

## Clara's Quilt

The quilt that I have chosen for the header of this website was, according to my mum, begun by my great grandmother, Clara Woolgar née Dawson.



**Clara Woolgar née Dawson**

As well as the quilt, I have some of the loose hexagons that she prepared, ready to add to the quilt, which I believe she started in the very early years of the twentieth century, if not before. The stiff paper that has been used to support the patchwork pieces is still intact in many of them and Clara appears to have cut up pages from school exercise books for this purpose. At first, I thought that these books might have belonged to her son, my great Uncle Percy. Some of



them are in French however and I would be surprised if he had learned French. I do have sample of his hand writing and it is possible that these scraps were in his 'best' writing but we may never know. The materials used for the patches seem to cover a range of fashion styles, with some appearing to be more modern than others. There are tiny cotton prints and some in thicker, striped material that might have been from men's shirts.



For whatever reason, Clara never finished her quilt and it was worked on by her daughter, my granny, Ivy Smith née Woolgar, before being passed to my mum, Gwendoline Catherine Braund née Smith, who also added her stiches.



**Ivy Gertrude Smith née Woolgar**



**Gwendoline Catherine  
Braund née Smith**

I am not certain whether the family superstition about patchwork began with my mum or my granny but by the mid-1960s my mum refused to do any more patchwork. There were numerous family deaths between 1963 and 1966 and mum believed that each time she worked on a patchwork quilt, someone died. She did complete a quilt in the 1960s and I am the current custodian of that too. I remember many of the materials in that quilt from the days when they were clothes worn by my mum or myself.

In the 1970s, I hankered after a patchwork maxi-skirt, highly fashionable at the time. Mum refused to have anything to do with this but was happy for me to make my own, which I began to do. I had barely begun when two of my close friends had a very serious motorbike accident. I never did have a patchwork skirt.

Much more recently, I reasoned that completing Clara's quilt by hemming round the edges and removing the paper hexagons wasn't 'doing patchwork', so I would be safe to go ahead. I began this but it still isn't finished. I plan to let my descendants work on the quilt, so we will have had six generations of stitchers taking part. Perhaps it should never be finished, so still more generations can join in. I am also reluctant to remove the paper from the last of the patches, which means it could not be washed. I would love to display Clara's quilt and the one that my mum finished in the 1960s, now an unbelievable sixty years ago but I am wary of them fading.