

The Red Maids' School – History in a Quilt by Eileen Tilley (*née Wade and a 1961-1968 Red Maid*)

The East Midlands Branch of the Embroiderers set a project title each year, in 2012 the project was 'Archives' and this is my own development of this historical theme. The techniques include; - fabric painting and dyeing, computerized embroidery and free machine quilting.

Panel 1

- a. Portrait of John Whitson
- b. A brief history of John's early life, written as if on an ancient manuscript
- c. Bristol was a very busy port in the 17th century, so an 'ancient' map was appropriate.
- d. As a Merchant John had many ships and cargoes of wine, oil, salt, wool etc.
- e. John was a member of 'The Spanish Company' a group of Bristol and London merchants and this is the Coat of Arms, which appears on his fireplace.
- f. Important dates in John Whitson's successful political life.
- g. A representation of his will, with a quote from his book Pious Meditations, complete with his signature and seal.

Panel 2

- a. A painting of Red Maids entering school in Denmark Street, with a quote about "Red Maids who walk the earth in scarlet gowns set off by white aprons".
- b. 1634 the date the school started.
- c. A quote from John Whitson's will, "forty poore women Children and cause them to bee there kept and maintained and also taught to read English and to sowe". The ghostly figure represents the first headmistress – a "woman of good life and conversation".
- d. The back of the school building in the Gaunts, painted by one of the mistresses.
- e. A map of the centre of Bristol in 1673.
- f. Red maids 'going to school' in uniforms as shown in Eyre Crowe's painting.
- g. A Victorian photo of Red Maids against the window of the school in Denmark Street.
- h. A Red Maid in 1909.
- i. The school coat of arms – a Victorian version, complete with 'mantling'.
- j. A photo of Jean Vanes, author of " apparelled in Red".
- k. In the Victorian period Red Maids were taught to sew, school has a bookmark, in cross stitch with this biblical verse.

Panel 3

- a. Part of a school photo, taken in 1965 (I painted myself in red).
- b. A few of my school recollections. I have included representations of the shillings we were given on Founders Day.
- c. The four school houses were named after four of John Whitson's ships.
- d. The main school building – much as I remember it.
- e. Once a year Red Maids gather for Founders Day and process from Bristol Bridge to the Cathedral.
- f. The 2013 procession with the Head girl and Deputy embroidered.
- g. School jumpers have the modern 'RMS' embroidered on them.
- h. The School badge as it is now, having undergone several changes over the years.
- i. Instead of a map in this panel I have included the Signpost, outside Denmark House, showing the contacts over the world.
- j. This was the memorable phrase on the school headed paper.