

Not the World's Keenest Seamstress

By John Kirkham

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My mother, Helen, was not the world's keenest seamstress! I only vaguely remember her doing the usual darning and repairs necessary. When we were young most of our 'civvies' were made by Billy the ancient police tailor in Zomba Camp. School uniform was acquired from the school suppliers. I feel sure that she did occasionally

make such items as curtains, but I have no clear recollection of her doing so.

She did, however, get heavily involved with Occupational Therapy for women patients at the African Hospitals in both Zomba and Blantyre. This seems to have involved the endless production of circular items of various sizes, made from mosquito netting and edged with beads for use as covers for plates, bowls or jugs of food, milk, jam etc. She did do some knitting - this only became a major occupation after she and Mac returned to England.

She taught me - but not Roger as I recall - to do simple knitting, how to sew on a button and do minor repairs with a needle and thread. As



a small boy I was fascinated by sewing machines and she taught me how to use one. To this day, I'm a dab-hand with my wife Jenny's ancient hand-cranked machine.

Helen's two main interests with a needle was embroidery and patchwork quilting. Over the years she produced several examples of both.

