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Elizabethan Inheritance

Santina M. Levey : Elizabethan Inheritance before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Elizabethan Inheritance:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Any book by Santina Levey is highly recommendedBy Jane in MilwaukeeI'm a serious student of historic needlework and the Tudor period in the English monarchy. In reading the histories of Queen Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots and Bess of Hardwick, and especially their needlework accomplishments and collections, you see how intertwined were the lives of these 3 lionesses of history. First, I recommend reading Mary Lovell's "Bess of Hardwick: Empire Builder." This gives you the background of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury who was born in the Old Hardwick Hall to high-born but low-income parents. She made her way to fame and fortune by marrying and outliving 4 husbands. Her 2nd husband, Sir William Cavendish taught her to watch every penny and she developed a better head for business than the majority of her male counterparts. She lovingly designed and built the New Hardwick Hall and kept such good care of and records of her belongings that this

book is possible. If you can, also read Santina Levey's "The Embroideries at Hardwick Hall: A Catalogue." This book is a massive tome describing in--sometimes excruciating--detail each and every item in the 1601 inventory; it includes many close-ups of the embroideries and comprehensively discusses the needlework techniques and heraldic symbolism. The reviewed book is much more accessible and readable. The mostly color pictures dot almost every page and great attention is paid to the relationship between Queen Elizabeth, for whom Bess was a Lady of the Privy Chamber, and Mary Queen of Scots who became the bane of the other 2 women's lives. It is little known, perhaps, that when Mary Queen of Scots was run out of Scotland by her nobles, she sought refuge with her cousin, Elizabeth I. Unfortunately for Mary, she posed a threat by being next in line to Elizabeth's throne. So Elizabeth had to find a suitable host (read "jailor") to house (read "incarcerate") Mary till she could decide what to do with her. Elizabeth's sensible choice was George Talbot, the 4th Earl of Shrewsbury, a staunchly loyal man whose Countess was Bess. Queen Mary and her "court" of 60 people almost ate the Shrewsburys out of house and home in the 15 years they kept her. Mary and Bess shared a passion for needlework and would embroider until their fingers ached. Mary imported many designs from France (did you know she was the Dowager Queen of France?) and gave Bess key ideas which wound up in the final images she commissioned or embroidered herself. Many of Mary's extant needlework can be found in Hardwick Hall. Most fascinating to me is that there is an important needlework component to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. She inserted secret messages in the embroidered objects she made as gifts, particularly a cushion she sent to the Duke of Norfolk. It shows a hand pruning off a dead branch, leaving the living parts of the plant to flourish. This symbolized the death of the Tudor branch--the barren Elizabeth--and her replacement with the Stuart branch, the fruitful Mary. For his plotting, the Duke was beheaded in 1572 and Mary, 15 years later. This panel now hangs in the Victoria Albert Museum in London. I also recommend reading Margaret Swain's 1973 book "The Needlework of Mary Queen of Scots" and Michael Bath's "Emblems for a Queen: The Needlework of Mary Queen of Scots" of 2008. All considered together put "An Elizabethan Inheritance" in riveting context. Santina Levey's expertise and drive for thoroughness and clarity cannot be exaggerated. I have visited the Textiles Room and glorious first floor exhibits at the VA Museum where she was Curator of Textiles for years. No one knows more about this subject matter than she. And she writes beautifully. (Please pardon a long review...I just get carried away with this subject matter.)

Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire houses a world-famous collection of 16th and 17th century textile furnishings. The collection ranges from carpets and tapestries to bed sets and cushion covers, many of them decorated with superb embroidery. In this lavishly illustrated and authoritative introduction to the collection, Santina M. Levey places the textiles in their day-to-day context. During the 16th and 17th centuries textiles were of prime importance. They were the major means of providing color, pattern, warmth, and comfort within a house, and their high cost made them the vehicle for an often ostentatious display of wealth.

About the Author Santina Levey, FSA, worked at the VA Museum for 20 years, the last nine of them as Keeper of the Department of Textiles. She was responsible for the collections of lace, embroidery and vestments, and also worked more generally with objects from the 16th and 17th centuries.