asked if we are going to deliberately collect military and police uniforms?

Well, yes, we will accept uniforms because they play an important role in the concept of dress and identity, namely what people wear to say who they are or what they would like to be, especially within the context of personal and social hierarchy. But we have no intention of collecting every single type of military and related uniforms – there are enough museums and collectors throughout the world busy with this extensive and very interesting subject.

However, should we be given a uniform with a name, story and a link to history, then we will seriously consider it. Mind you, this applies to a wide range of other objects as well, after all, the TRC is deliberately building up a broad based encyclopaedic collection, one with many aspects, levels and stories.

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Items given by Kees van der Zwan

In October and November of this year, Kees van der Zwan very kindly gave the TRC a range of object that have a military and/or Napoleonic flavour.

One of the textiles he gave is said to have been part of the pall that covered Napoleon's

coffin. The cloth was allegedly used when Napoleon's remains were transported back from St. Helena in the southern Atlantic (his place of exile from 1815 until his death in 1821) to France, on board the frigate La Belle Poule. This occurred in the second half of 1840, and Napoleon's remains were eventually laid to rest in the Dôme des Invalides in Paris.



Fragment of broadcloth (to the left), purportedly cut from a pall of Napoleon's coffin in 1840/1841. To the right is a piece of paper with a text in Dutch identifying the piece of cloth ([TRC 2020.4528](#)).

In May 2021 there will be the Textile Festival in Leiden (we hope) as well as being the 200th anniversary of the death of Napoleon. So we intend to have a mini-exhibition on the theme of Napoleon, which is based on this textile.

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The Charles and Carolyn Knobler Collection of Mexican and Guatemalan garments

For the last few years, Charles and Carolyn Knobler (Los Angeles) have been sending the TRC various items from their collection of Mexican and Guatemalan garments. These include men, women and children's garments that are made in a variety of woven and embroidered techniques. These items are of particular value to the TRC as they have been given exact provenances so we know where these garments come from.

They include a wide range of patterns that show the diversity of colour combinations, motifs and symbolism regarded as suitable for these garments. It is our plan to display many of these garments in an (actual) exhibition in the autumn of 2021, but this all depends on what happens with the corona pandemic. There will, of course, be an online version of the exhibition!



An embroidered woman's top from Mexico ([TRC 2020.0531](#)).



A woven, man's cloth from Guatemala (Santo Domingo Xenacoj; [TRC 2019.2851](#)).

We would very much like to thank both Charles and Carolyn for their continuing support of the TRC Leiden, and for especially helping us to build up our Central and South American collection of textiles and dress.

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An Iraqi Charuga for the TRC Leiden

At the end of May of 2020, Fatima Abbadi wrote a blog ([click here](#)) about the *charuga*, which is a mantle-like garment knotted at the shoulder and worn at festive occasions among the Christian community in northern Iraq. The TRC commissioned the sewing and embroidering of a *charuga*, by a local embroideress, called Suzan Sukari. Early December we were informed that the garment has been completed and we soon hope to show it in our TRC Gallery in Leiden.

Suzan Sukari is one of the last embroiderers from the Iraqi town of Qaraqosh who still embroiders the traditional *charuga*, with much love and devotion. She is doing so despite all the struggles that she faces every day, including the difficulty in finding textiles and threads, the lack of demand due to the economical crisis and the decline in the willingness of the younger generation to wear this traditional garment.

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The story behind.....



Jane Hardy's sampler, worked in 1872 when she was ten years old ([TRC 2020.1606](#)).

On the 10th April 2020, we [wrote a blog](#) about a sampler that had recently been donated to the TRC Leiden. The sampler had been worked in 1872 by Jane Hardy when

she was ten years old. She went to Burton Leonard School, in North Yorkshire, England.



The school of Jane Hardy, as it looks nowadays along the High Green of Burton Leonard, Yorkshire

More details about Jane Hardy were subsequently provided by Vivienne Ravis, a local historian, with the help of members of Burton Leonard History Group and the kind permission of Burton Leonard Primary School. The story and the sampler bring to life a girl from Yorkshire who died at a young age, and has long been forgotten:

Jane Hardy was born on or about 29th March 1861, in Burton Leonard, then in the West Riding of Yorkshire. She was baptised at the parish church, then St Helen's, on the 10th July of that year. Her father, Thomas, was a cordwainer or shoemaker, who was born in the village of Skelton, near York, in about 1812. Her mother, also called Jane, was born in Topcliffe, near Thirsk, in about 1825.

Jane was their seventh child and was only aged 10 days at the time of 1861 census. Unusually, all the Hardy children were born in Burton Leonard, suggesting the couple settled there before or at the time of their marriage. Two younger children were born after Jane and the couple went on to raise Fred, the child of their eldest son, Edward.

We know nothing more at this time of Jane's short life, other than that she died in the October quarter of 1880, aged 19.

The description below of the Hardy home and the Burton Leonard school (**which is still thriving!**) is intended to put Jane's home and school life in context.

Jane was born before the introduction of compulsory schooling in England and Wales (the 1880 Education Act), but, like her siblings, she attended the local school higher up the village on the south side of the high green. The school building and site were owned by its patron, James Brown, a Leeds industrialist who had bought the neighbouring estate of Copgrove.



St. Leonard's church at Burton Leonard. The church dates to 1878. Jane Hardy's funeral probably took place inside this church, in 1880.

The Hardy village

Burton Leonard was known in the early 19th century for its tannery and fine saddlery trade. Nearby Ripon was renowned for making rowels or spurs, an essential piece of horse tack. The Hardy family lived next door to the last saddler in the village, together forming the last vestiges of the leather industry in the village, as the tannery closed before 1900, remaining derelict until the 1980s.

The School was and is a denominational school of the Church of England, so its curriculum was in part prescribed, and its

religious teaching monitored, by the diocese of Ripon. The school was built in early 1800s, probably at the instigation of the local landowning family, the Duncombes of Copgrove. Brown bought the estate from Duncombe's heir and proceeded to rebuild the parish church, reverting to the old name of St Leonard's, and to extend the tiny school.

Jane may have left school just as the new school room was being completed in 1874, which must have provided many more school places for the children of the village's workers. The school inspector recorded his approval in October 1874: "I am exceedingly glad to find the enlargement of the building carried out in such a handsome and satisfactory manner."

Sewing and Burton Leonard School

Sewing was seen as an important part of the children's education, although Charles Wilson, the father of four daughters who all became teachers, commented rather bitterly in September 1869: "It would be of advantage to the girls to have one lesson with me in the afternoon instead of spending three hours in sewing." We think the sewing lessons were undertaken by his wife, Jane Ann Wilson, who seems to have taught the infants in the overcrowded school whilst also looking after her own growing family.



Children in front of the Burton Leonard school (c. 1900. Postcard, Burton Leonard School).

On Friday 22 March 1870, “Miss Shiffner brought sewing for all the little girls”. Miss Shiffner was probably Emily, or her sister, who were the nieces of the unmarried school patron, James Brown.

Emily Shiffner inherited the Copgrove estate with its patronage of the School from her uncle, and as Lady Bridgeman continued his benevolence towards its pupils until her death in 1927. It seems very likely that the materials for Jane’s sampler, with its bright colours, were provided by Miss Shiffner.

At the next inspection in May 1870 this paid off: “The master and his wife deserve great praise for the work they have done in the school... The needlework is very good indeed.” A change was made in December 1870: “The girls go to their sewing on the first instead of the last part of the afternoon.” In January 1871, “Thos & Sophia Hardy return to school” suggesting a significant absence. The following week “I find Sophia Hardy and James Geldart have forgotten nearly everything they learnt” suggesting that education was not a high priority in the hardworking Hardy household.

At the annual inspection in May 1871 “The sewing is also good” so Jane’s sampler, dated 1872, was made when sewing was a key part of the curriculum for girls.

However, by the latest date that Jane would have left the school, in October 1875: “The greatest difficulty is with the sewing classes, the parents being determined to send their own work to school. They keep their children knitting for weeks together so no progress can be made with sewing.”

As the 1870s economic downturn and foreign food imports hit British agricultural communities hard, it is no wonder that mothers tried to get the family mending and sewing done by their daughters during school hours. It seems likely Jane in fact left before she was 14.

There were also much more serious challenges to be faced, which now have a strange resonance with our own times. The cramped conditions of the school and the poverty many families must have experienced meant that children were frequently ill with childhood diseases which then could be lethal. In January 1874: “Many have stayed away on account of the fear of infection from scarlet fever... Scarlet fever and bronchitis is continuing to spread in the village.”

TRC Reference collections

We spent a lot of time and energy in 2020 defining the nature of the TRC Collection and our collection policy. It was decided that we had a ‘broad-based encyclopaedic collection’ and as such the building up of various reference collections to help with the identification and cataloguing of a wide range of objects was essential.

The Reference collections include:

- Woven samples
- Printed samples
- Embroidered samples (hand)
- Embroidered samples (machine)

- Raw fibres
- Preparation equipment
- Spinning equipment
- Weaving equipment
- Dyeing equipment
- Sewing equipment
- Fastenings
- Embroidery equipment
- Lace equipment
- Miscellaneous

It will take at least a year to get the reference collection in order but it will provide an invaluable facility for those studying and working with textiles and for teaching.

Lace reference collection

In addition to the above reference sub-collections the TRC is also building up a lace collection, which includes a wide variety of hand made laces, as well as machine laces.

The TRC lace collection will be used for lace identification workshops (see below), as well as for publications about the history of lace in general, and needlelace in particular.

Study Days

Throughout 2020 the TRC Leiden has presented a number of study days on various aspects of textiles and dress. These are intended to give participants a chance to see and handle a range of textiles and garments from the TRC Collection, while looking in greater depth at specific subjects.

The study days that took place in 2020 included the nature and history of velvet, the diversity of Indian sub-continent embroidery (from north to south), as well as a general introduction to Middle Eastern Embroidery, and a more specific one that was focussed on embroidery from the Arab Peninsula.

More study days are planned for 2021.

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Study Day about Middle Eastern embroidery

Fatima Abbadi from Capelle aan den IJssel attended the July 25th July TRC workshop on Middle Eastern embroidery. She sent us the following impression:

"Finally, after months of lock down and online seminars and workshops due to the coronavirus outbreak, on Saturday, July 25, I participated in the long-awaited "Identification of Middle Eastern Embroidery" workshop held by Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood at the TRC in Leiden. Upon arrival at the TRC I was overwhelmed by the smell of coffee, tea and a delicious chocolate cake. We were surrounded by some fifteen boxes of embroideries from Arab countries, such as Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen.

Dr. Gillian immediately started by giving a detailed definition of what is embroidery. And how old should this embroidered piece be in order to be defined as an authentic one? Was this craft reserved to the female domain or did men also use to embroider? What were the differences between a regional garment and an urban one and how did people make the change from using natural threads and fabrics to artificial and synthetic ones. All questions that triggered lots of discussion between us making the beginning really exciting.



TRC workshop on 25th July: Middle Eastern embroidery. Photograph: Fatima Abbadi.

We dived into history, talking about the oldest known embroidery pieces found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, the history behind the

Kiswah embroidery and Mecca, the tent makers in Cairo, the forgotten embroidery patterns of the Qadisha Valley in Lebanon, the Sinai bedouins, the Mamluks and finally the Ottoman influence on Arab embroidery.

Then came the most awaited moment: actually seeing for real many examples of garments with different techniques of embroidery, such as free-style embroidery, gold and silver embroidery, telle metal thread embroideries and couching and passementerie. We dived into the various ranges of garment styles, colours and patterns used in the Arab world, including applied items such as beads, shells, buttons, coins, amulets, etc and their significance. Furthermore, I had the privilege to view two rare fragments of embroidery from a children's tunic dated to about the 5th century A.D. from Coptic Egypt, along with many other pieces dating from the 18th century and later.

Dress in the Arab world has its own language and it is meant to move and interact with the surrounding environment, even to produce sound with all the dangling silver and shells hanging from various head dresses and veil decorations.

Unfortunately, the introduction of hand embroidery machines and of the French DMC embroidery company threads brought about many changes that influenced drastically Arab embroidery over the last 100 years, as did the Industrial Revolution, World Wars 1 and 2, conflicts and war, globalization and commercial contacts around the Arab world.

At the end of the workshop I really wished Dr. Gillian could repeat everything all over again. To me it was like travelling back in time. All the ladies that attended the workshop asked for more of these workshops, let's cross our fingers and see if our wish comes true."

TRC Intensive Textile Course

The five-day intensive course is a regular feature of the TRC agenda, and has been organised for almost twenty years. It is taught in Dutch or English by Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, director of the TRC.

The course is a mixture of theoretical and practical elements, with an emphasis on trying out the various techniques of textile production (spinning, dyeing, weaving), on holding and examining fibres, textiles and finished items, all in order to learn and understand what is happening and why various combinations take place. The aim is to make textiles less 'frightening' and allow people to look and understand a textile, from virtually any historical period or culture.

The course is suitable for anyone dealing with archaeological, historical and modern textiles, for designers and fashion students, as well as anyone who is seriously interested in all aspects of textile history and production, and simply wants to know and practise more.



*About sixty different dye baths made from natural dyes, producing a plethora of colours, at the September 2020 edition of the five-day TRC Intensive Textile Course.
Photograph: Augusta de Gunzbourg.*

The TRC's Intensive Textile course was held three times in 2020, in April, September and October. Below are some comments made by Ineke Joosten about her experiences during the September course:

I am still recovering from the Intensive Textile Course at the TRC in Leiden! What a week! As a researcher at the Rijksdienst van het Cultureel Erfgoed (Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands), I am often confronted with small pieces of textiles, sometimes from an archaeological context.

I analyse a few fibres taken from the textile with an electron microscope (SEM) to study their condition and whether they have been dyed or stained. These small pieces and fibres are, of course, part of a larger piece of cloth! But what does the resulting information actually tell about the larger cloth, the previous owner, what was the original colour (s) and how was the cloth used?

To gain more insight into textiles in general, I registered for the five-day Intensive Textile Course at the TRC. Under the inspiring supervision of the director of the TRC, Gillian Vogelsang, we identified fibres, we spun them into threads and we used weave frames to turn threads into cloth. Because of the corona virus we did so in a small group with six people, which enabled us to spend more time on practising and discussing the various techniques.

First of all, my respect for spinners and weavers: you need a well-trained 3D insight to be able to produce various types of cloth!

It was also a week of multi-tasking. On Monday we prepared different dye baths for natural animals and plant dyes (literally from cochineal to tumeric), and we immersed pieces of wool, dyed or not, into small bowls. Naturally, this resulted in a range of beautiful (and sometimes unexpected) colours.

During the week it was also possible to experiment with various dye stuffs that we brought from home: fresh walnuts were 'cooked' in the form of husks, whole nuts and cracked ones, to see what the difference would be when using them for dyeing. I also made a delicious onion soup from the peeled, yellow onions whose skins were used to produce a lovely range of yellows!

With the knowledge gained during the spinning and weaving workshops, we were soon able to identify various textiles from the inexhaustible collection of the TRC (with a little help from Gillian). Then we were introduced into the different printing techniques. So many possibilities, and so many ways to combine various techniques. Unbelievable.



*Examining archaeological textiles from Egypt, at the September 2020 edition of the five-day TRC Intensive Textile Course.
Photograph: Augusta de Gunzbourg*

Finally, we got a comprehensive overview of embroidery, a speciality of Gillian. And again some of the most beautiful examples of embroidered textiles from all over the world came onto the table for us to look at and learn from. What a wonderful experience to be able to compare all those pieces.

At all stages we were encouraged to analyse items and to make sample collections that included raw fibres, spun threads, dyed

fibres (wool and silk), metal threads, woven and non-woven textiles of many diverse forms, as well as a printed examples. An important lesson I learned during the week is that textiles are an example of 'form follows function' (which starts with the way how the fibres are prepared), and good planning at all stages. This insight is very important in my research.

Now I can (hopefully) better interpret the fibres and small bits of cloth I am being asked to study for my work. In the coming period I hope to analyse with a microscope the reference collection that I have taken home, as well as regarding it as a reminder of a very interesting and varied course.

Films of the TRC workshops and courses during the Corona virus and later

We have had various emails during 2020 concerning filming workshops and events in order to make them available to a wider public. We have started to make a series of films of events, such as a talk given on the 26th September about the role of Mennonites in making and distributing comforters and quilts to those in need.

Thanks to a very kind donation we have been able to acquire a professional video camera and in 2021 we are planning to make a series of short films about different aspects of textile and dress history based on items in the TRC Collection.

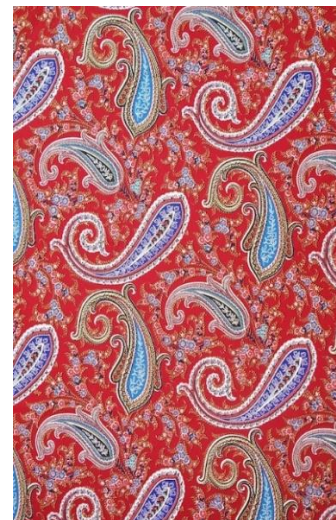
We have decided, however, not to make films of specific workshops or courses. This is because the textiles need to be seen and handled in order to really understand their various characteristics. And this would just not be possible via the media of film.

One-line Textile Conference (IIAS)

From 6-9 October, the TRC co-organised an online conference on the theme 'Textiles on the Move'. The conference was set up by the International Institute for Asian Studies (Leiden), together with the Tracing Patterns Foundation in Berkeley and the TRC. Below we present an impression of the conference, written by Shelley Anderson.

"Like many people during the pandemic, I miss travelling. But the on-line conference **Textiles On The Move** (6-9 October 2020) has satisfied that craving. Researchers, experts and curators from around the world come together to explore the movement of textiles and garments in Asia, and between Asia and the rest of the world.

The online programme includes a series of presentations, video documentaries, guided tours, a round table discussion, with participants using chat boxes to ask questions after each session. The



Modern example of Tissue Provençal with the paisley motif, ca. 2020 ([TRC 2020.3192](#)).

documentary on Minangkabau textiles and loom highlighted traditional skills that still have a local market. It was produced by the **Tracing Patterns Foundation** (Berkeley,

Cal.), one of the conference organisers and a TRC partner.

I learned of many new resources, including the Washington, DC-based **Cotsen Textile Traces Study Collection**, which comprises some 4,000 fragments of textiles from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Another resource is the **Javanese Batik Collection of King Chulalongkorn of Siam**, currently on display at the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles (Thailand). This includes over 300 beautifully preserved batiks dating from the 19th to early 20th centuries, with garments worn by royalty and (even rarer) by ordinary people. Many of the pieces were from batik ateliers run by Dutch women, like the mother-daughter team of W.F. van Lawick van Pabst, who created innovative designs mixing traditional Javanese skills with 19th century European motifs. The exhibition will be on display at the World Culture Museum in Sweden in 2021.

Yet another resource is the **five-part video**, now on YouTube, of the V&A's stunning exhibit *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk*.



Small fragment of Jin silk from Niya, Xinjiang, western China, ca. 100 AD (TRC [2000.0009](#)).

How can a single motif travel and conquer the world? *Buteh* (the Paisley motif) can do so, as TRC Director Dr. Gillian Vogelsang explained during one presentation. Whether

you call it a mango, an almond, a seed from the Tree of Life, this curving shape now appears on everything, from bandanas to underwear, dresses, to sports gloves. It also occurs in the *Tissus Provencaux*, a textile tradition from southern France based on Indian chintz (the subject of a talk in the same conference on Friday 9 October).

The *buteh*/paisley is popular in every region except China, perhaps, she speculated, because China already has a similar motif, the yin/yang symbol. The Textile Research Centre in Leiden will hold an exhibition on *buteh* beginning in February 2021. Special thanks to Erica Riccobon, who has been researching the motif since it first appeared hundreds of years ago, as for instance carved into stone in a mosque in Afghanistan in the 10th century.

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Dinolite, macro-photographs, and pin heads

In October 2020 the TRC was given a pin cushion (TRC [2020.4732a](#) and [4732b](#)) by Christa van Veersen. It dates to the early 19th century and it is made from blue silk and linen damask. It has a design, on the blue silk side, of a date and initials. More specifically, the series of initials and a date of 1826 are made out of pin heads with a spherical shape. The pin cushion came with a bag made from a blue and white checked linen cloth.

Pin cushions decorated in this manner were fashionable from the early 18th to the late 19th century and are often associated with a birthday and/or a marriage. It is believed that this particular pin cushion was owned by a member of the Blanken family, who lived in the Gouda region of the Netherlands. Exactly who owned it has yet to be determined, but the fact that there are two sets of initials suggests it was made to celebrate a marriage.



Image of a series of hand made, wrapped pin heads on a pin cushion dated 1826, magnification 33.2x ([TRC 2020.4732a](#)).

The pins used to make the initials and the date all have spherical heads. The pins were hand made, using a shank made from steel that was then coated with nickel. The pin's head was made from a narrow length of flattened wire (plate) that was wrapped three to five times around itself and attached to the blunt end of the shank.

The image given in this account was made using a Dino-lite microscope at a magnification of 33.2x. The way in which the plate was wrapped around itself can clearly be seen on the various pin heads of the 1826 pin cushion. This was the normal type of pin head in the 18th and early 19th centuries in Europe.

In fact, machine produced pins with heads and shanks in one, as we know them today, were not widely available until the 1860's and not universal in the West until the 1880's.

Then in early November a textile and a piece of paper were given to the TRC Leiden ([TRC 2020.4528](#)) by Kees van der Zwan. The cloth is said to have been part of the pall that covered the coffin of Napoleon when his remains were moved from St. Helena to Paris in 1840.



Detail of the hand made, wrapped pin head on an alleged broadcloth fragment of Napoleon's pall, magnification 57x ([TRC 2020.4528](#)).

Under the Dino-lite microscope (57x magnification) the pin that was made to fasten the piece of cloth to the accompanying piece of paper turned out to be handmade and produced using two different pieces, the shank and the head.

In addition, the shank is not rusty, which suggests that it was coated with a nickel alloy, as was relatively normal in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The head has a cone form and is made by wrapping a strip of metal around itself and fastening it to the shank, as in the case of the pin heads found in the 1826 pin cushion.

The fact that the pin head is hand wrapped would indicate that it was made in the 18th or early 19th century. The pin is in a very good condition. As a generalisation, when pinning an item to a piece of paper people would use a new or a clean pin rather than a rusty one, so perhaps a date sometime in the early 19th century seems likely, thereby helping to confirm the date and perhaps the authenticity of the textile and its accompanying letter.

TRC Gallery Exhibitions

At the beginning of 2020 we had been planning about having three TRC Gallery exhibitions per year in order to attract more visitors and to showcase the diversity and depth of the TRC Collection. In 2020, these plans did not materialise, but we did present two exhibitions, one about American quilts, the other about the role of textiles and clothing during the Second World War (a domestic, rather than military history of the war).

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200 years of American quilts (5th May – 21st August 2020)

On the 5th February 2020 the **American Quilt exhibition** was officially opened and it was a most inspiring event with lots of visitors!

It started with a lecture by Susan Cave on the history of American quilts. The talk was illustrated with photographs of quilts from the exhibition and numerous anecdotes based on Susan's long experience of working with quilts.



Opening of the TRC American Quilts exhibition, 5th February 2020, by Marja Verloop, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the American Embassy, The Hague

Additional, and more technical details were provided by Beverley Bennett. Lynn

Kaplanian-Buller presented details about **Mennonite relief quilts** (three of which are on display in the exhibition).

The official opening was conducted by Marja Verloop, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the American Embassy, The Hague. A textile lover, she understands the value of American quilts to reflect artistic, economic, social, technical, and trade histories, and of course, the quilts tell about the importance of women's social and personal history.

Ms. Verloop was presented with a quilted cushion decorated with a *Dresden Plate* design, which had been especially made by Beverley Bennett for the occasion. There was then the chance for everyone to visit the exhibition and to partake of a small reception with drinks and snacks. The American quilt exhibition was taken down the 21st August 2020.

All being well this exhibition will be on view in the American Museum, Bath, England, in 2021 or 2022.

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Textile Tales from the Second World War (16th September 2020 – 4th February 2021)

During the first half of 2020 the TRC staff worked very hard on organising, preparing and setting up the TRC's exhibition, 'Textile Tales from the Second World War'.

We had originally planned an official opening with a special guest, a large audience, a lecture, buffet meal, etc. Instead, and because of the Covid-19 virus, we had to change our plans, but we still wanted to mark the event, so we organised a 'non-opening opening', which was attended by representatives from the Mennonite community, the TRC Board and community, and those who have helped put up the exhibition.

A total of seven people came to the ‘opening’ and most had the chance to say a few words about the history of the exhibition, to make some general comments, as well as to provide more personal accounts about certain objects.

Initially the exhibition was due to end on the 17th December 2020. However, it was decided to extend it until Thursday, 4th February 2021. Visitors however, could only come after the 19th January and on an appointment-only arrangement.

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A ‘reunion’ after 75 years

The exhibition contains some fascinating objects, many of which with their own particular story. These include a ‘Dutch farmer’s wife’ outfit.

The garments were made in 1945 for a parade in the De Sitterlaan, Leiden, to celebrate the liberation of Leiden by the Canadians and others in May 1945.

The outfit was actually made by Mw. Van der Staaij for her daughter, Tineke, who was six years old at the time. The clothing was based on regional dress worn in Volendam in Noord-Holland and consists of a black blouse, bodice, scarf, white cap, as well as a striped skirt and apron (TRC 2020.0592a-f). All sorts of material were used to make the outfit, including part of a 19th century curtain for the apron. The family, so we heard, still treasures the sewing machine that was used for these and many other items.

On the 7th September 2020 the TRC welcomed two unexpected visitors – Tineke van der Staaij, who is now 81 years old, and her younger sister.

Although at that moment the exhibition was not quite finished, we did a special guided tour for them, including showing the

‘Volendam’ outfit which Tineke had worn as a little girl 75 years ago.



Mw Tineke van der Staaij, 81 years old, sitting in front of the Volendam-style outfit (with the characteristic white cap) made for her by her mother when she was six years old. She wore the garments at a liberation parade in Leiden (May 1945).

As part of the exhibition we also included a number of Mennonite and Canadian Red Cross quilts that were sent to Europe in 1945. Part of this story is given below.

*

I lost a quilt given to my care.... and that’s all right.

Lynn Kaplanian-Buller

At the end of the Second World War, Russian Mennonites fleeing west were allowed to temporarily stay in the Netherlands, provided that the Dutch Mennonite (Doopsgezinde) community would house, feed and clothe them. The Mennonites, who during the last few centuries spread all over the world, are named

after Menno Simons from the village of Witmarsum in Friesland, in The Netherlands. He was a 16th century former Catholic priest whose first name was taken up by many of his followers inspired by his reformist ideas. The Amish in North America are an offshoot of this group, being followers of Jakob Ammann.



Display of quilts at the TRC Gallery exhibition 'Textile Tales from the Second World War'. The quilt on top is the twin of the missing quilt that was sent to Syria. The yellow quilt at the bottom of the rack was given to replace the missing quilt.

During and just after the war, Mennonites in Canada and the US sent over pallets of food, clothing and quilt blankets to support those in need in Europe, including the Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union.

An Keuning-Tichelaar and her husband Herman, a Mennonite minister in Friesland, hosted several of these refugees. But they soon had no mattresses left. An called the Mennonite

Central Committee office in Amsterdam, asking for mattresses. The next day she received a truck with eighty quilts. No mattresses, much to her dismay – these quilts were so thin! She was told to pile four or five of them together in a ticking and sleep on top as well as under them.

After her house guests left a year later for Paraguay, An kept the quilts as silent reminders of her wartime experiences. I happened upon them as a guest and recognized them from growing up in the US with Mennonites. In 1994 she turned this collection of twenty quilts over to me in stewardship.

Recently, European Mennonites have also started making quilts for refugees. At the European Mennonite conference in France in 2018, An's quilts from the Second World War were on exhibit. Simultaneously, hundreds of newly made quilts were being lovingly loaded into a freight container, bound by sea for Syria. One of An's quilts had been displayed on an easel to entice visitors to the other building where quilts were being made for Syria. At the end of the conference, we could not find it. The old quilt must have gone into the container somehow! In its place, the organizers urged us to take a modern quilt with us to tell the continuing story – we chose a special yellow one, with shadings from black to white. The 'new' quilt is now **on display at the TRC in Leiden**, together with an old 'twin' of the quilt inadvertently sent to Syria.

When the container was unpacked in Syria, the old quilt was tucked amongst the new ones. It now hangs on the wall of a church in Damascus where the relief goods were first distributed. There it serves as an ambassador from the past, linking the women who fled generations ago to people now in need, ever passing on the comfort.

For more information on the WW2 comforters, see the Dutch [website](#) or (in English), [click here](#).

TRC mini-exhibitions

As part of the programme to make a wider range of textile and dress subjects and objects available to a wider audience, in 2020 the TRC launched an appeal for a new showcase to display mini-exhibitions. Thanks to the help of some dedicated TRC supporters the money was quickly raised and the first exhibition was organised.

A mini-exhibition includes one to 10 items that can be related to a very specific theme or technique. Three exhibitions were created (more were planned but due to the well-known situation in 2020 not made) and details about these ‘mini’s’ can be found below.

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Wissa Wassef: A TRC-mini exhibition

In January 2020 we registered four Wissa Wassef tapestries that were given to the TRC by Pier Steensma. These textiles represent an important aspect of 20th century Egyptian textile history (TRC 2020.211-TRC 2020.0214).

A major influence on Egyptian decorative textiles in the 20th century was the work of Habib Gorgi and his son-in-law, the architect **Ramses Wissa Wassef (1911-1974)**. Both believed that children were (and are) endowed with creative powers and potential that should be encouraged.

In 1951, Wissa Wassef established the Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Centre, near the Giza pyramids. The aim of the Centre was to teach Egyptian village children to create art,

and tapestries in particular. Ramses Wissa Wassef encouraged the children to weave images based on things they saw around them in their villages, such as women talking, making bread, washing, men working in the fields or fishing, weddings, birds, fish and so forth.



A panel called ‘Squares’ made by Imam (aged 12; Egypt, [TRC 2020.0214](#)).

The textiles given to the TRC also include the names of those who made the textiles and their ages. So again helping to make sure these craftspeople are not invisible and their story (or at least part of it) can also be told.

*

Tenerife lace: A TRC mini-exhibition

Tenerife (also spelt Teneriffe) lace is a form of needle woven lace that includes a series of individual discs or rosettes. It was developed in Europe in the 19th century. It has become particularly associated with the Spanish island of Tenerife, where it was worked by women and girls and sold mainly via the trousseau market and a growing tourist trade. Tenerife lace was also exported to various Spanish colonies in South America where it became known as *naduti* (‘web’, as in spider’s web).

Tenerife lace is made by using a small frame that is generally round, although square, triangular and oval shaped versions also exist. The round frames are known as *sol* (sun) or *rueda* (wheel) and come in a variety of sizes, from 5 to 15 cm. Occasionally even larger examples are made.

A cotton, linen or silk thread is passed back-and-forward around the ‘teeth’, nails or pins that are inserted into the edge of the frame. Once all these ‘radical’ threads are secured a pattern can then be woven using a needle. The finished discs (rosettes) are then released from the frame. Once enough lace discs have been made they are sewn together in an open structure, or may be inset into a ground material. Sometimes the ground material is also embroidered.



A Tenerife lace collar (early 20th century, [TRC 2020.0462](#)).

Tenerife lace was used for making a range of items, including collars, bodices and cuffs for blouses and dresses, as well as decorating household items such as pin cushions, cushions, table cloths, serviettes, doilies, and curtains.

This form of lace became very popular in the late 19th century and continued to be made well into the 1930’s. However, it had virtually died out by the 1960’s as changes in interior design, types of household linen and in what people were making and wearing changed dramatically. Since the 2010’s there has been an increased interest in Tenerife

lace as part of the general revival of craft traditions. It is sometimes described as a means of making lace without the complications!

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Six 18th century samplers: A TRC mini-exhibition

At the end of August 2020 the TRC was given some early samplers following the sad death of Mw. Trees Verberne-Van Hamersveld, The Hague. She wanted to leave the samplers to the ‘Leiden Textile Museum’ (the TRC Leiden is often called this).

We wanted to thank Mrs Verberne-Van Hamersveld and her family for this very kind and thoughtful donation, so we made them into a mini-exhibition.

There are a total of six samplers that date from between the mid-eighteenth century and 1803 (TRC 2020.3682- 3687). They all have linen grounds and are worked in polychrome silk yarns, most of which have now faded. In addition, some of the black yarns have bled leaving heavy stains.



Detail from a sampler dating to the late 18th century ([TRC 2020.3683](#))

Three of the samplers are conventional forms with many motifs embroidered in cross stitch, although one of them also includes letters and a date in eyelet stitch. The other three samplers are darning samplers. Two of them included squares in ‘Swiss’ darning

that was a technique used for mending silk stockings.

Intriguing items indeed, that show some social and economic information about the position of girls at the time as these needlework skills were needed in order to run households in the 19th and 19th centuries. However, these abilities are relevant to the 21st century, as the increased attention given to sustainability and the corona pandemic have shown that these ‘simple’ life-skills were and still are of relevance in the lives of many.

Online exhibitions

In addition to getting the TRC Collection online we have also been working on a series of [online exhibitions](#) that reflect the range and depth of the collection and put many objects into context.

In 2020 we added three more exhibitions, namely on Maltese lace; on Textile Tales from the Second World War, and on the Rainbow People, celebrating 50 years of Stonewall.

We also linked the online exhibitions to the main catalogue of the TRC Collection, and we are sorting out all 15 exhibitions, updating them, and adding new objects.

TRC Projects

In addition to the exhibitions and research projects, the TRC was involved in a variety of other activities and events. Some of these were social, such as welcoming visiting groups, as well as giving lectures and talks about textiles in other institutions. The TRC was also involved in a variety of different projects, both large and small, concerning textiles and dress from around the world. In 2019 the main projects were as follows:

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Encyclopedia of Embroidery series with Bloomsbury, London

During 2020 the Encyclopedia of World Embroidery series (Bloomsbury Publishing, London), has been gaining momentum. Volume 2, which is about embroidery from Central Asia, the Iranian Plateau and the Indian subcontinent (see here) should appear in January 2021.

In the meantime, we have been working on Vol. 3, on embroidery from Scandinavia and West European embroidery. Many of the drawings in this volume were made by Martin Hense, while photographs were taken by various people including Joost Kolkman. We hope to submit the manuscript in 2021. In addition, the volume on embroidery from Sub-Saharan Africa is nearly finished and will also be sent to the publishers in 2021.

We have also started on developing the Table of Contents (TOC) for the volume on East and Southeast Asian embroidery and thanks to the help of various people this is taking on a very interesting approach, with some well-known forms as well as many unusual items that people might not be aware of.

What has been very encouraging is that offers of help have been coming from various museums, curators, scholars and individuals and although it will be some time before all the volumes are finished, the wait will be worthwhile.

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Working with a school in Yorkshire (gingham and a sampler)

In April 2020, the TRC was working on a mini-project called ‘What is Gingham’, as part of the TRC’s building up of a reference collection of various types of cloth. It was published in a TRC Blog called ‘[Gingham thoughts](#)’ that appeared on the 10th April.

In the same month we added a sampler ([TRC 2020.1606](#)) to the TRC Collection that was made by Jane Hardy of Burton Leonard, North Yorkshire (England). The sampler was dated to 1872 when Jane was ten years old (more details about this sampler and its social and economic history can be found above).



A gingham school uniform dress from the Burton Leonard Church of England School (c. 2020; [TRC 2020.3704](#)).

We contacted the Burton Leonard Church of England school where she had made the sampler to see if they had any further details about her. This led to emails between the school and a local historian called Vivienne Ravis, who was very excited about the sampler, as it is one of the few items made by pupils that have survived from this period.

The children of the school are now involved in a project to find out more about school life in the late 19th century, and to see if they can find out more about Jane, a fellow pupil.

On a slightly different note, the TRC told the school about the TRC's gingham project. The school kindly sent us a girl's summer uniform – namely a dress made out of gingham. A lovely way in which various institutes and people can help each other!

*

During the last few months of the 2020 we have been contacted by two groups who are working with textiles and dress in various manners. More work will be carried out in 2021, but it does clearly show that what the TRC Leiden is doing is needed, appreciated and works!

2021 is already indicating that it is going to be an interesting year.

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Working with RAWI, Cairo,

In late November 2020 we were contacted by Yasmine el Dorghamy, who is the founder and editor of RAWI ('Storyteller') publications. RAWI was established in 2010 and is an annual, bilingual publication that specialises in Egypt's history and heritage.

Each issue of RAWI explores a central theme in depth, including subjects such as jewellery and culinary history.

Yasmine is currently preparing the next issue, which will discuss the history of clothing in Egypt from the Pharaonic period to the first half of the 20th century. Given the prominence of Egypt in the history and development of the TRC Collection, how could we refuse? So the TRC is going to help especially with the pharaonic dress section with an emphasis on the clothing for the various ranks within Egyptian society, and with a special section on the textiles and clothing from the tomb of Tutankhamun. We will also be helping with the chapter on Mamluk dress.

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Working with YERO, Yemen

Also in November 2020, the TRC was contacted by Isabelle Causse, who is involved in a project about embroidery in Yemen, in Sana'a. The project is run by YERO, founded by Mrs Nouria Nagi. The organisation has been active since 2003, and it launched in 2007

embroidery workshops as a means of helping uneducated women earn a living.

We are more than willing to be involved with YERO by sharing information about the Yemeni pieces in the TRC Collection, thus helping and enabling Yemeni embroiderers to explore the rich heritage of embroidery (a subject we feel very passionate about here at the TRC).

The *Stichting* TRC will be happy to answer any questions that readers may have about our work. In addition, gifts of clothing, books and visual material are always welcome! And anyone wishing to help financially or take part in the activities of the *Stichting* should contact us at:

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A corona face mask donated by the London based company of Hand&Lock ([TRC 2020.5176a](#)).



A paisley (buteh) motif from India ([TRC 2020.5154](#)).



A hand-woven raffia basket from Congo ([TRC 2020.5076](#)).