



# The Embroideries at Hardwick Hall: A Catalogue

*Santina M Levey*

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The collection of late 16th-century embroidery, needlework and wrought linen at the National Trust's Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire is the most important of its type in Britain, and probably in the Western World. Largely commissioned and acquired by the redoubtable Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury - known as 'Bess of Hardwick' - these pieces, some 200 in total with many of the highest quality, range from small fragments of exquisite needlework to a dramatic set of huge wall hangings depicting 'Heroic Women of the Ancient World'. Most have remained at Hardwick for over 400 years. Bess of Hardwick moved in the highest echelons of contemporary society and was on close terms with Queen Elizabeth I. The collection therefore constitutes an invaluable document of social history, reflecting the interests and values of the Queen, her courtiers and Elizabethan patrons of the arts. In the first ever catalogue of this extraordinary collection, Santina Levey looks at each piece in turn, explaining the context to its creation, its symbolism, materials, workmanship and history. Grouped by type, many of the pieces are surprisingly well documented and Levey throws new light on the ways in which they were displayed and even re-used at different periods of their past. She also explains the remarkable range of techniques used on the embroideries, and provides fascinating new information on design sources and motifs.

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