

Elizabeth Burden and the Royal School of Needlework

Lynn Hulse

William Morris's sister-in-law, Elizabeth (Bessie) Burden, remains one of the more elusive figures in the designer's circle. Praised by Philip Webb in 1880 for her skill 'in all types of needlework, from the most simple & rudimentary to the more particular and complicated', she was described by Morris as 'a first-rate needle-woman' with a 'complete mastery of the theory & practice of all kinds of needlework'. Yet, little of Bessie's output has been identified and even less is known about the details of her day-to-day working life. In this context, the recent discovery of correspondence illuminating Bessie's association with the Royal School of Needlework (RSN) provides a welcome insight into her career as a tutor of embroidery.¹

The School of Art Needlework, as the RSN was originally known, was founded in November 1872 by Mrs Victoria Welby (1837–1912) with the twin objectives of reviving 'a beautiful and practically lost Art', impoverished by 'the universal substitution of printed or woven designs for hand-made decoration', and providing 'private and suitable employment for reduced or distressed Gentlewomen'.² The School opened over a bonnet shop at 38 Sloane Street, Kensington, where around twenty ladies were trained in needlework made exclusively for the home from good designs or old examples. Mrs Anastasia Dolby, whose 'thorough knowledge of the higher branches of decorative needlework [was] well known', was appointed teacher and superintendent;³ a former embroideress to Queen Victoria, her publication *Church Embroidery, Ancient and Modern* (1867) was regarded in her own lifetime as an authoritative work on the subject.

Anthea Callen was the first scholar to note in print the connection between Bessie Burden and the RSN in the School's *Handbook of Embroidery* (1880).⁴ Following Callen's lead, Jan Marsh speculated that Bessie may have begun her career at the School as a 'humble worker', rising quickly through the ranks to become a tutor,⁵ but it is clear from Bessie's correspondence with Mrs Welby dating from the winter of 1872/73 that her relationship with the fledgling School operated on quite a different footing.

Responding to an invitation from the RSN to teach six hours per week, Bessie wrote to Mrs Welby on 21 December 1872 setting out her terms and conditions.⁶ In addition to working for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., Bessie supplemented her income by teaching embroidery at the home she shared with her sister and brother-in-law at 26 Queen Square in Bloomsbury. Her normal hourly rate was 7s 6d for one pupil or 10s 6d for two, but she offered to instruct three or four pupils at the RSN's premises for 10s 6d per hour, making a total of 3 guineas per week. She refused however to take on more pupils without an extra charge and was not prepared to accept less money, 'as the teaching will interfere with my own work'. Bessie was willing to engage herself for one quarter or three months on these terms, after which the appointment might be renewed or terminated by mutual consent.

Appended to the letter is a rough draft in Mrs Welby's hand outlining the arrangement: three pupils twice weekly from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm (changed to 10.30 am–1.30 pm) for an initial period of six weeks; a requirement for Bessie to attend for interview at the School prior to commencing teaching; and a specimen of work to be sent out by post, presumably to indicate the kind of embroidery undertaken at the RSN. Ten days later, Bessie wrote from Clay Cross in Derbyshire, where she was staying with her sister Emma and her brother-in-law the Rev. Joseph Oldham. She agreed to the terms set out in the draft, though prior engagements on both sides meant that her interview could not occur until early February.⁷

The precise date on which Bessie's appointment commenced is not recorded, but she was soon attending the RSN on Tuesday and Friday mornings, having made the journey from her new lodgings at 100 Southampton Row, Russell Square. She appears to have been hired primarily in order to develop further the skills of pupils such as Mrs Davison, a widowed governess, who had completed the statutory course of lessons and 'passed satisfactorily as a painstaking and conscientious worker in crews' before joining Bessie's class.⁸

However, by the end of the third week in February relations between Bessie and the RSN had turned sour. The timing could not have been worse for the School. On the 18th of the month, Mrs Dolby died unexpectedly at the age of forty-eight after a brief illness at her home in Highgate, leaving Mrs Welby in sole charge. Two days later, Bessie requested an interview the following afternoon (Friday) either at the RSN or at Mrs Welby's home, 10 West Eaton Place. She was concerned about the School's decision to exhibit figures stitched by her pupils with her name attached because 'they will not be worked well enough'. Furthermore, she informed Mrs Welby that she did not intend renewing the arrangement with the RSN at the end of the six weeks, at least not on the same terms as before. She proposed instead to give only one lesson a week on the grounds that 'I find it so very inconvenient to leave my own work and I lose so much time by

feeling so fatigued afterwards that it is rather a loss to me than gain'.⁹

Mrs Welby's reply does not survive, but on Wednesday, 26 February Bessie wrote again, this time in response to a message received the previous day. She believed it had been sent on purpose by the afternoon rather than the morning post so that it would arrive after she had set off from her lodgings to teach at the RSN, otherwise 'I certainly should not have made my appearance there at all'. By this stage, relations had broken down irretrievably. At the heart of Bessie's grievance was the fear that displaying such inferior work would severely damage her reputation as a tutor of embroidery:

You must be well aware that you have no right to exhibit work with my name on it without my permission, and I beg to tell you at once that I strictly forbid you to do it. Why cannot it be exhibited simply as work executed at the School without having my name put on it at all? I am the best judge of my own pupils' work, and I do not consider them sufficiently advanced to do me credit or indeed to make their work worthy of exhibition at all. The exhibition of those figures worked as they would be by mere beginners (in my branch of the art) would do me a great deal of harm professionally and in order to prevent it I positively refuse to finish the course of lessons until after the opening of the Exhibition. You will please to understand that this is my final decision arrived at after having given the matter full consideration.¹⁰

Bessie was so dismayed by the quality of her pupils' work that she offered to break off the engagement altogether and to return the money she had already earned 'so laboriously'. Indeed, she was willing to make any other sacrifice in order to spare herself 'the intense mortification of seeing such work exhibited in the South Kensington [i.e. the South Kensington Museum] as the result of my training'. The display to which Bessie refers cannot be identified; at this stage the RSN may have been toying with the idea of showcasing examples of its work alongside the *Special Loan Exhibition of Decorative Art Needlework made before 1800*, hosted by the South Kensington Museum at the behest of the School in May 1873.¹¹

On receipt of Bessie's letter, Mrs Welby set about drafting a lengthy rebuttal, informing her that it would be 'impossible after the letter you have thought proper to write to see you again at the School'. As for naming Bessie without her permission, Mrs Welby retorted:

... there never had been the slightest intention of attaching your name to the work for exhibition without your consent ... the number of lessons the pupils had received would have been carefully mentioned to guard against any idea of their having received any lengthened or complete training ... It would have been no advantage whatsoever to the School to mention your name on work exhibited

... the proposal was made solely with the object of avoiding any impression that the ladies of the School had worked the figure without some tuition.

Incensed by Bessie's high-handed attitude, Mrs Welby questioned the contribution she had made to the RSN:

I am obliged to state very distinctly that you have hitherto taught your pupils at the School nothing but what I could have taught them myself ~~and considerably less than I could have taught in the same time.~~¹²

Reflecting further on her final clause, Mrs Welby judiciously deleted it from the draft, but she reminded Bessie that the RSN had made every allowance to accommodate the fatigue she endured in travelling to the School, emphasising the fact that she was not alone in this regard: it was 'a disadvantage ... shared by most of the ladies'. She particularly regretted the tone in which Bessie had expressed her refusal to finish the course of lessons given that the RSN had offered to relieve her of one or two pupils. Mrs Welby's parting shot was to lay the whole sorry business before Princess Helena, President of the School.

Bessie's final letter, dated 22 March, thanked Mrs Welby 'for setting me free from my very fatiguing and unsatisfactory labours'.¹³ She reiterated her grievance that the embroidered figure would, in the words of Mrs Welby, 'unquestionably be exhibited as my pupils' work', and repudiated the aspersion cast on her skills as a tutor: 'I consider the School extremely indebted to me for having introduced quite gratuitously a class of work utterly unknown there before'. The 'class of work' to which Bessie refers probably relates to the method of stitching employed in the series of twelve large figures designed by Morris for the dining room at Red House. (Figure 1) The figures were embroidered using a traditional late Medieval technique, in which the design, worked in a variety of stitches on a linen ground (including long and short, couching, darning and brick stitch in the case of the Red House series), was cut out and applied to a high quality fabric such as velvet or silk.¹⁴

On receipt of Bessie's letter, the RSN immediately closed ranks. Princess Helena's response, sent to Mrs Welby on 29 March, criticised Bessie's manners, but there is also a hint of the growing undercurrent of negativity towards the role played by artisans in the artistic direction of the School prevalent among certain members of the RSN Council in its early years:

As to Miss Burden, I think her behaviour simply outrageous. I never read so cool or impertinent a letter. It shows she can have no ladylike feelings for no lady or decently educated person would have penned such a letter. I am very glad you sent it to me to read. She is a good riddance and I am sure the little she may have taught has not fallen on unfruitful ground.¹⁵



Figure 1. St Catharine from The Legende of Good Wimmen series of tapestries, designed by William Morris for the dining room at Red House, detail, ca 1860. Society of Antiquaries of London: Kelmscott Manor collections. Photograph: Lynn Hulse.

However, that was not the end of the RSN's relations with Bessie.¹⁶ Despite the brief setback brought on by Mrs Dolby's unexpected demise compounded by Mrs Welby's inability to manage the School effectively owing to an extended period of ill health, the RSN moved in July 1873 to larger premises at 31 Sloane Street in order to accommodate its burgeoning staff. By the beginning of the following year, the RSN was sufficiently well established to put on an ambitious display of work at its first world fair, the fourth London International Exhibition of Art and Industry, which opened in South Kensington in April 1874. However, the exhibits received a mixed response from the national press. On 10 April, Mrs Welby's local paper, *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, praised the School for 'some really beautiful samples of what female fingers can achieve even in these modern and degenerate days'. The ladies newspaper, *The Queen*, was considerably less charitable in its critique:

Technicalities easily mastered, however complicated, are nothing; design is everything, and in this respect the exhibits on view, with a few exceptions, fail. The professional or unprofessional designers – for the school evidently scorn to be imitators, and try to be original – want to create a new style; and what is the result? An incongruous motley of indigested decorative ideas.¹⁷

Over the next few months, the RSN undertook various initiatives in order to improve the quality of its design portfolio, culminating in March 1875 in the creation of a special fund for the purchase of designs from eminent artists and the establishment of an advisory committee of gentlemen skilled in decorative work.¹⁸ Shortly afterwards, Mrs Madeline Wyndham, a founding member of the RSN who was 'especially keen' on the School, wrote a fifteen-page letter to Mrs Welby from her sister's home at Hyères on the Côte d'Azur, setting out her recommendations for the artistic management of the institution.²⁹ One of the issues which particularly concerned her was the choice of candidate to oversee the production of crewel work:

There was another thing I wanted to speak to you so very much about & that is ... Miss Burden. You must not think me unkind about it because I know she behaved so badly but I know also that you are too much the true mother of a child sick school to mind that if you thought she would be the best person to teach now to mind the by-gones & the more I see of her work the more I feel that she is the only person who knows how to work the crewel work.¹⁹

Mrs Wyndham was vexed by the RSN's lack of technical proficiency. In fact, she rated her own skills in crewel embroidery almost on a par with the best needle-woman at the School and better than many of the other workers. Even so, she told Mrs Welby, her own handiwork could not compare with that of Bessie, 'it is so far above any thing I can do or come near', citing two examples prepared by

her: a piano cover designed by Morris for Susan Baroness Wharnclyffe,²⁰ and a second piece, 'so beautifully prepared that I cannot go on with it till I get a few lessons from [Miss Burden]'.²¹ In addition, Mrs Wyndham claimed that the RSN was so careless in preparing orders that many of its customers, including all of her neighbours in Cumberland, whose skills exceeded those of the School, were themselves correcting the work. She was convinced that the best solution was to persuade Bessie to return, no mean feat given the circumstances under which she had departed previously, but a necessary one in order to protect the RSN's reputation:

I feel that at all costs it would be such a good thing if Miss Burden could be got to undertake the teaching of 6 or 7 of our crewel workers & not leave them till she considers that they know how to work & arrange it so she must take a pride in it, & feel that the credit will be hers. It would be difficult to arrange but the difficulty ought not to daunt us because the result will be if we do not that all good workers like Lady Wharnclyffe will go to her to get their work prepared & we shall have all the riff raff of amateurs coming to us for cheap & badly prepared work which will be spread all over the world bringing disrepute on us.

Mrs Wyndham was hopeful that Mrs Welby would reach the same conclusion and not think her prejudiced in Bessie's favour, but in order to hammer home the point, she turned to the question of Edward Burne-Jones's involvement in designing for the RSN. She feared that the work-room mistress, Elizabeth Gemmell, was too inexperienced to interpret the artist's intention as regards the arrangement of colours and would give him 'so much trouble in looking after it that I do not think he would undertake another for us'. But if Bessie had 'the arrangement of it & the teaching of the workers on it', she believed it would be of immense advantage to the RSN for '[Miss Burden] has lived & been trained in his school of design & colouring for it is the same as Mr Morris'.

Mrs Wyndham's lengthy missive achieved the desired effect; on 26 July 1875, Bessie began teaching in the 'Artistic room' specially set aside for working the designs of Morris, Walter Crane and others in crewels, for which she received £150 per annum. The RSN Council was informed that Bessie was 'supposed to be the finest worker in the style in England'. Few details survive of her employment, but according to the School's *Handbook of Embroidery*, a variety of 'cushion' stitch (*opus pluvinarium*) dating from the Medieval period and found in the work of German, Flemish, Italian and French schools, was taught by Bessie and 'used under her direction in working flesh in some large figures', namely Walter Crane's *Complete Design for Decorating a Room with Hangings*, which formed the centre piece of the RSN's display at the 1876 Philadelphia International Centennial Exhibition. Known during the late nineteenth century as 'tapestry' stitch (Figure 2) because of its resemblance to woven tapestry, the stitch was rediscovered

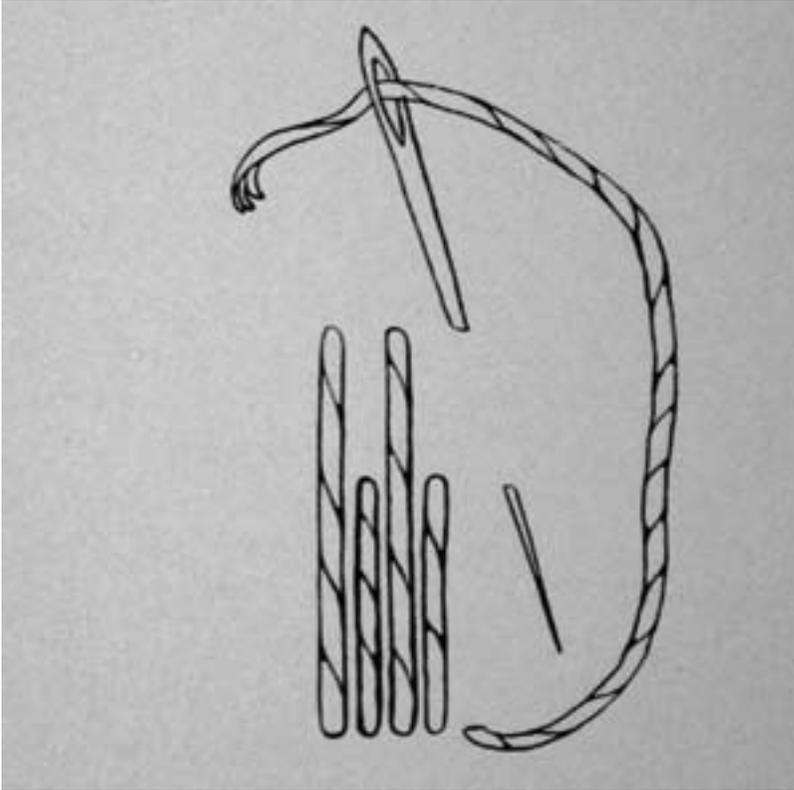


Figure 2. 'Tapestry Stitch', May Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, London: Joseph Hughes & Co., 1893, p. 36. William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest.

by Morris during the late 1850s and used to good effect in *The Legend of Good Wimmen* series (see Figure 1). Bessie's niece, May Morris, describes the method of working the stitch in her manual *Decorative Needlework* (1893):

This stitch is, like darning, used for filling-in broad spaces; but, unlike darning, it is solid back and front (though not identical), and instead of being rather frail and loose, is close and extremely durable. The worker aims at laying the stitches upright in rows, and when one row is done the next is laid with the stitches fitting close into those of the last row. This forms a laborious building-up of surface, simple enough where only a little shading or gradation of colour is wanted. Such

a method of work was formerly, and is still, a very favourite one for embroidering figures, and here it becomes difficult as well as laborious.

The stitch was renamed 'Burden Stitch' in the School's *Handbook of Embroidery* in recognition of Bessie's contribution; a woodcut showing the stitch was also included in the volume on the grounds that the RSN was frequently asked to describe it (Figure 3).²²

The last recorded payment made to Bessie dates from April 1877.²³ The timing of her departure may have coincided with the re-organisation of the RSN in the summer of that year following a lengthy and heated debate on the future management of the School, which resulted in the dismissal of several key members. Despite the brevity of her appointment, Bessie's teaching undoubtedly contributed to the RSN's success both nationally and internationally during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The set of furnishings worked under her direction for the 1876 Philadelphia Exhibition received a Certificate of Award, and in the opinion of the American interior designer Candace Wheeler, 'sowed the seed' for the development of art embroidery in the United States. The 'Artistic room' continued to work with the leading designers of the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts Movements, producing several notable figurative embroideries including Burne-Jones's portières *Musica* and *Poesis*, which were frequently copied.²⁴

From Bessie's perspective, this correspondence reveals how little the RSN could teach her about art embroidery. She comes across as a prickly professional who refused to compromise her standards, and who was less than adroit in managing her aristocratic employers. Had she shown more finesse, she might have achieved a pivotal role in the running of the School.

NOTES

1. Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles*, London: V&A Publishing, 2013, p. 29 (subsequently Parry); Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, Vol. I: 1848–1880, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 561 (subsequently Kelvin). On a personal level, Morris had little time for his sister-in-law (*Ibid.*, p. 172); See, for example, the *Lamb and Flag* altar frontal worked in 1868 for the restoration of Llandaff Cathedral (Parry, p. 23) and the figures of *Lucretia*, *Hyppolyte* and *Helen* from *The Legende of Good Wimmen* series, designed originally for the dining room at Red House in ca 1860 and sold as a three-panel screen to George Howard, 9th Earl of Carlisle in 1889 (Tim Barringer, Jason Rosenfeld & Alison Smith, *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde*, exhibition catalogue, London: Tate Publishing, 2012, p. 185). An embroidered floral binding found on a copy of

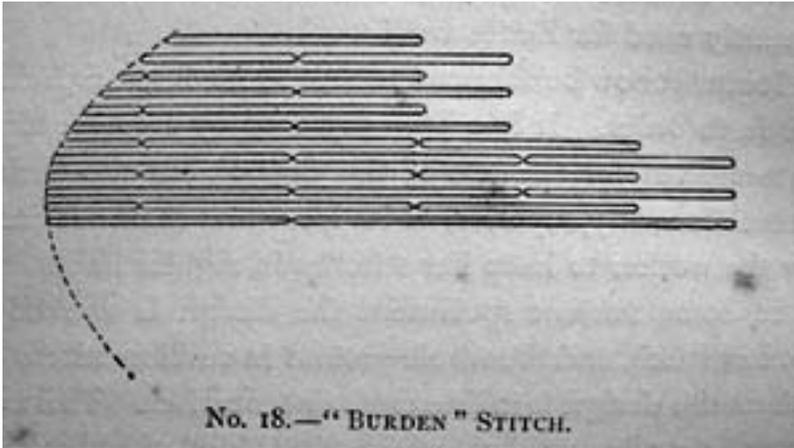


Figure 3. 'Burden Stitch', Letitia Higgin, *Handbook of Embroidery*, London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1880, p. 50. Photograph: Lynn Hulse.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881), imitating the original gold stamped cover, has also been attributed to Bessie (National Library of New Zealand, REng ROSS Ball 1881); In 1880, Morris noted that Bessie had been employed for a number of years as an embroideress and 'arranger of such-like work', and was responsible for keeping 'troublesome & complicated accounts concerning designs, materials, & wages'; Kelvin, p. 561. In the 1881 UK census, she is described as 'Embroidress' (The [UK] National Archives [subsequently TNA] RG11/52/61/40); I am grateful to the Welby family for permission to publish material from their private papers (subsequently 'private collection').

2. Royal School of Needlework, Hampton Court Palace, Surrey, RSN Archive 136/5, Flyer for the School of Art Needlework, nd [October 1873]. For more information about the early years of the RSN, see my introductory essay to Letitia Higgin, ed, Lady Marian Alford, *Royal School of Needlework Handbook of Embroidery* (1880), East Molesey: Royal School of Needlework, 2010, p. 1–98 (subsequently Hulse).
3. Flyer for the School of Art Needlework, nd [October 1872]; private collection.
4. Anthea Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870–1914*, London: Astragal Books, 1979, p. 101.

5. Jan Marsh, *Jane & May Morris: A biographical story, 1839–1938*, London: published by the author, 2000, p. III.
6. Elizabeth Burden to Mrs Welby, 21 December 1872 from 26 Queen Square, Bloomsbury; private collection.
7. Ditto, 30 December 1872 from The Vicarage, Clay Cross; private collection. Bessie had already informed Mrs Welby that she would be out of town for a fortnight from 23 December and was therefore unable to attend for interview before the latter's departure for Lincolnshire. Mrs Welby did not return to London until 3 February 1873.
8. At the time of the 1871 UK census, the building was occupied by Mary Amery, a widowed accountant, and her children (NA RG10/340/7/9). Within a decade, the singer Elizabeth Grundy and her family had moved into the property (RG11/321/6/7). Writing to Aglaia Coronio on 23 January 1873, Morris commented that one of the advantages of moving from Queen Square to Horrington House on Turnham Green Road was that the latter was too small for Bessie to continue living with the family; Kelvin, p. 176; RSN Archive 17, Admissions Register (1872–1922), p. 21. Mrs Davison thanked Mrs Welby in early February for sending her to Miss Burden; S. J. Davison to Mrs Welby, Thursday [6 or 13 February 1873]; private collection.
9. Obituary notice, *Liverpool Mercury*, 22 February 1873 (British Newspaper Archive, www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk); Elizabeth Burden to Mrs Welby, nd [20 February 1873] from 100 Southampton Row, Russell Square; private collection. In the archive at the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, is an empty envelope, postmarked 17 February 1873, addressed to Bessie at 26 Queen Square in Mrs Welby's hand and sent from her London home (PhJ902xxxix). The letter has not survived, but its contents must have fuelled Bessie's outburst; Bessie's letter ends with the comment that she had not seen Morris the Friday before and doubted whether he would have had much time to call on Mrs Welby. Keen to forge links with Morris, the School may have hoped that Bessie would act as go-between with her brother-in-law. In December 1872, the art furniture maker and RSN agent Henry Capel had approached Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in order to enquire whether it would be interested in using outworkers from the RSN, but he received a negative response from George Wardle, the works' manager (Henry Capel to Mrs Welby, 13 and 17 December 1872 from 26 Great Titchfield Street, Langham Place; private collection).
10. Elizabeth Burden to Mrs Welby, Wednesday 26th [February 1873], from 100 Southampton Row, Russell Square; private collection.
11. In papers relating to the RSN for 1873, there is no record of a needlework exhibition being held at the South Kensington Museum. See also Eliza-

- beth James, *The Victoria & Albert Museum: A Bibliography and Exhibition Chronology, 1852–1996*, London: Fitzroy Dearborn in association with V&A Publications, 1998, 804 pp.; *Catalogue of the Special Loan Exhibition of Decorative Art Needlework made before 1800*, London: Chiswick Press, 1874, pp. v–vi (subsequently *Catalogue*). There is no mention of contemporary work in the catalogue or in the various newspaper reports of the exhibition; see, for example, *The Spectator*, 26 July 1873, pp. 951–952.
12. Mrs Welby to Elizabeth Burden, nd, from 10 West Eaton Place; private collection.
 13. Elizabeth Burden to Mrs Welby, 22 March 1873, from 100 Southampton Row, Russell Square; private collection.
 14. See Note 1; Parry, pp. 19–21; A. R. Dufty, *Morris Embroideries: The Prototypes*, London: The Society of Antiquaries, 1985, 52 pp. See, for example, the fragment from an altar frontal, 1470–1500, in Donald King & Santina Levey, *The Victoria and Albert Museum's Textile Collection: Embroidery in Britain from 1200 to 1750*, London: V&A Publications, 2001 rep., pp. 23 and 44.
 15. Princess Helena to Mrs Welby, 29 March 1873; private collection.
 16. Following her departure from the RSN, Bessie attempted to set up her own teaching establishment. On 13 April [1873 or 1874], she received a letter from Rossetti, sent from Kelmscott Manor, enclosing a postal order for an unspecified sum and offering to be 'a large Donor to your School' (William Morris Gallery J2098). The letter is not included in William E. Fredeman, ed, *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 9 vols, Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002–2010. The outcome of Bessie's enterprise is unrecorded.
 17. *The Queen*, Vol. 55, 25 April 1874, p. 335.
 18. RSN Archive 216, School of Art Needlework Minute Book, fols 74–75, 23 March 1875; Walter Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences*, London: Methuen & Co., 1907, p. 164.
 19. Madeline Wyndham to Mrs Welby, nd [1875], from Sylvabelle, Hyères; private collection.
 20. In all probability, the 'Grand Pianoforte cover. Designed by Mr Wm. Morris. Ground Linen Worked in fine crewel worsted' cited in Lady Wharncliffe's list of embroidered work; Sheffield Archives Wh M 489, nd, late 19th century–1922. Also included are '2 Sofa backs worked in crewels on Russian Crash. Design taken from Morris's wall paper of Primroses and Columbines', 'one small cushion. Linen worked in yellow silks. Morris pattern' and '1 Long Sofa back. Worked in Silks on linen. Wm. Morris's design'. The latter may be identified as the 'Design for a Sofa-Back Cover' printed in Letitia Higgin, *Handbook of Embroidery*, London: Sampson Low, Marshall, Searle, & Rivington, 1880, p. 63, Plate 6 (subsequently Higgin). For more informa-

tion on this design, see Hulse, p. 44 and note 285. Lady Wharnccliffe had served on the executive committee for the *Special Loan Exhibition of Decorative Art Needlework* (*Catalogue*, p. vi). She was married to Mrs Welby's cousin, Edward Montagu-Stuart-Wortley-Mackenzie, 3rd Baron Wharnccliffe, who was a trustee of the RSN.

21. Both Morris & Co. and the RSN sold partially-worked kits with a small section of the design completed in the recommended technique as a guide for the customer to follow at home. (See, for example, the kit designed by May Morris, ca 1890s illustrated in Linda Parry, ed, *William Morris*, exhibition catalogue, London: Philip Wilson Publishers Ltd, 1996, p. 247, M.29); Hulse, pp. 27–28.
22. RSN Archive 119, Managing Committee Minutes (1875–1876), fol. 2. Bessie was paid £37 10s per quarter (RSN Archive 109, Receipts and Payments [1876–1877], entries dated 13 May 1876, 1st October 1876, 12 January 1877 and 12 April 1877): *Vice-President's Report to HRH the President and the Council of the Royal School of Art Needlework, for 1875*, London, 1876, pp. 2–3. According to the Admissions register, Bessie signed the certificate of three ladies trained at the RSN during the period 1875–77 (RSN Archive 17 pp. 108, 113 and 119); Higgin, pp. 49–50. Bessie may have first introduced the stitch to the RSN during February 1873; Hulse, pp. 40–41; May Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, London: Joseph Hughes & Co., 1893, pp. 36–37 (subsequently May Morris); W. G. Paulson Townsend, *Embroidery or The Craft of the Needle*, London & New York: Truslove, Hanson & Comba Ltd, 1899, pp. 96–97. The stitch is generally known today as 'brick' or 'brick satin' stitch; May Morris, *Ibid.*; The definition of Burden stitch described in Caulfeild & Seward's Victorian stitch primer as 'A variety of Cushion Stitch and Plain Couching, called "Burden", as it was used by a lady of that name at the South Kensington Needlework School [i.e. the RSN] for working flesh', differs from Higgin and May Morris in being worked over a foundation of horizontal laid lines, a technique still in use today. See S. F. A. Caulfeild & Blanche C. Seward, *The Dictionary of Needlework*, London: A. W. Cowan, 1887, 2nd edn, p. 56).
23. There is no evidence to support the view that Bessie became chief technical instructor of the RSN during 1880 (see Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris. A Life for our Time*, London: Faber & Faber, 1995, p. 360).
24. Candace Wheeler, *The Development of Embroidery in America*, New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1921, p. 107. In 1877, Wheeler set up the New York Society of Decorative Art, modelled on the RSN, and within a short space of time RSN-trained teachers were superintending schools of embroidery in cities across the country, including Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco; Hulse, pp. 37–39, Figs 18–19.