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FRAGILE SURVIVORS



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Fragile objects can break easily. They are made from delicate material such as paper, glass, ceramics, or textiles.

They are items that although present in our everyday lives, we are told not to touch and instead appreciate distantly. We are afraid of breaking fragile objects, meaning that people are often protective of these objects.

Our desire to protect these objects means it is easy to see them as weak, however, they are in fact survivors. Museums, institutions, and individuals spend time and money to preserve these objects and keep them alive.

CERAMIC



WHEN HUMANS DISCOVERED THAT CLAY CAN BE FOUND IN ABUNDANCE AND CAN BE MOULDED INTO OBJECTS BY MIXING IT WITH WATER, THE STORY OF CERAMICS BEGAN.

DESPITE THEIR DELICATE NATURE, THEY BECAME AN OBJECT OF POWER AND COMMUNICATION.

THEY WERE PASSED ON TO GENERATIONS AND WITNESSED THE CHANGING WORLD AND CREATED STORIES THAT BECAME A MEDIUM OF THE WORLD'S ADVANCEMENT.



BUTTER DISH

Material: Ceramic

Period: Georgian William IV

Period Start date - 1833

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Image sourced from York Museums Trust.

Available from: Butter Dish | York Museums Trust



An object as fragile as a ceramic butter dish has been in several instances used as an object of communication. Even in its fragile state, this object has reflected to be somebody's personal investment. Here, this butter dish becomes the witness as well as the storyteller of the rise and influence of Freemasonry in the 19th century.

When you look closely, you can see the compass and the triangle, which are drawn from the five key aspects of early Victorian family ideology: loyalty, duty, mutual support, effective bonds, and patriarchal authority. These allegorical symbols foster fraternal bonds among the brethren, which is important for family formation.



PLATE

Material: Ceramic

Period: Georgian - William IV

Period Start date - 1833

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Image sourced from York Museums Trust.

Available from: Plate | York Museums Trust





SUGAR VASE

Material: Ceramic

Period : Qing Dynasty, Kangxi, Yongzheng, Qianlong, Jiaqing, Daoguang

Period Start date- 1700

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Available from: Vase | York Museums Trust



The Chinese blue and white porcelain reflects the Imperial tastes of the period 1700-1850. This bright blue on a warm white ground vase was prized throughout the Qing dynasty's Kangxi era and beyond and was an integral part of the Western collection as a mark of luxurious trading class.

Aptly called the first truly global commodity, this porcelain sugar vase , both in terms of shapes and surface decoration, revealed an enthralling mingling of cultural exchange, wealth, influence, and power. It linked to the fascination and enchantment of Europeans with Chinese porcelain inextricably to the history of exploration, conquest, and colonization of exotic land.



COFFEE POT

Material: Ceramic

Period: Georgian William IV

Period Start date - 1826

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Available from: Coffee pot | York Museum Trust



An earthenware coffee pot with a brown glaze from Rockingham works is decorated with oriental scenes in gilt over the glaze.

Due to the development of science and technology, the cultural exchange between the East and the West became convenient. This pot became one of the finest example of exhibiting the beginning of cultural exchange between the East and the West.

Imagine, how the owner of the coffee pot would have felt when he poured coffee from it.



HEAD POT

Material: Ceramic

Period: Roman

Period Start date - 300 BC

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Available from: Face Urn | York Museums Trust



The large face vase of thick red fabric, her hairstyle and facial details suggest that it is modelled on Roman empress Julia Domna.

She was well-read and politically astute, during the reign of her husband and son, she was involved in the management of state affairs as a female politician.

This pottery is well made and records those history of women in power. It represents a role model of independence and autonomy among ancient women. Can her feminine strength be passed on to every modern woman who sees it?

GLASS



GLASS IS PERHAPS WHAT MOST PEOPLE THINK OF WHEN YOU CONSIDER A FRAGILE MATERIAL.

WE WRAP IT IN PAPER OR BUBBLE-WRAP, WE PACKAGE IT CAREFULLY AND WE ARE TOLD TO HANDLE WITH CARE.

YET GLASS IS EMBEDDED IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES, IN WINE GLASSES, SPECTACLES, SCREENS, WINDOWS AND SO MUCH MORE. AS A RESULT IT IS OFTEN BROKEN AND DISPOSED OF.

THEREFORE, GLASS OBJECTS THAT HAVE SURVIVED FOR CENTURIES IN ONE PIECE ARE TRULY IMPRESSIVE



WINDOW GLASS

Material: Glass

Period: Medieval

Period Start date - 1335

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Available from: Window Glass | York Museums Trust



This window glass from medieval York is still exquisite today. It may have been removed from a church as an act of protection and preservation, perhaps from concerns of the ageing glass or the pollution from the streets of York.

This stained glass were restored and remounted after a partnership with the research students of the MA course in Stained Glass Conservation in 2009-2010.

Window is an indispensable part of architecture. People would see the king's gaze when they walk into the cathedral where this window is located. This object is likely a symbol and penetration of royalty and church power, a form of control by using a hardly ignored window.

PAPER/TEXTILE





PAPER HAS BEEN USED FOR CENTURIES AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATION. IT IS A DELICATE MATERIAL.

IT CAN BE RIPPED, STAINED, CRUMPLED, TORN, OR EVEN BURNT. THE SURVIVAL OF OBJECTS MADE OF PAPER IS CONSEQUENTLY IMPRESSIVE.



TEXTILES HAVE MANY FORMS, THE MOST OBVIOUS BEING CLOTHING.

TEXTILES ARE CREATED USING BEAUTIFUL PATTERNS, THAT HAVE BEEN PRESERVED AND PROTECTED DEMONSTRATING THE SKILL AND CREATIVITY OF INDIVIDUALS WHO PRODUCED THE TEXTILES.





VALENTINE'S CARD

Material: Card

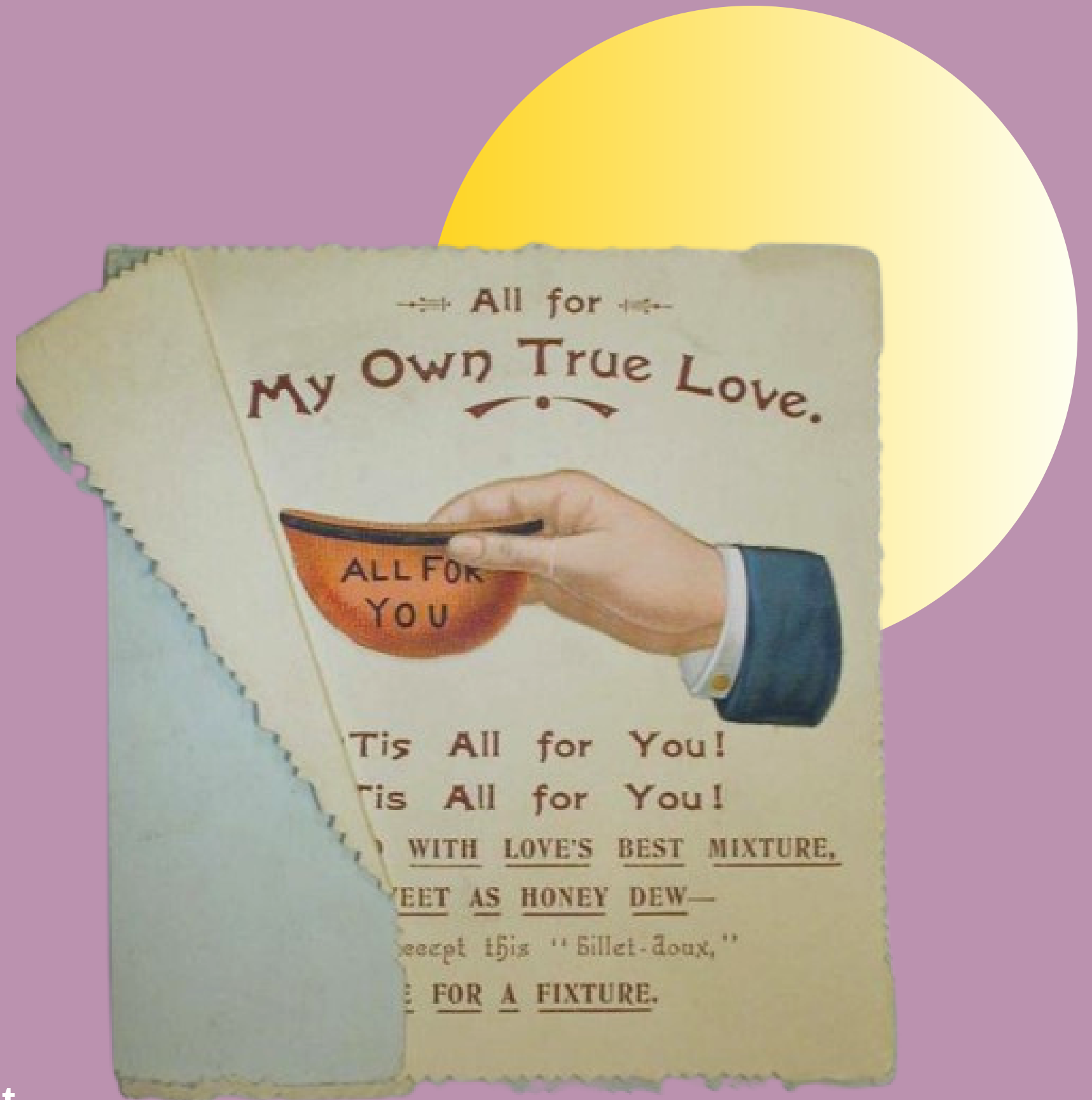
Period: Georgian

Period Start date - 1800

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Available from: Valentine Card | York Museums Trust





GEORGE HUDSON PORTRAIT

Material: Photographs, Glass plate

Period: Victorian

Period Start date - 1849

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Available from: George Hudson Portrait | York Museums Trust



George Hudson (c. 1800-1871) was a British railway financier and politician known as the "King of the Railways". He developed his home city of York into a major railway hub.

Glass slide bearing a photograph of a punch cartoon of 1849 shows the fall of George Hudson.

The photograph shows the downfall of George Hudson in a comical comic strip, with a textual description of the scene below.

The photograph is well preserved. It is a testament to history, an expression of disgust and a silent rebellion against George Hudson.



PLAYING CARD

Material: Paper

Period: Georgian

Period Start date - 1710

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Available from: Playing card | York Museums Trust



Playing cards is a form of entertainment.

What's special about this deck of cards is that most of them are printed with “Witty Sayings”. It takes entertainment to the extreme and helps people eliminate loneliness.

These interactive playing cards are fragile, and are protected by people with the hope that it brings them happiness.

To this day, playing cards are still an important tool for people to socialize.



THE WORLD AND IT'S INHABITANTS

Material: Paper, cardboard

Period: Georgian

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Image sourced from York Museums Trust.

Available from: The World with ist Inhabitants (sic) | York Museums Trust



Globes were sold as educational aids, this one comes as part of a set 'The world and its inhabitants' which contains paper strip illustrations of 28 different races.

If you think about how many children may have handled this paper globe and used it to explore the world, it is remarkable that it has survived.

The globe could be used today to acknowledge how physically the world has changed both by looking at the changes in maps, for example the formation of new countries.



WOMAN SUFFRAGE PAPER CUP

Material: Paper

Period: 1917

From The Smithsonian

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Image available at:

Woman Suffrage Paper Cup | Smithsonian Institution (si.edu)



On the 6th of November 1917 the Susan B. Anthony amendment was passed making New York an equal Suffrage State, meaning for the first time Women there could vote.

Slogans encouraging voters were printed on all types of merchandise, including this paper cup, there was no guarantee that the amendment would be passed however someone had the faith that it would be, to such an extent that they kept this small cup.

Generations have cared greatly for this important piece of history, keeping it in pristine condition so it can serve as a reminder of how women fought to gain suffrage in the USA.



SAMPLER

Material: Linen, Wool

Period: Victorian

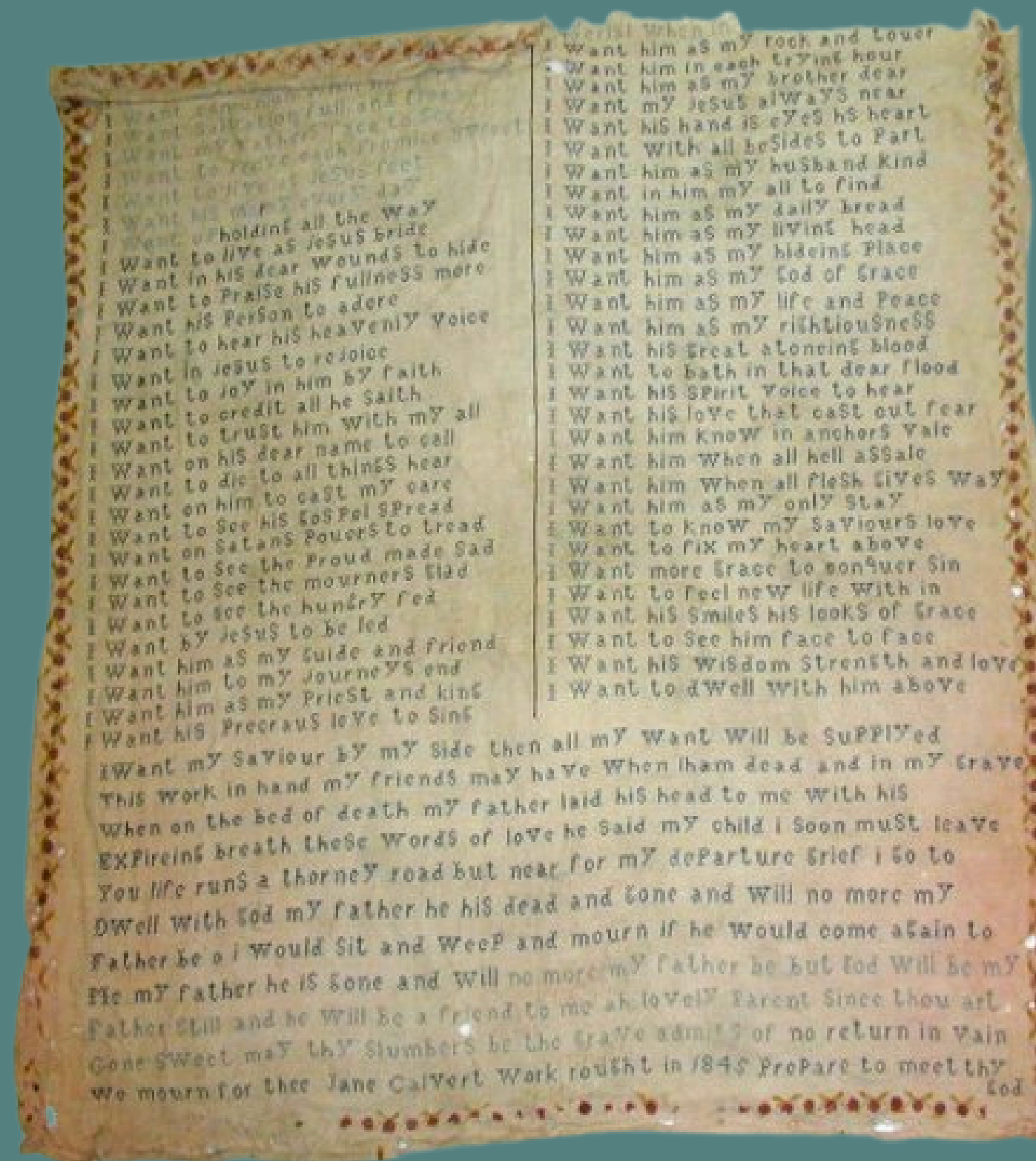
Period Start date - 1845

Creator: Jane Calvert

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Available from: Sampler | York Museums Trust



This sampler was stitched by Jane Calvert after the death of her father.

Jane Calvert's devotion to her father and to God is evident in the delicate stitching as it shows her father's last words to her, 'I go to dwell with God'.

You can see from the neatness of her stitches, how much time and dedication Jane put into creating this intricate sampler, which may be why this object has survived in good condition for over one hundred years.

WHY PEOPLE PROTECT



?

HOW ABOUT
YOU?



- 1 Is it worth considering why people keep fragile objects?
- 2 What makes these objects special?
- 3 What stories do they tell?
- 4 How does the survival of these objects demonstrate their power?
- 5 How does the protection of these objects influence our lives?