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The history of the fine lace knitting industry in nineteenth and
early twentieth century Shetland

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
History
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Abstract

This thesis tells the story of Shetland knitted lace. It is a history that comprises more than a series of chronological events which illustrate the development of a domestic craft industry; it is also the story of a landscape and the people who inhabited it and the story of the emergence of a distinctive textile product which achieved global recognition. Focusing on the material culture of Shetland lace opens up questions about the relationships between the women who produce it, the men and women who sell it and the women who consume and wear it. In acknowledging these connected histories and by following Shetland lace over time and across, often wide, geographical spaces, Shetland knitted lace can be shown to epitomize and signify social relations.

This research takes a life cycle, or biographical, approach to Shetland lace in which consideration is given not only to the circumstances surrounding its production, but also to recognising the different stages in its development and how it moved through different hands, contexts and uses. Shetland lace exists within a set of cultural relationships which are temporally, spatially and socially specific and it carries shifting historical and cultural stories about its makers, traders and wearers and the worlds that they inhabited. Recognising these relationships as an integral element in the formation of historical and cultural narratives it is possible to see the role Shetland lace played in defining self and community within Shetland while acknowledging difference in an expanding national and international market. This understanding of the production, marketing and consumption processes demonstrates the multiple relationships between Shetland lace and its market and between the producer and consumer.

The focus on the highly skilled Shetland lace producers demonstrates the development of female enterprise and entrepreneurship in the Shetland lace industry in which local networks operated in an exchange of labour and goods, both as a barter and monetary economy. Identifying the economic and symbolic place of Shetland lace within Shetland society highlights the impact of external influences on the success, and perceived decline of this industry.

From this perspective this research engages with many of the key questions concerning a specialised form of textile production dominated by women, its place within the female economy, and its position within the world of trade and fashion. In this it aims to make a new contribution to our knowledge of women's work, of the operation of markets, and the perception of skill and value in the past and the present and provide an understanding of an industry which was a crucial element of household economics and female autonomy in these islands. It acknowledges the community of unknown Shetland women who, over generations, introduced, produced and sustained the Shetland lace industry and where possible identifies, and gives a voice to, previously unknown individual producers.

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ERRATA SHEET

This errata sheet lists the errors and the corresponding corrections for the doctoral thesis written by Roslyn Chapman, titled *The history of the fine lace knitting industry in nineteenth and early twentieth century Shetland*. Submitted to The University of Glasgow, 2015.

The List of Figures on pages 4 and 5 is correct. However, due to a formatting error the Figure numbers in the body of the work from page 17 are 2 digits out of synch, causing Figures 7-50 to be incorrectly labelled as 5-48. Please see table below which will indicate the correction and the page number where it is located.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Error</u>	<u>Correction</u>
p. 17	Figure 5	Figure 7
p. 45	Figure 6	Figure 8
p. 50	Figure 7	Figure 9
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p. 87 (upper image)	Figure 22	Figure 24
p. 87 (lower image)	Figure 23	Figure 25
p. 102 (upper image)	Figure 24	Figure 26
p. 102 (lower image)	Figure 25	Figure 27
p. 113	Figure 26	Figure 28

<u>Location</u>	<u>Error</u>	<u>Correction</u>
p. 120	Figure 27	Figure 29
p. 124	Figure 28	Figure 30
p. 125 (upper image)	Figure 29	Figure 31
p. 125 (lower image)	Figure 30	Figure 32
p. 126	Figure 31	Figure 33
p. 132	Figure 32	Figure 34
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The Joy Sandison Collection, noted in the thesis as being held in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, is now held in Shetland Museum and Archives, Lerwick.

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List of accompanying material

Appendix 1

Sample entries from 'All Known Shetland Lace' database illustrating database compilation. Example of full database entry: SMA TEX 2013.39 - fine lace 'wedding ring' shawl.

Appendix 2

Sample entries from 'Newspaper Database' illustrating database compilation with two examples of a full database entry: advertisement and article.

Appendix 3

Sample entries from 'Victorian Knitting Books' Database illustrating criteria used in database compilation with an example of full database entry: Cornelia Mee and Mary Austin's *New Work on Knitting* (London: Mee & Austin, 1867).

Appendix 4

Information about available wools in 1849, Esther Copley, *The Comprehensive Knitting Book* (London: William Tegg and Co., 1849), pp.2-5.

Appendix 5

Business card and price list of Andrina Aitken, SMA TEX 1992.9116

Appendix 6

Highland & Agriculture Society's Show, 1892. Instructions on how to enter and category list for prizes.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the support of, and thank, the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding this collaborative PhD between the University of Glasgow and Shetland Museum and Archives.

I thank all the staff at the Shetland Museum and Archives (Lerwick), who made my visits to Shetland pleasurable as well as productive. Although too numerous to mention them all by name I owe them a debt of gratitude for their assistance and support on each of my visits

I thank the Sandison Archive (Unst), The Unst Heritage Centre, the Shetland Textile Museum (Lerwick) and the Old Haa Museum (Yell) who gave me unprecedented access to their collections. I also thank Joy Sandison for giving me access to her collection held in the National Museum of Scotland.

My appreciation goes to the staff and post graduate community at No.9 and No.1 University Gardens, for providing a stimulating and supportive research environment (and a great coffee and cake service) in which to complete this thesis. Special thanks to Dr Graeme Small and Dr Donald Spaeth for reading and commenting on chapters of this thesis.

I owe my greatest thanks to my supervisors Lynn Abrams, Marina Moskowitz and Carol Christiansen without whom this thesis would never have been completed. Their guidance and support was only surpassed by their enthusiasm for the research. They continue to motivate and inspire me.

My thanks go to Wilma Small and Peggy Golk, for reading over chapters and never looking dazed or bored when my only conversation involved Shetland and knitting. My most heartfelt thanks go to the Delgados. I thank Paul, Luis and Nathan for their unwavering support, for keeping me laughing and reminding me that there is a life both outside and beyond the PhD. My deepest and sincerest thanks go to my sister, Linda Delgado, whose initial support and encouragement that I should take an Access course in 2004 eventually led to this thesis. She challenged my ideas and offered new and insightful ways to look at the research. Her belief in my abilities has never faltered, even when mine did. This thesis is for our mum, Rose Reynolds Chapman (1928-1989), who exhibited her (not Shetland fine lace) knitting at the 1938 Empire Exhibition, Scotland (Glasgow).

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work, and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institutions.

Signature:_____

Printed name: Roslyn Chapman

Abbreviations

GM	Glasgow Museums
HHI	Highland Home Industries
NMS	National Museum of Scotland
PP	Parliamentary Papers
SA	Shetland Archives
SandArch	Sandison Archive, Unst
SMA	Shetland Museum and Archives
SHI	Scottish Home Industries
SHIA	Scottish Home Industries Association
SM	Shetland Museum
SN	Shetland News
ST	Shetland Times
TM	Shetland Textile Museum, Lerwick
UHC	Unst Heritage Centre

Shetland Museum and Archives is a singular organisation, however where the reference is directly applicable to the Museum it is referred to as SM, similarly where it is directly applicable to the Archives it is referred to as SA. Otherwise it will be referred to as SMA.

It should be noted that throughout the research period there were a variety of ways that prices were marked, for example two pounds fourteen shillings and five pence could be written as £2/14/5 or £2/14s/5d or 2/14/5. Throughout this thesis the format will take £1/0/0, where monetary value is recorded in shillings only the format will be 5/- for five shillings no pence. Often in the documentary records the value is accorded in shilling format even when the value is equal to the pound, for example 40/- rather than £2, where this makes cross comparison of pricing easier they have been left unchanged, otherwise the format will include the £. Where there is only pence recorded, then the value is listed as 5d, 6d etc. Quotations with monetary values remain as they appear in the original source.

Maps



Figure 1: Map of Shetland showing the principal islands and towns mentioned in this thesis, map courtesy of The Shetland Amenity Trust.

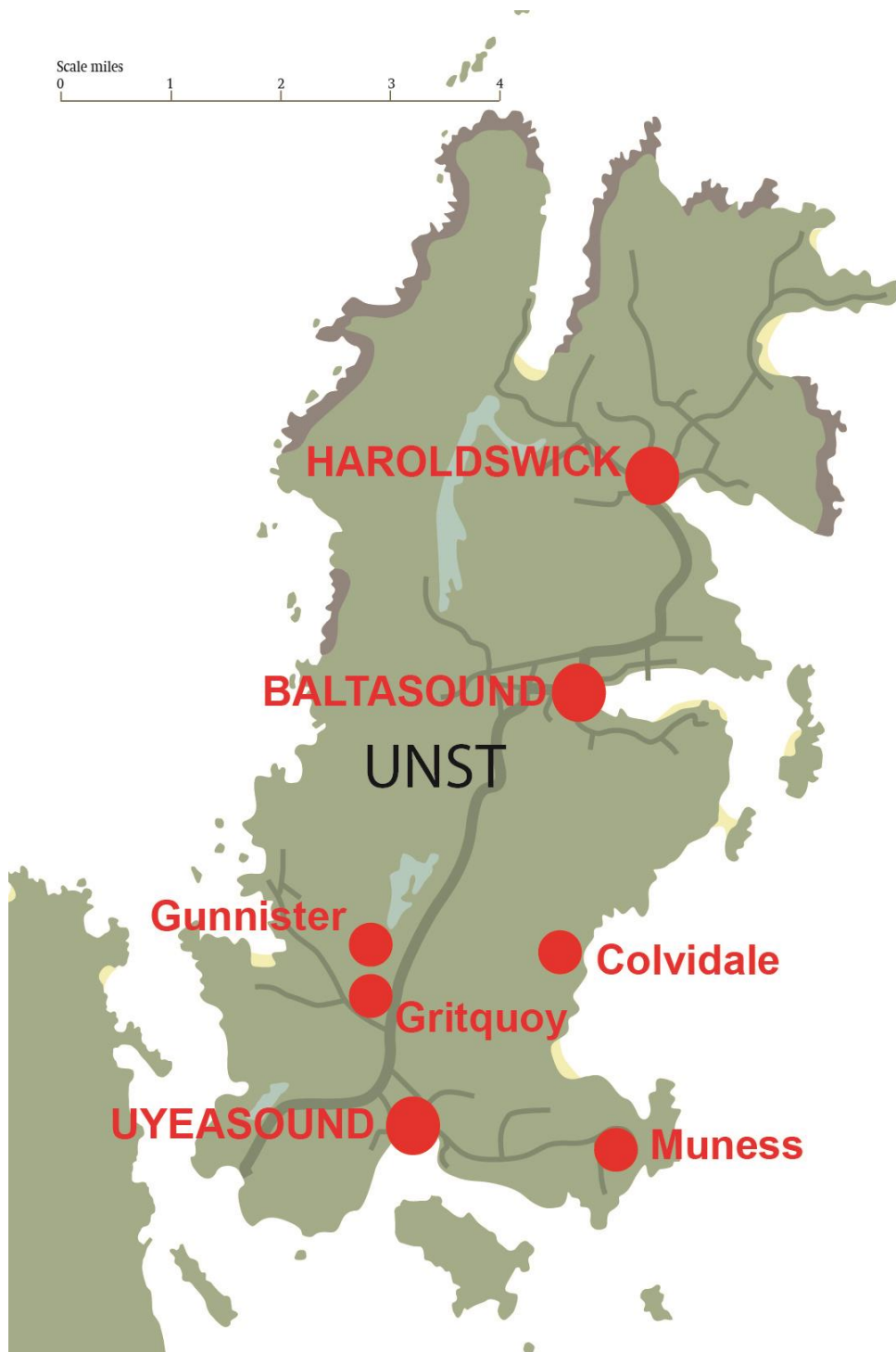


Figure 2: Map of Unst showing the principal settlements mentioned in this thesis, map courtesy of The Shetland Amenity Trust.

Chapter 1: Introduction



Figure 3: Eliza, Ann and Joan Sutherland, of Chromate Lane, Lerwick (originally from Colvidale Unst). Image courtesy of SM, photograph NE04481.

When Eliza Catherine Sutherland died on 9 March 1956, aged 74, her obituary in the *Shetland News* reported that she was a ‘noted Shetland spinner and knitter’ whose death was ‘a great loss to an art now rapidly becoming extinct’.¹ She was survived by her sister Julia, whose death in 1964 heralded the end of a Shetland knitting dynasty which had started almost 100 years earlier with Unst spinner Elizabeth Nisbet and her three daughters, Agnes, Ann and Joan (born 1846, 1851 and 1854 respectively).² In the late 1860s and 1870s, Ann and Joan ‘sold’ their knitting at Alexander Sandison’s shop in Baltasound, Unst, in 1879 they commanded upwards of 30/- for a shawl, and by 1888 they were being named as the best knitters in Unst.³ From this point they were spinners and knitters extraordinaire, producing some of the finest quality and most exquisitely designed Shetland lace, knitting for royalty and winning numerous prizes at exhibitions. Figure 3 shows Eliza Ann and Joan posing in front of a shawl they produced for the wedding of Doris Hunter (see figure 49). This shawl was possibly reproduced as a gift on the marriage

¹ *Shetland News* (SN) 13 March 1956.

² Shetland family History, *Bayanne*, <<http://www.bayanne.info/Shetland/getperson.php?personID=I63336&tree=ID1>> [accessed 12 March 2015].

³ Sandison Archive (SandArch)1879.32A, 31 December 1879, letter from Robina Leask; Letter Book 09-1888-1890, p.250, 26 October 1888; Letter Book 10-1890-1892, p.31, 28 July 1890; Ledger 030-1865-1867, p.189; 045-1876-1880, p.74; 064-p.73; 097-1885-1898, p.90.

of the Duke and Duchess of Kent in 1935. The two sisters married two brothers, David and Thomas Sutherland, also of Unst, and so the Sutherlands' lace creations were very much a family affair with Ann's husband David creating some of the designs. Much of the Sutherlands' story is well-known, not just in Shetland, but to all Shetland lace aficionados and they are among the few whose voices have carried down to the present. While Ann, Joan, Eliza and Julia became prominent personas in the Shetland fine knitted lace industry, most of their contemporaries have been lost to history. Archival research has made it possible to identify many of the individual producers by name, nevertheless it is important to acknowledge the community of unknown Shetland women who, over generations, introduced, produced and sustained the Shetland lace industry. As 'famous' Shetland fine lace spinners and knitters, the Sutherland women are simultaneously unique and the embodiment of all Shetland fine lace producers; their story is the same as many of the others, and in many ways their story is the story of all Shetland lace producers.

This thesis explores the history of the Shetland fine lace knitting industry in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Located in the furthest reaches of the United Kingdom, the Shetland Islands are often conversely described as isolated and marginal but also a hub of trade and industry.⁴ Early fishing traders eagerly sought out the warm but coarse stockings produced in the islands and few early travellers, writing of their visit to Shetland, failed to comment on the quality of the knitwear and the industriousness of the Shetland knitter. Seventeenth century coarse functional stockings evolved into eighteenth century fine knitted stockings and nineteenth century fine knitted lace and in the 1830s a new Shetland industry was born. One which would continue, in varying degrees, styles and formats through to the present day. Figures 4-7 illustrate a range of Shetland lace knitted articles produced. The widespread popularity of Shetland fine lace knitting is attested by royal and celebrity endorsements, its place in the International Exhibitions, and its sales throughout British and international markets. Nevertheless, from the 1880s and increasingly from the 1900s onwards there were various harbingers of doom, invariably announcing the decline and even death of the industry, only to witness its resurrection. The revitalisation of the industry and the continued production and consumption of Shetland fine lace knitting can be firmly credited to the fine lace knitters who, like the women before them, adapted and evolved Shetland knitting to conform to consumer demands. Although many other people and organisations were involved in developing and

⁴ For example, Hance D. Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade, 1550-1914* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984), p.339.

maintaining the industry, without the producers there would have been no industry. This thesis tells their story.

Figures 4 to 7 illustrate the range of Shetland lace articles produced during the research period. With the exception of the first image of a Shetland hap which is included for comparative purposes only, figure 4 illustrates various Shetland lace shawls and veils. Of interest in the top row are the triangular shawls demonstrating the different methods applied to the centre of the shawl. The triangular shawls do not have a border along the top (shoulder) side, only the lace, with the borders being on the sides running to the apex of the shawl. Only a lace edge rather than borders are used in veils (bottom row), however the 'top' of the veil does not have a lace edge, only a row of lace holes through which a ribbon (or similar) could be threaded to attach it to a hat. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate lace stoles, figure 6 showing three lace stoles produced for presentation gifts for royal occasions (1899, birthday of Queen Victoria (80 years old); 1910-1935, Silver Jubilee of the reign of King George V; 1937, Coronation of King George VI). Figure 7 illustrates the range of other articles produced in Shetland fine knitted lace: Dressing / Bed jackets, blouses, jumpers, children's clothing and household goods such as doilies or handkerchiefs, and a pocket for holding a nightdress. Other similar articles include, tray mats, cushion covers and curtains.

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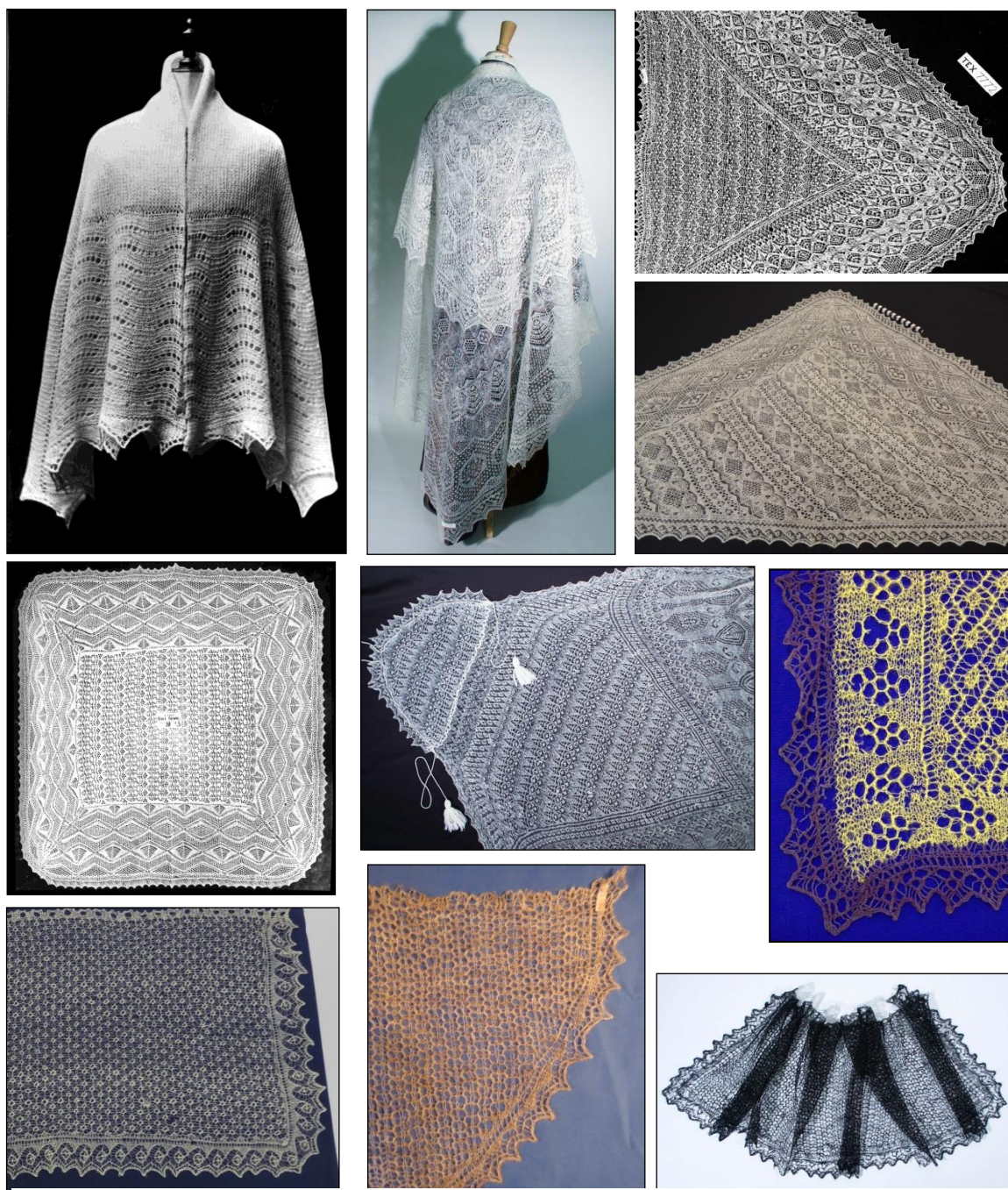


Figure 4: Selection of Shetland fine lace knitted shawls and veils.

Top row: Plain Hap (not lace), image courtesy of SMA, photograph No. 03373; Shetland lace shawl, SMA TEX 7782 (1780 mm x 1870 mm), image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01399; triangular lace shawl with centre pattern running perpendicular to apex, SMA TEX 7772 (1710 mm long side x 1020 mm deep, c.1850), image courtesy of SMA, photograph NE02412; triangular lace shawl with centre pattern running perpendicular to one border and parallel with other border (half a square shawl), SMA, TEX 2004.172 (2382 mm x 659 mm, c.1930), image author's own.

Middle row: square lace shawl, image courtesy of SMA, photograph LJ00200; lace Christening shawl with head piece, wing and tassels, SMA TEX 8927 (1780 mm x 1750 mm deep, knitted by Elizabeth Mouat, Eshaness, 1858), image courtesy of SMA, photograph LJ00200; neckerchief with coloured lace, UHC U131, image courtesy of UHC.

Bottom row: rectangular lace veil, the lace is knitted on three sides with lace holes along fourth side to pass a ribbon through to gather the veil, SMA TEX 2012.492, image courtesy of SMA; semi-circular (round) lace veil, TM E0248 (902 mm long side x 387 mm deep), image author's own; lace mourning veil, drawn together at the top to go over a hat brim, TEX 1996.25, late nineteenth century, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01346.

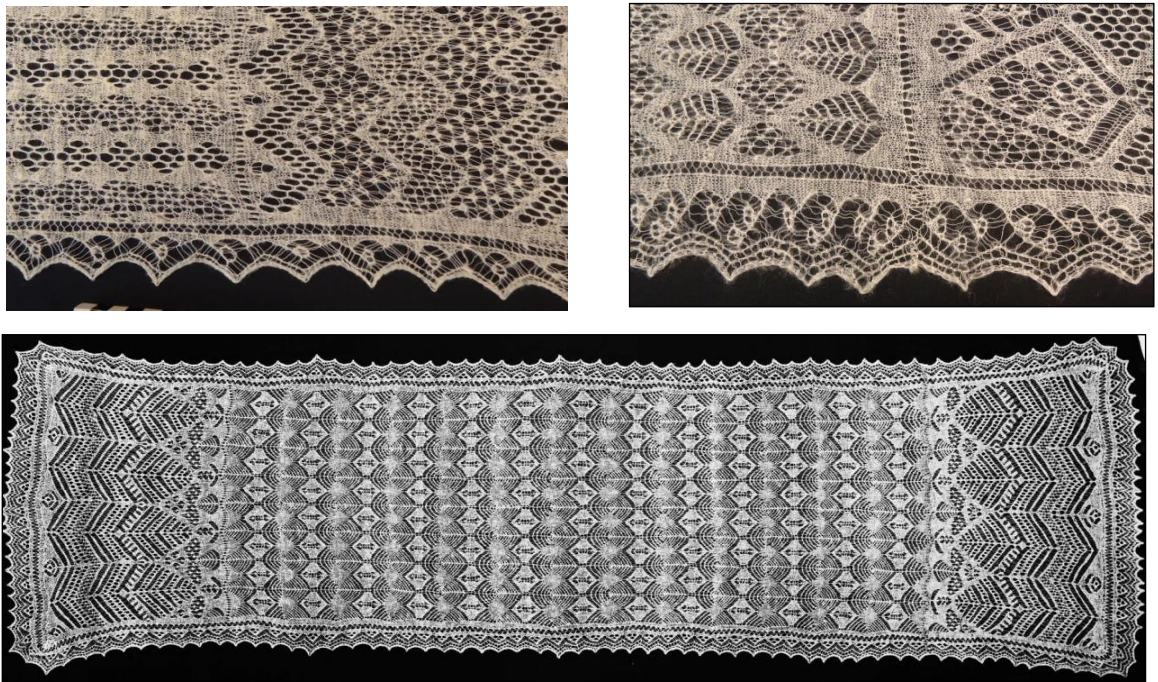


Figure 5: Shetland lace stoles. Top left: border and centre of lace stole, SMA TEX 8938 (1420 x 390 mm), image author's own. Top right: border and centre of lace stole, SMA TEX 81331 (1130 x 340 mm), image author's own. Bottom: lace stole, knitted by Mrs. G. A. Reay (nee Shewan) of Fetlar, awarded a prize at Highland Show, image courtesy of SMA photograph JB00029.



Figure 6: Three Royal Stoles, hand-spun and hand-knitted by members of the Sutherland family, Chromate Lane, Lerwick (formerly of Unst), photographed at time of production and made into postcards. Copies of the original stoles were also made. A copy of the stole on the left is held in the Joy Sandison Collection at the NMS, a copy of the stole on the right is held by the Textile Museum, Lerwick. If there is also a copy of the centre stole, its whereabouts is currently unknown. Images courtesy of SMA.



Figure 5: Shetland fine lace knitted articles

Top row: lace dressing/bed jacket, TM E0270 (902 x 560 mm long, knitted by Annie Sandison c.1935-39), image author's own; dressing/bed jacket, lined and trimmed in heavy pink silk, TEX 7779 (L- 530 mm, shoulder width 140 mm, c.1930), image author's own; detail of woman's vest/camisole, TEX 7770, image author's own.

Second row: Hand-spun and knitted Edwardian high neck blouse, (shoulder 367mm, shoulder to cuff 495mm, length 462mm, knitted by Miss M.J. Smith of Sandwick, c.1908), image author's own; lace jumper knitted by Mrs Bess Hughson, Uyeasound, Unst, Miss Joy Sandison Collection at the NMS, image courtesy of Miss Sandison; lace camisole, Miss Joy Sandison Collection at the NMS, L.1985.70-2, image courtesy of Miss Sandison.

Third row: child's layette, UHC U1030, image courtesy of Unst Heritage Centre; child's dress, lined with blue satin, TM E0064 (chest 610 mm length 410 mm), image author's own; high necked lace jumper with ribbing, SMA TEX 8939, image author's own.

Fourth row: lace mitts c.1880-1890, SMA TEX 7790, image courtesy of SMA photograph 01406; handkerchief (doily?) trimmed with linen thread lace, SMA TEX 856, image author's own; nightdress cover with Mrs J. M. Saxby's name on front, Miss Joy Sandison Collection at the NMS L.1985.70-19 (510 mm x 355 mm), image courtesy of Miss Sandison.

In this introduction I will offer a working definition of Shetland fine lace knitting followed by an outline of the central argument of this thesis. I will then describe the theoretical and methodological approach taken, provide an overview of the limited historiography, discuss the sources used, and outline the chapters that follow.

Working definition of Shetland fine lace knitting

Defining Shetland fine lace knitting is not a straightforward process. The first problem encountered is in the naming of it. It is not, as noted in Jackson's *History of Handmade Lace*, 'a bobbin lace made of the finest Shetland wool instead of flax or silken thread with which most lace is made'.⁵ Rather it is a hand-knitted lace created using openwork lace patterns. In *Heirloom Knitting*, lace knitter and designer Sharon Miller notes the questions raised as to whether the knitting produced in Shetland is lace knitting or knitted lace or even lace at all. She illustrates the distinctions between lace knitting (threads in the open work are in pairs, twisted round each other and knitted with alternating pattern and plain row) and knitted lace (single threads are straight and untwisted with the design in every row).⁶ Miller favours the term Shetland lace knitting but sees no issue in also using the term knitted lace. I agree, and in this thesis the expressions are considered interchangeable. For issues of clarity and brevity, the shortened term 'Shetland lace' will be used; furthermore, any reference to 'lace' throughout the thesis is with regard to Shetland lace. It should also be noted that Shetland lace may be considered both as a singular and group of articles, that is, the term can simultaneously refer to one lace shawl or all Shetland lace articles in a generic way. Where there may be any confusion the article will be named.

The second problem involves defining what constitutes Shetland lace, that is, the criteria by which an article is recognised to be Shetland lace and by this same criteria what is not. Shetland lace is an integral part of Shetland identity and as such, concerns regarding authenticity have been raised since the earliest manufacture until the present day. In addition to this, issues of authenticity of production/manufacture are fundamental in understanding the industry as a whole. With knowledge of Shetland production processes and an understanding of the people who participated in each step and the extant articles they made it becomes clear that authenticity is difficult to establish and indeed that the co-existence of a number of variables relating to materials, production and design indicates a

⁵ F. Neville Jackson, *A History of Hand-made Lace*, (London: L. Upcott Gill, 1900), p.197.

⁶ Sharon Miller, *Heirloom Knitting* (Shetland: Shetland Times, 2002), pp.4-5.

spectrum of authenticity. In such cases, the decision as to whether a Shetland lace article is considered authentic/genuine or not is dependent upon its placement within an established set of criteria which define Shetland lace. These criteria include: whether it must be produced in Shetland, by a Shetland knitter, using Shetland wool and established Shetland designs and styles. Nevertheless, without authenticated provenance this can, at times, be an impossible task. If a Shetland styled fine knitted lace shawl is discovered exhibiting typical design motifs but with no provenance, determining its authenticity is doubtful at best. How can we tell if it originated in Shetland, or that the unnamed knitter was a Shetlander? Furthermore, how can we tell if it is indeed an early article of Shetland lace and not a well-made identikit reproduction? Shetland lace with provenance comes in a variety of qualities therefore a poorly knitted item does not indicate that it was not made in Shetland, just as a well knitted item does not exclude a non-Shetland knitter. Similarly, the material used cannot be a marker of authenticity as Shetland wool was sold throughout the British mainland while Shetland fine lace knitters were known to knit in non-Shetland materials.⁷

Where material, style and design can be attributed to Shetland we have the emerging problem of distinguishing between those articles produced in Shetland and those produced elsewhere. Holtorf proposes that rather than being confined by the restriction of the chronological age of an object it is more appropriate to ask “Does it possess pastness? Why? Which past is being evoked? How?” While the first two questions offer a possible route to recognising Shetland lace articles which are outwith the research period it is the other two questions which are of particular relevance in gaining a more nuanced understanding of the authentic nature of Shetland and non-Shetland produced articles.⁸ Recognition that it is ‘of the past’ rather than of a specific age may allow for a fuller understanding of the object itself. Here materiality and cultural context can be understood to simultaneously shape a ‘plausible and meaningful’ narrative that ‘links past origin and contemporary presence’, one which might be considered authentic Shetland (produced in Shetland) or inauthentic Shetland (produced elsewhere) or independently viewed as authentic (authentic Nottingham produced Shetland).⁹

⁷ See Chapters Three and Four.

⁸ Cornelius Holtorf, ‘On Pastness: A Reconsideration of Materiality in Archaeological Object Authenticity’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 86:2 (2013), pp.427-443, p.441.

⁹ Holtorf, ‘On Pastness’, pp.431-434.

As such, defining authentic Shetland fine lace knitting is problematic. These issues were raised during two public talks held in Shetland and attended by current Shetland lace knitters and fine spinners.¹⁰ Beginning with the full list of criteria I asked the audience to assist me in creating a working definition for 'authentic' Shetland lace, one which I could use to begin to understand and recognise the 'inauthentic'. Although on both occasions these impromptu discussions lasted more than 30 minutes, it was clear that there was a lack of consensus amongst the contemporary lace knitting community in Shetland. Similarly, although individual and private conversations with current Shetland lace knitters occasionally included the use of Shetland wool, they regularly failed to produce more than two essential criteria.

To this effect only two criteria are considered essential in the initial authentication process. It should be produced (hand-knit) by a Shetland knitter, whether resident in Shetland or not, and it should exhibit a style and design in line with known Shetland lace articles. Jules Prown notes that with the use of material culture to draw conclusions about a specific culture, it is necessary that the objects being examined are authentic productions of the culture in question. Any external aspect applied to the object in question adds a degree of inauthenticity and is therefore only useful to the secondary culture.¹¹ However, to dismiss the value of an external element in the study of any object is to miss the opportunity to understand why it became part of its material culture in the first place. In the case of Shetland lace, the use of cotton, silk, mohair and Pyrenees wool for example, would, at first glance, define the article as inauthentic.¹² However an understanding of the scarcity of fine Shetland worsted, the 1850s fashion for mohair and the economic situation of the knitters makes it clear why such materials were used. Although it is not known how much non-Shetland produced Shetland lace was available for consumption, incidences of inauthentic Shetland lace increased throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹³

¹⁰ I was an invited speaker to two Shetland museums: The Unst Heritage Centre (February 2012) and the Textile Museum, Lerwick (June 2013).

¹¹ Jules David Prown, 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 17:1 (1982), p.8.

¹² R. Friedel, 'Some matters of substance' in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. by S. Lubar, and W. D. Kingery, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), pp.41-50. Friedel considers the "stuff" actually used to make things, including patterns of material use.

¹³ See Chapters Five and Six.

Outline of the central arguments of this thesis

In twenty-first century Shetland, the production of Shetland fine knitted lace is a craft form, performed by ever decreasing numbers of knitters, mostly mature women, for whom the fine knitted lace is an integral part of their history, heritage and lives. These modern producers have distinct and different lives, nevertheless they largely know each other and are aware of a shared common identity: they are Shetland lace knitters and they strive to ensure the continuity of their skill and art form. The history of Shetland's lace knitting industry is more than a series of chronological events which illustrate the rise and fall of a domestic craft industry. It is also the story of landscape and the people who inhabited it. This thesis engages with many of the key questions concerning this specialised form of textile production dominated by women, its place within the female economy, and its position within the world of trade and fashion between 1837 and 1939. The research period has been defined in acknowledgement of the purportedly 'oldest' Shetland lace shawl and the onset of World War Two, which heralded significant changes to the Shetland knitting industry as a whole. From the mid-seventeenth century Shetland spinners and knitters became increasingly renowned for the fine quality of their hand-knitted products, a skill and economic activity conducted almost entirely by women. The production of Shetland lace is an intriguing fusion of domestically produced handcraft which simultaneously incorporates everyday clothing and high fashion. As an economically and ecologically sustainable development, concurrently self-reliant and self-sustaining, and community based it offers a unique perspective of female skilled production that nevertheless remained a home industry largely unaffected by technological improvements.

The focus on the production of highly skilled Shetland lace producers places Shetland's hand-knitting industry within a wider nexus of economic and cultural relationships while illuminating the dynamics of a particular sector as it operated from one of the UKs most isolated communities. As a material object Shetland lace carries shifting historical and cultural stories about its makers, traders and wearers, and the worlds that they inhabited. Recognising this as an integral part in the formation of historical and cultural narratives it is possible to see the role Shetland lace played in defining self and community within Shetland while acknowledging difference in an expanding national and international market. This understanding of the production, marketing and consumption processes develops an awareness of the relationship between Shetland lace and its market and between the producer and consumer. It also recognises the initial stage of producer as

consumer, in that they must procure the raw materials needed to create the final product. Without consumption there would be no production beyond the first articles; indeed it is the aesthetic, cultural/political and social desire to possess the fine knitted lace that creates and maintains its continual production. From this perspective there are two routes to understanding production, both of which are addressed throughout the following chapters: consideration will be given to the actual production methods as well as to the social aspects of manufacture and production which include the roles, ideas and activities of both the producer and consumer. However, regardless of the intention of the producer and subsequent seller, the material form only truly becomes what it is intended to be and takes on its full potential when it is made available and used as such. It is the consumers who give the Shetland lace its true meaning which can be sensory, aesthetic or symbolic: the quality of Shetland wool for babies or invalids; the beauty of an exquisitely fine shawl; or a family heirloom christening shawl.¹⁴ In this it can be seen that in many instances the Shetland lace article was meaningful rather than a conveyor of meaning and in this it creates social experiences which inherently influence personal and social identities and relationships.¹⁵

Past or present, the 'ornament' of the fine knitted lace, that which identifies it as Shetland-produced and/or designed, acts akin to a language, albeit one with some degree of flexibility, that is able to be used to project a social identity, whether as a cultural or political ideal or virtuous or ethical aspect of the individual producer or consumer.¹⁶ However, perspectives of self identity can nevertheless be altered and reshaped dependent upon the changing circumstances of an individual's social and cultural life. Self-identity is in a continuous state of flux, created and recreated dependent upon the culture in which people live, which itself plays an important role in shaping and re-shaping their sense of self.¹⁷ Additionally, self-expression and social identity creation is often expressed in the objects that people choose to own and in this respect consumption can be seen to be not merely a passive but an active process. In acknowledging this and by following the knitted

¹⁴ Jacques Macquet, 'Objects as Instruments, Objects as Signs', in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. by S. Lubar and W. D. Kingery (Washington DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), pp.30-40.

¹⁵ Daniel Miller and Christopher Tilley, 'Editorial', *Journal of Material Culture* 1:5 (1996), pp.5-14, p.8.

¹⁶ Andrew Morral, 'Ornament as evidence' in *History and material culture: a student's guide to approaching alternative sources*, ed. by Karen Harvey (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p.186.

lace over time and across, often wide, geographical spaces, Shetland knitted lace can be shown to epitomize and signify social relations.

Acknowledging Abrams' work on the women of Shetland it is clear that not only are women an integral part of Shetland society and business dealings but are essential to it.¹⁸ As such the focus on Shetland lace as an object allows an entry point into the industry; this approach neither prioritises the male nor the female role, nor sees either as completely autonomous, but rather allows a contextual analysis of the female and male interactions with regard to the industry. Focusing on the material culture of Shetland lace opens up questions about the relationships between the women who produce it, the men and women who sell it and the women who consume it. This final relationship involves a two step process: firstly women as primary consumers purchasing the objects for themselves and secondly men as the primary consumer, purchasing the objects as gifts for women. From this perspective this research aims to make a new contribution to our knowledge of women's work, of the operation of markets, the role of external influences and the perception of skill and value in the past and the present and provide an understanding of an industry which was a crucial element of household economics and female autonomy. Where possible it identifies, and gives a voice to, previously unknown individual producers and discusses who the consumers were and their motivation in choosing Shetland knitted lace over other products in the market. It will identify the economic and symbolic place of Shetland lace within Shetland society highlighting the impact of external influences on the success, and perceived decline of this industry. Finally it will offer a method of enhancing the value of collections containing Shetland knitted lace items.

Theoretical approach

This thesis will examine how Shetland lace is constructed as a complex social object: as a material object it exists within a set of cultural relationships which are temporally, spatially and socially specific. Understanding the history of the Shetland lace industry involves more than the recognition of the documentary record and acknowledgment of the social and cultural events which played a significant role prior to and during its production and

¹⁸ Lynn Abrams, *Myth and materiality in a woman's world: Shetland 1800-2000*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); 'Knitting, autonomy and identity: the role of hand-knitting in the construction of women's sense of self in an island community, Shetland, c.1850-2000', *Textile History*, 37: (2006), pp.149-165; 'There is many a thing that can be done with money': Women, barter and autonomy in a Scottish fishing community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', *Signs*, 37:3 (2012), pp.602-609; 'Gender, work and textiles in the Shetland household' in *Shetland textiles; 800 BC to the present*, ed. by Sarah Laurenson (Lerwick: Shetland Heritage Publications, 2013), pp.158-164.

consumption. However an overt focus on the visual composition and representation of the lace often places the aesthetics of style and technique to the forefront whereby intermediaries in the creation, selling and consumption of the lace can be overshadowed by iconography, semiotics and the search for the symbolic. Viewing material culture beyond historical and art-historical terms can provide a fundamentally important insight into social, cultural and economic relationships and create new understandings of social landscapes and the complex interactions between people, places and objects. In order to consider the fine knitted lace as an object which exists in relation to the technological, social, economic, political and historical systems of which it is an integral part, it is necessary to construct a theoretical and analytical framework which allows not only the ability to understand how the knitted lace became endowed with specific meaning but also an interpretation that incorporates both producers and consumers alike. From this perspective it is necessary to adopt a framework which allows the materiality of the Shetland lace to be examined in relation to the specific social and cultural structures and processes through which it was produced, sold and consumed. In this it is possible to emphasise the connections between distinct Shetland lace articles and the way in which they became integrated into the lives of those who made and used them.

The initial theoretical framework adopted for this study follows MacKenzie's and Hoskins' influential studies in material culture.¹⁹ MacKenzie's investigation of how meaning is encoded in material culture focuses on the androgynous symbolism of the looped string bag, or bilum, of the Telefol people of Central New Guinea while Hoskins' study of Sumba Island, Eastern Indonesia explores how objects become invested with personal meaning which makes them ideal vehicles for narrating people's lives. In both studies the research framework centres on the life history, or social life of the object in question. To this end this research will take a life cycle, or biographical approach in which it is recognised that the biography of an object is relational to both producers and consumers, and is therefore comprised of multiple social, cultural and personal relationships surrounding it.²⁰ This follows a methodological approach advocated by Appadurai in his seminal article on commodities and the politics of value which supports the importance of understanding the life history of an object in order to better understand the ways in which the object is transformed when it is taken into new and different social contexts. In this it

¹⁹ Maureen A. MacKenzie, *Androgynous Objects: String bags and gender in central New Guinea*, (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991). Janet Hoskins, *Biographical objects: how things tell the stories of people's lives*, (New York: Routledge, 1998).

²⁰ Jody Joy 'Reinvigorating object biography: reproducing the drama of object lives', *World Archaeology* 41:4 (2009), p.552.

becomes clear that it is indeed people who encode objects with significance but it is the object itself which can illuminate the human and social context.²¹ In the same volume Kopytoff voices support for Appadurai's methodology noting that in examining an object's biography, specifically in establishing an object's relationship with external factors and addressing such questions as who, when, where, why and how at various temporal and geographical points of its life cycle, it is possible to reveal how economic and social values vary through time and as the object travels through different spheres of exchange.²² Furthermore, in following objects as they move through time and space, as if they had biographies and social lives as people do, it becomes clear that like the individual producers, sellers and consumers, the identity of the fine knitted lace is at no time irreversibly defined but rather changes as it traverses various transactions and social contexts, taking on new identities as it acquires new forms, functions, meanings and values.

Kopytoff notes that physical characteristics do not create inherent biographical meanings, but rather the biographical meaning is attached to them when they become significant personal possessions – so, the biography is narrated through the medium of the object. This further understanding of biography also incorporates life transforming events which provide additional meaning to the object and in this the lace knitting has a supplementary biography where it is possible to see the direct connection with the lives of the female producers in the variously finished objects which similarly illustrate rites of passage, or life transforming events, from christening to wedding to mourning shawls and veils. A Shetland lace article is produced, or 'born'; during its 'life', or series of lives, it is then engaged in a series of relationships and when these relationships come to an end, it 'dies'. Where objects of cultural importance are housed in museums the last relationship can be indefinite with the possibility that the object is never discarded (or dies). Recognising the experiences and histories accrued by the knitted lace over its lifetime, it becomes possible to reveal the previously hidden relationships between people and the Shetland fine lace knitting.

²¹ A. Appadurai, 'Introduction: commodities and the politics of value', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) pp.3-63.

²² Igor Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: commodification as process' in A. Appadurai (ed.) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.64-94.

Where the focus is on the social relationships of the transactions rather than on the object itself there is the risk that such an emphasis on function, context and relations can deflect analysis away from the objects themselves. However, diligent cataloguing of material objects as a means of social research is also problematic. When the form is central to the study and function rarely considered a focus on the relationship between the material objects rather than the relationship of the object to external factors can be created. This formation of a typology of objects is commonly used in archaeology and is often criticised for being overly subjective on the part of the observer when selecting which categories are appropriate for inclusion in the classification process and because of concerns regarding object analysis creating a fetishisation of the object which would subsequently diminish rather than augment the social and cultural analysis.²³ However, it is possible to offset any disconnection of objects and people influenced by classificatory limitations by simultaneously acknowledging the social life of the Shetland lace and its active role in the everyday life of producers, sellers and consumers.²⁴ I am in agreement with Miller that a direct focus on objects does not necessarily ‘fetishise’ them but can illustrate and highlight the material and sensual aspects of the object which are hitherto invisible within the context of cultural and social lives and the reasoning behind the importance placed on such objects by people.²⁵ This approach not only stresses the sensory qualities of the object but can also expose the emotional impact and bodily experience on the person handling the object, whether through the colour, texture, weight or shape of the object and by which it produces feelings of like/dislike, nostalgia, memory and desire. These are an integral part of the purchasing/owning decision and rather than fetishising the object can aid in the explanation of why certain objects ‘matter’ to people, and why they live on whether in physical form or through myth and imagination. Although cultural aesthetics change over time, this approach allows for a modern corporeal experience to be back-projected creating the possibility of ‘experiencing’ the object in the same way as it would have been when originally produced.

²³ Typology may be of specific use with regard to dating some fine knitted lace. Using three fine knitted lace stoles, which are dated and contain a crown motif, it may be possible to date other items. This is an ongoing project.

²⁴ M. D. Cochrane and M. C. Beaudry ‘Material Culture studies’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. by Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.203.

²⁵ Daniel Miller, ‘Why Some Things Matter’ in *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, ed. by Daniel Miller (London: UCL Press, 1998), p.5, p.9: Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

Methodology

This research undertakes an empirical approach to the history of the Shetland fine lace knitting industry, privileging a qualitative methodology to recognise patterns in production, marketing and consumption. When the history of an object, or series of objects, is the central focus of study, there is the risk that the object analysis overwhelms the social analysis or vice versa. This is often dependent upon whether the research is object centred or object driven. Researching the knitted lace from an object centred perspective places the focus on the physical attributes and material features of that object including technological development, typologies and aesthetic qualities of taste and fashion. By regarding the knitted lace as evidence of complex social relations, object driven research utilises documentary sources to reveal the meaning around the Shetland lace and reveal more about the people who made, used and lived with the lace.²⁶ As such, it is necessary to avoid reducing the lace to its materiality (shape, function, decoration etc), its physical attributes (material, size, weight, design etc) or to generic forms such as ‘text’, ‘art’ or ‘semiotics’. These elements are important but do not tell the whole story. In addition to specific production processes, Shetland lace carries shifting historical and cultural stories about its makers, traders and wearers, and the worlds that they inhabited. Therefore, in order to maintain a continual revelation about what it is doing and how it is performing in social terms, it is necessary to see Shetland lace as any combination, or all of the above. It is in this that the full contextualisation of Shetland lace whether social, political or economic, is fully understood. Accordingly, while maintaining a primary focus on the lace as an essential part of the research, the most appropriate methodology is one which offers a combination of the two approaches, where both form and function have equal weighting in the analysis. To achieve this it is essential to establish a comprehensive base of empirical data.

The creation of a detailed catalogue and database of all known Shetland lace provides the foundation for the analysis of design aesthetics, form, material and manufacture including evidence of damage and repair.²⁷ It also stimulates contextual analysis of the fine knitted lace whether by backward linkages to materials, design, and manufacture or forward

²⁶ Bernard L. Herman, *The Stolen House* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), pp.4-11.

²⁷ See Appendix 1 for layout of database and sample entry. Upon completion this database will be housed with Shetland Museum.

linkages to users and observers of the object.²⁸ Consideration of the contexts and processes of manufacture make it possible to address specific questions such as originality of expression, transfer of patterns, the possibility of cultural meanings in the designs and the potential linking of specific styles to individual producers indicating personal identity within a larger group. Furthermore, a material inventory allows comparisons to be made and relationships to be established which incorporate the changing nature of Shetland lace as it moves beyond the Shetland Islands and into new and different social contexts. In creating an empirical database while simultaneously examining the fine knitted lace as if it had a social life which is integrated within other social relations it is possible to maintain the focus of attention on the fine knitted lace while continuously establishing those external relationships.

Nevertheless there are certain factors affecting the research methodology with regard to empirical data collection which creates additional bias. Problems of over/under representation of extant fine knitted lace articles in museum and private collections gives a false account of the quantity and quality of the articles produced. While the material inventory is far from complete due to unidentified collections, there is also the probability that within 'knitting' collections, not all Shetland lace articles have been located or identified. For example, within some collections Shetland lace has at times been categorised as crochet, Orenburg (Russian lace knitting), or simply catalogued as 'knitted' shawl or scarf. Additionally, extant articles in collections are often preserved as representations of the craft, and in this there are often other circumstances surrounding its inclusion in the collection, for example the exceptional quality of the spinning or knitting, the artistry and elegance of the design, or the status of the original owner or donor. Many articles have survived due to the specific function attributed to them, as in the case of christening and wedding shawls, which were not undergoing continual use which mitigated damage and deterioration. The fame of Shetland fine lace knitted shawls and stoles has encouraged their preservation and in this they have a high level of representation in the database. Conversely, articles which were produced for everyday wear, such as fine knitted lace blouses and jumpers are underrepresented in collections. As garments which would have been worn and cleaned regularly they are more likely to have sustained irreparable damage and been discarded, or unpicked making the yarn available for other purposes. Some garments, such as opera cloaks, have no known representation in any

²⁸ Robert B. Gordon, 'The interpretation of artefacts in the history of technology' in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. by S. Lubar and W. D. Kingery (Washington DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993) pp.41–50.

collection and are only known through documentary sources such as business records and price list brochures.

Therefore, in acknowledging Miller's argument that 'culture is a process' and as such cannot be viewed and analysed within its singular subject and object forms it becomes not only possible to limit the effect of fetishisation but also recognise articles missing from the material culture record.²⁹

To this effect a supplementary database of news articles and classified advertisements which actively promote Shetland lace has been compiled which provides a fuller understanding of the distribution and pricing of Shetland lace.³⁰ Recognising the temporal and geographical spread along with consumer preferences in changes of style, colour and design allows for a more fluent interpretation of the impact of the industry. When analysed in conjunction with business records this permits the cross referencing of personal and business names associated with the production and selling of the Shetland lace and illustrates previously unseen personal and business network operations. This methodological approach creates a collaborative framework in which the Shetland lace is simultaneously the starting point of the research and its end result by recognising an interpretive model that negotiates not only the origins of the industry, but also the methods of distribution and the relationship between the modes of production and consumption.

Overview of the historiography

This research is not about the history of knitting in general, but rather about the history of Shetland lace knitting in particular and as such will not cover issues such as the introduction of knitting in antiquity, its development, evolution and movement. Nevertheless it must be noted that there is indeed a scarcity of research on the history of knitting. Shetland lace has witnessed a resurgence in popularity in recent years which has spawned the development of a modern community identity external to the Shetland Islands. This shared identity or identification with Shetland fine knitted lace, nurtured through an influx of books and more recently internet blogs and forums, has arisen from practitioners' ability to appreciate its rich history, heritage and aesthetic beauty and to engage with it as active participants. This is done by examining the fine knitted lace objects where they survive and using photographs when they do not to deconstruct the

²⁹ Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, p.18; Mackenzie, *Androgynous Objects*, p.25.

³⁰ See Appendix 2 for layout of database and sample entries.

patterns for future and often shared reconstruction and thereby placing them into new contexts in the present.³¹ A search on Ravelry, the online community site for knitters and crocheters, for Shetland lace reveals an astounding number of interested participants. The Heirloom Knitting group, dedicated to those interested in fine Shetland knitting, has 2631 members and a search for Shetland lace patterns brings up 882 matches.³² While the books, blogs and forums mainly concentrate on providing the reader with patterns and techniques of production, many also present a brief history of fine lace knitting in Shetland.³³ As such it is not uncommon for pattern books to contain a few pages commenting on the origins of the industry, with perhaps a mention of royalty, the great exhibitions, or a short commentary on the economic situation experienced by the Shetland knitters during the nineteenth century. Generally the historical perspective is somewhat limited and often the same information is recycled with most forming similarly styled arguments.³⁴ Notable exceptions to this are later publications and online websites by Elizabeth Lovick and Sharon Miller, both of whom regularly include a more comprehensive historical context and provide some personal theories about the Shetland knitting industry.³⁵ After the 2008 publication of *Shetland Hap Shawls* Miller came in for some criticism for using the expression ‘hap shawl’, which is sometimes considered an inaccurate description, the garment being either a hap or a shawl. Although there is only one known record from 1872 of a knitter, Mrs Ann Eunson from Lerwick stating that she

³¹ In October 2009 over 30 ravelry members deconstructed and then reconstructed a shawl only know from a photograph on the Shetland Museum website, SM photograph numbers S00019 and S00024. The reconstructed pattern was named The Queen Susan shawl and is available at <<http://www.mediafire.com/download/ycb9wjxwafmjvcf/The+Queen+Susan+Shawl2-24-10.pdf>> [accessed 24 March 2012].

³² Ravelry, <www.ravelry.com> [accessed 20 April 2015]. These figures represent the members and patterns available on 20 April 2015, the numbers change on a daily basis.

³³ Books of technical instruction only include, for example, Mary Smith and Maggie Liddle, *A Shetland Pattern Book, knitting designs selected and edited*, (Lerwick: Shetland Times Ltd, 1992, first edition 1979); Alice Korach, 'Shetland Lace', *Threads*, June/July (1987), pp.40-44; Gladys Amedro, *Shetland Lace* (Lerwick: Shetland Times, 2008, first published 1993).

³⁴ James Norbury, *Traditional knitting patterns from Scandinavia, the British Isles, France, Italy and Other European Countries (Dover Knitting, Crochet, Tatting, Lace)*, (London: Batsford, 1962); Sarah Don, *The Art of Shetland Lace*, (London: Bell and Hyman, 1981); Sheila McGregor, *Traditional Knitting*, (London: B. T. Batsford, 1983); Tessa Lorant, *Knitted shawls and wraps*, (Somerset: Thorn Press, 1984); Mary Smith and Chris Bunyan, *A Shetland Knitter's Notebook*, (Lerwick: Shetland Times Ltd, 1991); Martha Waterman, *Traditional knitted & lace shawls* (Colorado: Interweave Press, 1998).

³⁵ Elizabeth Lovick, *The Magic of Shetland Lace Knitting: Stitches, Techniques, and Projects for Lighter-Than-Air Shawls & More* (Kent: Search Press, 2013), Northern Lace <<http://www.northernlace.co.uk/>> {accessed 29 October 2014}; Sharon Miller, 'Heirloom Knitting'; Sharon Miller, *Shetland Hap Shawls. Then and Now* (Okehampton: Heirloom Knitting, 2006); Sharon Miller, *The Lerwick Lace Shawl* (Okehampton: Heirloom Knitting, 2008); Sharon Miller, *Love Darg Shetland Shawl. Centenary 1910-2010* (Okehampton: Heirloom Knitting, 2008), Sharon Miller, Heirloom Knitting <<http://www.heirloom-knitting.co.uk/>> [accessed 29 October 2014].

made 'little hap shawls' Shetland businesses were known to use it.³⁶ As such, the criticism is a little unwarranted. As public (knitter) interest in the story behind the pattern is more widely recognised the inclusion of social and cultural aspects of Shetland lace production has become more nuanced. Of note in this respect is the recent publication of pattern books by Shetlanders.

In 2014 The Unst Heritage Centre located on the most northerly of the Shetland Islands, produced the second of two small booklets on the history and production of Unst lace. The first (undated) *A Stitch in Time* offers a brief history of lace production while the second, *Unst Heritage Lace: Recreating Vintage Shetland Lace* provides technical instructions supplied by noted Unst lace knitter Hazel Laurenson. The booklet also includes the stories of three historical Unst knitters.³⁷ The Shetland Guild of Spinners' authored *A Legacy of Shetland Lace* also provides instructions on how to create the perfect Shetland lace article, with patterns from noted Shetland knitters. However the addition of short biographical accounts of the designers enhances the social context of the Shetland lace while remembering that its production is not only a thing of the past.³⁸ Although the 2013 publication *Shetland textiles: 800 BC to the Present* discusses a range of textiles produced in Shetland, as well as a chapter on Shetland lace, it also contains chapters on spinning, sheep, and the economics of hand-knitting, subjects relevant in the research of Shetland lace.³⁹ More commonly the history of Shetland lace features in short articles that provide a basic overview of the history from origin stories, barter-truck, exhibitions, gifts to royalty, Shetland businesses, and fashion.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 June 1862, Linklater & Coy's, Wholesale & Retail Shetland Warehouse, 57 New Buildings, North Bridge, Edinburgh - Shetland thick hap shawls; *Shetland Times*, 17 June 1872, p.1. Laurenson & Co, Lerwick – Hap shawls; Truck, line 3419, Mrs Ann Eunson; Lin 3292-3293, Miss Isabella Sinclair; lines 2847.

³⁷ Unst Heritage Centre, *A Stitch in Time, Unst's fine lace knitting*, (Haroldswick: Unst Heritage Trust, Undated); *Unst Heritage Lace: recreating vintage Shetland lace* (Haroldswick: Unst Heritage Trust, 2014).

³⁸ The Shetland Guild of Spinners, *A Legacy of Shetland Lace* (Lerwick: Shetland Times, 2012).

³⁹ Roslyn Chapman, 'Shetland Lace' in *Shetland textiles; 800 BC to the present* ed. by Sarah Laurenson (Lerwick: Shetland Heritage Publications, 2013), pp.120-133.

⁴⁰ Jessie A. McWhirter Shetland home-spun and hand-knit lace articles from the early 19th century, *The New Shetlander*, 124 (1978); Alice Starmore, 'Unraveling the Myths of Shetland Lace', *Threads* 23 (1989); June Freeman, 'The crafts as poor relations' Oral history, the Journal of the Oral History Society, 18:2 (1990); Margaret M. Nixon, 'Cobwebs on Unst', *Shetland Life*, 137 (1992); Linda Taylor, 'Not only spiders spin cobwebs: the artistry of Shetland lace', *A stitch in time* (summer 1994); Veronica Burningham, 'The Knitwear of Shetland', *Craftsman* (February/March 1995); Kate Davies, 'Shining a New Light on Shetland Lace' (reprint of Rowan editorial feature) in *60 North* 2 (2012); Roslyn Chapman, 'Suitable for matron and flapper: from Henley to Paris and beyond', *60 North* 10 (2014), 'Truck and barter: knitting for nothing but goods', *60 North* 11 (2014), 'Currie & Co.: no truck with truck', *60 North* 12 (2015); Kate Davies

Few publications on the history of Shetland fail to mention the hosiery or fine lace knitting industry.⁴¹ Similarly publications focussing on the history of knitting regularly include Shetland knitting but as with the short articles featured in magazines, the sections on Shetland lace are brief and often confined to the same discussion topics.⁴² Helen Bennett's unpublished PhD Thesis on Scottish Hand knitting provides a chapter on knitting in Shetland, a substantial portion of which refers to Shetland fine knitted lace and Linda Fryer whose detailed research into the Shetland knitting industry devotes a chapter to Shetland fine knitted lace while also addressing issues appropriate to the fine knitted lace industry in other chapters.⁴³ While Bennett provides a relatively detailed overview of the Shetland knitting industry, with specific reference to the production of lace, it is Fryer's seminal work, written in 1995, which offers the only comprehensive research on Shetland hand-knitting. Although Fryer addresses the marketing of Shetland knitting in general terms, with reference to specific Shetland and British mainland merchants, what is most obviously missing from this, and all previous texts, is any detailed information regarding the consumption of Shetland lace. Its origins and production are of obvious interest to many parties (notably those who wish to attempt to knit one of the shawls), however without consumption there would be no reason to produce, and as such the consumption of the shawls plays an important role in the origin and evolution of the fine lace knitting and in its omission only half of the story is told.

However it is Lynn Abrams' research into the material and economic lives of the Shetland women which provides the first detailed research with regard to social, cultural and political implications of knitting on the islands. She addresses the crucial role played by women in nineteenth and twentieth century Shetland: historically, economically, materially, as producers and consumers, and as economically and culturally autonomous

also regularly blogs features on Shetland lace <<http://katedaviesdesigns.com/>> [accessed 25 April 2015].

⁴¹ Publications which include small sections on Shetland lace are included in the appropriate chapters in this thesis.

⁴² For example, Clifford Gulvin, *The Scottish hosiery and Knitwear Industry 1680-1980*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984); Richard Rutt, *A History of Handknitting*, (Sussex: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1987); Joanne Turney, *The Culture of Knitting* (Oxford: Berg, 2009); Sandy Black, *Knitting. Fashion, Industry, Craft*, (London: V&A Publications, 2012).

⁴³ Helen M. Bennett, *The origins and development of the Scottish hand knitting industry*, PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh: unpublished, 1981). Linda Fryer, *The Shetland Hand Knitting industry 1790-1950: with special reference to Shetland lace*. M.Litt thesis, (University of Glasgow: Unpublished 1992); *Knitting by the fireside and on the hillside: a history of the Shetland hand knitting industry c. 1600 - 1950* (Lerwick: Shetland Times Ltd, 1995).

individuals.⁴⁴ A key aspect of her research acknowledges Shetland women's voices by privileging their interpretation of the past and acknowledging the importance of their stories in the historical narrative.

Notwithstanding these studies, the history of Shetland lace has yet to be written and this thesis is the first to take a holistic perspective on the production and consumption of lace in Shetland and beyond.

The sources used

In order to fully investigate a skill and economic activity conducted almost exclusively by women for whom hand-knitting provided essential income, explore the social relationships established by women and develop the cultural and social relationships between producer and consumer each chapter, out of necessity, draws upon many sources simultaneously. The key sources used are as follows.

Articles of Shetland lace

A detailed catalogue and database of all known Shetland lace was created combining all known extant Shetland lace from various collections (see methodology section and Appendix 1). In order to do this effectively it is necessary to have a wide representational sample of articles for comparative purposes. As an organic article, made primarily to be worn, it is likely that much of the fine knitted lace has not survived to the present day, and many of those articles which have survived have done so due to mitigating factors such as the importance of the article to the consumer, becoming a family heirloom or incorporation into a collection. The quantity of extant knitted lace is thus not indicative of the quantity originally produced, however extant articles are representative of fashion and style.

Shetland Museum holds the largest collection of Shetland lace knitting in the United Kingdom and the articles held here formed the initial basis of the research. As a collection with a high level of provenanced articles it is possible to begin the process of recognising inauthentic articles held in other collections. This is also true of the Joy Sandison collection held at the National Museum of Scotland. Ms Sandison (originally of Unst) has carefully collected not only articles of Shetland lace, but where possible the stories behind

⁴⁴ Lynn Abrams, *Myth and materiality in a woman's world*; 'Knitting, autonomy and identity'; 'There is many a thing that can be done with money': 'Gender, work and textiles in the Shetland household'.

the articles: name of spinner, knitter, place of production, identity of consumer or gift recipient.⁴⁵ The Unst Heritage Centre in Baltasound, Unst has a smaller, but no less important collection of Shetland lace. Of particular value here is the range of articles which can all be dated to approximately the 1880s, as the articles were found during the refurbishment of a Uyeasound building which had originally housed Unst merchant Alexander Sandison's shop. Although the articles were damaged due to having been 'hidden' in a disused building, their replications by current Shetland lace knitters has allowed them to be examined as they would have originally existed. The Shetland Textile Museum, Lerwick, Shetland holds a yet smaller, but no less significant collection due to the social and cultural importance of some of the articles held there, and also having one of the few extant examples of a Shetland lace gossamer blouse popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Although there are articles listed in price lists and brochures which are not represented in the Shetland collections, analysis of the four collections has allowed a fuller understanding of the range of Shetland lace articles produced, beyond those articles in price lists and brochures. It has also enabled a means of recognising authentic Shetland lace and provided the means of identifying possible imitations.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London is known to hold lace articles in their collection; however I was unable to examine this collection due to mitigating circumstances.⁴⁶ Online searches for Shetland lace articles held in other museum collections outwith Shetland provided limited results. This may in part be due to few museums having detailed online catalogues of their textile collections. Furthermore, outwith Shetland the lace is often classified simply as 'knitting' and at times it is mistaken for other forms of knitted lace such as Orenburg (Russia). Requests for information emailed to museum curators and posted on online blogs and forums established the whereabouts of small collections, or at times individual articles, held in museums. These museum collections examined include Glasgow Museums; Glasgow School of Art; Dumfries Museum and Camera Obscura; West Highland Museum, Fort William; Manchester Art Gallery; University for the Creative Arts at Farnham; and Hampshire Museums. Each of which hold smaller collections which has enhanced the understanding of the Shetland lace held in Shetland. Where only one article was held in the collection it was examined in photographic form

⁴⁵ Due to the ill health of Ms Sandison (and myself) I was only able to access her collection in the final stages of my research and as such it was only possible to work with a selection of articles from her collection and accompanying notes.

⁴⁶ During the course of the thesis the V&A underwent extensive restructuring which negated access to the research rooms.

rather than in person. Nevertheless, it is possible that these collections, and others, may in fact have further examples of Shetland lace not yet identified.

As discussed in the methodology section, there are problems of over/under representation of extant fine knitted lace articles which gives a false account of the quantity of the articles produced. Of the 307 articles in the database 105 are shawls (34%), 79 are stoles (26%) and 38 are veils (12%), making 72% of the total sample. Conversely, articles which were produced for everyday wear are underrepresented in the database. The nine extant fine lace blouses/jumpers make up only 3% of the extant articles. Similarly, there are only five bed/dressing jackets (1%), two curtains and two capes (0.5% each). The remaining 28% of the sample comprises socks, stockings, mitts, household articles (cushion and nightdress covers, tray mats, doilies, etc). 79 (26%) of the articles name the knitter and/or spinner, however a further 33 articles (10%) provide a degree of provenance sufficient to confirm Shetland production and date within the research period.

While the database of known lace articles contains confirmed articles of Shetland lace, there are articles noted in a secondary database which consists of possible or probable Shetland lace which requires further investigation. This secondary database consists of an additional 383 articles, and although mainly details articles held in the Joy Sandison Collection at the NMS which I was unable to view or to match with Ms Sandison's notes, there are also entries for other collections yet to be visited. As such these cannot form part of the 'known lace' database without further confirmation. For example, in the Sandison Collection there are 15 'jumpers' which make reference to lace, but it is not clear if these refer to early lace jumpers (1920-30s) or later (1950s). Similarly, there are three stoles held by Hampshire Museums which display similarities to Shetland stoles, however there is the possibility that these are machine produced.

As the location of Shetland lace articles will form part of my future research in the subject, the 'Shetland lace database' will be updated with all new locations and articles discovered.

Photographs

Shetland Museum also holds an extensive photographic archive of Shetland lace, including images of articles which contain previously unrecorded articles. While photographs offer a 'snapshot' of time, it is not always a reliable snapshot and must be used with care as a

historical source.⁴⁷ Many of the images are posed, notably those which indicate production methods, nevertheless, they can provide a personalised context to the research in that many of the people in the images are named. In this it becomes possible to create a more nuanced narrative about individual producers who were known to knit Shetland lace. Combining the images from Shetland Museum with photographs held in other collections and using them in conjunction with other archival sources makes it possible to see the dynamic nature of the industry, illustrating the value placed upon it by the community. Where the image is of an article of Shetland lace and nothing more, it can be analysed in a similar manner to the extant articles, as was carried out by the Heirloom knitting group's reconstruction of a Shetland lace shawl pattern. Photographs also provide a means of recognising Shetland lace, for example a lace stole in the Textile Museum is also one of a series of photographs illustrating stoles knitted by the Sutherland women of Chromate Lane, further authenticating the provenance of the article.

Archives

As with the articles of Shetland lace, the archives containing the most comprehensive collection of business and personal documents are in Shetland. Shetland Museum and Archives, Lerwick holds an extensive collection of documents relating to the production and marketing of Shetland lace. The Sandison Archive in Baltasound, Unst holds the records pertaining to one specific Shetland business, Sandison Brothers.⁴⁸ As one of Shetland's foremost businesses during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, amongst their varied business practices they acted as an agent for Shetland lace knitting. The archive holds a unique collection of business records relating to both the knitters on the island and the Scottish mainland businesses purchasing it for resale and contains an extensive collection of ledgers and other records pertaining to the Unst business and its place within the lace knitting industry. Similarly, the Old Haa Museum in Burravoe, Yell houses a previously unknown archive belonging to Yell merchant James Clark. Although considerably smaller than the Sandison archive, James Clark's papers highlight the distribution of Shetland lace to national and international department stores. Unst Heritage Centre in Haroldswick, Unst and the Shetland Textile Museum in Lerwick hold smaller archival collections.

⁴⁷ Penny Tinkler, *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2013).

⁴⁸ Over a 100 year period they variously traded as Sandison Brothers, Alex Sandison, Alex Sandison & Sons and Sandison & Sons.

Government reports

This thesis utilises various British Parliamentary Papers, notably in relation to the Truck system in operation in Shetland.⁴⁹ Although legislated against on various occasions since 1465, Shetland largely operated under the truck system during the nineteenth century. Much of the population worked for a landlord-merchant and received payment for their labours in kind rather than coin. In addition to this a system of barter-truck was also in operation, whereby domestically produced items were exchanged for provisions and within this system, the hand-knitting industry played a pivotal role. At face value the practice is ostensibly one of a free and legal exchange, and the outcome would be the same as if the knitter had been paid money which they had then spent on domestic necessities held in the shop. However by being obliged to participate in barter-truck knitters were compelled to consume goods at set prices dictated by the participating merchants, prices that were often set higher if shop credit rather than cash was used.⁵⁰

The 1872 investigation interviewed knitters from around the islands and recorded their responses verbatim. Although the selection criteria for invitation to be interviewed are not known, we do have named knitters recorded using their own words, although in answer to specific questions set by Commissioner William Guthrie. Their responses provide an insight into the knitting industry that might otherwise have been lost and not only supplies the voice of the producer but often also provides the knitter's location, in some instances the exact address. When no specific location is given it can prove difficult, if not impossible, to locate the named individual as in many cases there are numerous women of the same name living in the same area. Of note lace is rarely mentioned in the report, and in those instances when it is, it is always by Guthrie or local businesses. No woman interviewed described her work as lace but rather as fine work or fancy work. Occasionally the text of the interview provides additional information, such as the naming

⁴⁹ British Parliamentary Papers [C.326] [C.327] *Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the truck system: together with minutes of evidence*. Vol. I. Report, schedules, and supplement, 1871; [C.555] [C.555-I] *Second report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the truck system (Shetland), together with minutes of evidence*. Vol. I. Report and appendix, 1872; [Cd. 4443] *Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts. Minutes of evidence taken before the Truck Committee*, Vol.II. Minutes of evidence (days 1-37), 1908; [Cd. 4444] *Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts. Minutes of evidence taken before the Truck Committee*. Vol.III. Minutes of evidence (days 38-66) and index, 1908; [Cd. 4568] *Departmental Committee on the truck acts. Minutes of evidence taken before the Truck Committee*, Vol.IV., 1909; [Cd. 5191] *Factories and workshops. Annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the year 1909*. Reports and statistics, 1910; [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on home industries in the Highlands and Islands*, 1914.

⁵⁰ George W. Hilton, 'The British Truck System in the Nineteenth Century' *The Journal of Political Economy* 65:3 (1957), pp. 237-256.

of other individuals with whom the knitter has dealings. These are invaluable in understanding not only the self-identified individual but also the networks in which they operated.

Periodically over the next 43 years commissions were set up, investigations were carried out, people were interviewed and parliamentary papers were written. Nevertheless, the barter-truck system was preserved with regard to Shetland knitters, for some into the 1930s. Opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of the truck system were often polarised. Some believed that the abolition of truck and the introduction of cash only payments would be detrimental to the industry as a whole, while others took the firm stance that truck was an abomination to the knitters and needed to be exposed and expelled at all costs. Each of the parliamentary papers gives an independent insight into the situation of Shetland lace production, not only at the time of writing, but with additional historical context omitted from the previous report.⁵¹

Census Reports for the years 1841 – 1901 were consulted extensively, and 1911 to a lesser degree. The census records do not provide a true representation of the work of women in Shetland, however they do provide demographic material, including occupations, family and living conditions and has proven essential in the identification of many Shetland lace knitters. The census records must, of course, be approached with caution.⁵² Hundreds of Shetland women have been identified as lace knitters however in 70 years of census records only seven are occupationally identified as lace knitter; even with expansion to include all keyword terms related to lace (fine, fancy, etc.), the maximum number was 69 women in 1861. It is possible that unless challenged otherwise, enumerators recorded fine, fancy or lace knitters as ‘knitter’, or ‘hosiery knitter’. Similarly, alternative occupations may have been recorded, depending upon the importance any one woman placed on her occupational role on census night.⁵³ Nevertheless, the census records hold vital evidence and clues in the identification of Shetland lace producers. Where only names exist it is at times possible to procure a location for the knitters, although the commonality of names in Shetland can make this at times impossible.

⁵¹ Also see Brian Smith, ‘The Truck System’ in *Shetland Textiles 800 BC to the present*, ed. by Sarah Laurenson (Lerwick: Shetland Heritage Publications, 2013); Lynn Abrams, *Myth and Materiality*, Linda Fryer, *Knitting by the Fireside*.

⁵² See Edward Higgs, ‘Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses’, *History Workshop Journal* 23 (1986), pp.59-80; Bridget Hill, ‘Women, Work and the Census: a Problem for Historians of Women’, *History Workshop Journal* 35 (1993), pp.78-94.

⁵³ For further discussion of census records and Shetland women see Abrams, *Myth and Materiality*, pp.200-201.

Newspapers and Almanacs

Over the course of the research period Shetland had four local newspapers, *The Orkney and Shetland Journal* (1836-1838), *The Shetland Advertiser* (1862), *The Shetland Times* (1872-present) and *The Shetland News* (1885-1963). The newspapers are a rich source of information for understanding the economic and cultural aspects of life in Shetland, especially with regard to the knitting industry. Each paper regularly ran advertisements, news stories, editorials and individual commentaries. That two of the papers ran concurrently during the period of research allows for a cross comparison of opinion with regard to what was considered 'important' in the knitting industry at any given time. That the *Shetland Times* was Liberal and the *Shetland News* Conservative goes some way to explaining the difference in published opinions.⁵⁴ In addition to Shetland newspapers, numerous national and international newspapers carried advertisements for, and stories of, Shetland lace. Analysis of these newspapers has provided the means of better understanding the geographical and temporal spread of Shetland lace.

Three almanacs were consulted in this thesis: *Manson's Shetland Almanac*, *Anderson's Shetland Almanac* and *Peace's Shetland and Orkney Almanac*. These small books operated as directories and as such both individuals and businesses could list a professional service they offered even if they were working from home. The Almanacs are a major source for recognising businesses in operation during the research period, listing business by category and offering an additional advertising service where businesses could have quarter to full page advertisements at strategic points in the publications. While *Anderson's* and *Peace's* Almanacs illustrate the extent of businesses in the area, they only make reference to merchant's businesses, whereas *Manson's Almanac* includes a section for dressers or cleaners although none of them placed direct advertisements with the publication. That these small business enterprises did not directly advertise through the Almanac could possibly be due to the costs incurred, which may have been considered an unnecessary expense and likely to have been beyond the means of many of the self-employed. In addition to providing business names and addresses, the almanacs provide a means of recognising the life-span of small businesses or independent traders that would otherwise be unknown.

⁵⁴ Brian Smith, Archivist, Shetland Museum and Archives, Lerwick. Personal communication.

Knitting books

Shetland's foray into the world of fashion coincided with the growing popularity of knitting books which endorsed the new fashion and published it, providing patterns for shawls and scarves and for various 'Shetland' motifs, which the individual knitter could use to make 'her' Shetland openwork shawl as fancy or simple as she chose. The advantage of nineteenth century knitting books is in the array of information that they provide, not only for nineteenth-century hand-knitting in general, but for Shetland (fine and non-fine) articles in particular where there is a deficiency in early documented evidence of the industry. Rather than expand on information with regard to the Shetland based fine lace producers, the knitting books offer a perspective from the ever-growing number of authors and hobby knitters in the Victorian era, notably regarding the production methods, or externally perceived production methods, involved in the manufacture of a Shetland article. Although it is not known how many knitters actually used the pattern books to produce their own 'Shetland' articles, there remains the possibility that with the increasing number of patterns included in the publications, and the growing fascination for Shetland fine knitted articles that there was an ever growing number of 'Shetland' articles being knitted: Shetland shawls and scarves not produced in Shetland. Careful analysis of the published knitting books makes it possible to differentiate between some of the unprovenanced fine knitted lace articles to determine a Shetland or non-Shetland production. Established Shetland production methods are not always adhered to in the pattern book instructions and as such in some cases it is feasible to determine a non-Shetland article on this basis. This reasoning may also be applied to the 'Shetland' motif patterns in the pattern books: where a pattern book 'Shetland' motif is not found on any provenanced Shetland article, it might be assumed that this was exclusively an externally produced article.

Outline of the chapters that follow

The chapters follow the life cycle of the fine knitted articles, illustrating the various stages in the life cycle of a Shetland lace article from inception through production, distribution, and consumption. Each chapter is then organised along topical rather than chronological lines and will include, where possible, information about the producers, merchants and consumers to illustrate the points being made.

Chapter Two, 'Fine knitting before fine Shetland knitted lace', examines the historical background, antecedents and influences which led to the introduction of fine lace knitting

in Shetland. In order to fully understand Shetland fine lace knitted articles as material objects, in addition to recognising the different stages in its development, it is necessary to understand the period leading up to the first lace knitted articles. Highlighting records showing instances of 'fine' knitting in Shetland from the end of the seventeenth century until the purportedly oldest extant Shetland lace article produced circa 1837, this chapter will illustrate that long before the introduction of Shetland lace Shetland spinners and knitters were widely known for the fineness of the yarn they spun and the stockings they produced. It will demonstrate that the introduction of fine lace knitting did not create a skill set epitomised by fine spinning and fine knitting but rather the previously established skills were already part of the knitting culture in the islands and were the foundations of what would essentially be the next step in the evolutionary process of knitting in Shetland.

Chapter Three, 'Made in Shetland', describes and examines the production processes necessary in the creation of a Shetland lace article. The creation of a finished Shetland lace article involved a minimum of six production processes: rooing, sorting, carding, spinning, knitting and washing/dressing and could employ one producer carrying out each of the necessary steps personally or engage many individuals in the various stages of production. By recognising the different stages in its development and how it moved through different hands this chapter considers the circumstances surrounding its production, including who, when and why it was made and acknowledges the internal and external, as well as the social, cultural, political and economic influences on both producer and process. This chapter will begin the process of identifying many of the individuals, producers and merchants alike, who participated initially in popularising and later in sustaining the craft practice. In identifying individual spinners, knitters, dressers and sellers it is possible to see the development of female enterprise and entrepreneurship. Acknowledging that in many instances 'female enterprise appears as the merest flicker on the surface of male documents', the careful analysis of extant business accounts in conjunction with governmental and public documentary sources illustrate the local networks operating in an exchange of labour and goods, initially as a barter but later as a monetary economy.⁵⁵ Highlighting what might be considered a 'community of women' who worked in cooperation with one another rather than being self-sufficient it becomes clear that the women producers of Shetland worked together in the manufacture of various commodities in which Shetland lace held an elevated place. Finally, in examining the individual production processes it will introduce the concept of authenticity with regard to

⁵⁵ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "A Friendly Neighbor": Social Dimensions of Daily Work in Northern Colonial New England', *Feminist Studies*, 6:2 (1980), p.397.

what is generally acknowledged to be ‘Shetland’ lace knitting, highlighting the difficulty in defining what is authentically Shetland and acknowledging that authenticity in a pure sense was necessarily open to compromise.

The theme of authenticity is continued in Chapter Four, ‘Not made in Shetland’. Shetland lace is an integral part of Shetland identity and as such concerns regarding authenticity have been broached since the earliest manufacture until the present day. Having established the processes involved in the production of a lace knitted article in chapter three, this chapter will examine the production of articles outwith Shetland to illustrate its influence and impact not only on Victorian fashion, culture and society but also within the wider trade and fashion networks of nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, Europe and beyond. The popularity of needlework as a pastime developed an increased demand for new ideas on what to make and how to make it. From circa 1840 printed pattern books featuring instructions on how to reproduce the hand-knitted fashionable articles of the day provided women with the technical wherewithal to produce these articles in the comfort of their own homes. Using the pattern books, pamphlets and newspaper articles which explicitly mention Shetland whether as a garment, pattern or motif or where Shetland wool was recommended as the most appropriate yarn this chapter will offer the perspective from the ever-growing number of authors and hobby knitters in the Victorian era, providing invaluable insight into the externally perceived manufacturing process involved in producing a Shetland fine knitted lace article. Further to examining hand-knitted ‘Shetland’ fine lace knitted articles produced by individuals outwith the islands, this chapter will also address the production and increasing popularity of machine-knitted ‘Shetland’ shawls. The 1860s mass production of machine knit lace shawls labelled ‘Shetland’ were not the first non-Shetland produced fine lace knitted articles to be made available and promoted as ‘Shetland’ in the market place, they would, however make a significant impact on the changing perspectives with regard to style and formatting of advertising and promotion in light of marketing the ‘real thing’.

Continued production of authentic Shetland fine lace knitted articles was dependent upon the successful selling of articles produced. The primary focus of Chapter Five ‘Leaving Shetland’ is the distribution and marketing of Shetland fine lace knitting examined from local, national and international perspectives, highlighting all forms of popularising Shetland fine lace knitting, whether direct or indirect, to the wider public and potential consumers. In addition to creating new understandings of social landscapes and the complex interactions between people, places and objects, a full understanding of the

marketing and distribution of the fine lace knitting highlights the integral relationship between the processes of production discussed in Chapter Three and its eventual consumption which is discussed in Chapter Six. In addition to discussing direct advertising placed in newspapers and almanacs this chapter will also address less direct methods of promotion through the inclusion of Shetland lace in articles and advertorials of the fashion and society columns of newspapers and journals, as well as in novels and images. This highlights the role celebrity, Victorian philanthropic pursuits and the popularity of the great exhibitions played in endorsing and sustaining public interest in the Shetland produced articles. From the earliest days of the industry businesses actively promoted their royal and aristocratic connections specifically naming members of the immediate royal family and high ranking aristocrats as part of their advertising feature. Knitters, but not all merchants, embraced proactive campaigning and marketing techniques involving aristocratic circles who formed anti truck campaigns to promote the hand knitted goods. Similarly, national and international exhibitions were recognised as being more than the mere display of articles; they facilitated marketing to a much larger and more diverse group of potential customers. The eyes of the local, national and international press were firmly focussed on the exhibitions, reporting much of what was going on to those unable to attend in person. Visits by dignitaries or royalty to an exhibition stand were immensely popular and regularly merited extensive column inches in the newspapers, as could something special about the display. Finally, highlighting poems, plays, novels, actors and images the chapter will look beyond the news media to illustrate the placement of Shetland garments in popular culture. By acknowledging how Shetland fine lace knitting was incorporated into the public consciousness with no known direct intention to advertise the products it is possible to see how they were perceived by the author/wearer and how that perception may have been acknowledged/accepted by the reader/viewer. When the article passes from the hands of the producer its potential social life comes into force, as regardless of the initial intentions of the producer, it is while in the hands of the subsequent seller and eventual consumer that the material form truly becomes what it is intended to be and takes on its full potential when it is made available and used.

It is through consumption of the finished article that a new cycle of production can begin, for indeed without anticipated consumption there would be no need for further production and Chapter Six 'Being somewhere else' explores the reception and consumption of Shetland lace. Using business records and correspondence and provenance notes in museum accession records which provide a glimpse of individual private consumers, this chapter examines the individual's motivational factors behind the purchase of Shetland

fine lace knitting. It will illustrate that motivations for consumption are multifaceted, including social and cultural motivations, fashion and aesthetic purchases, and gift giving. It will then examine these consumer motivations in conjunction with newspaper and journal articles and advertisements to demonstrate that while many consumers remain invisible, it is possible to identify potential consumer groups. A discussion of the identified consumer groups will demonstrate that just as the Shetland lace is produced, so are consumers produced, created through clever marketing, advertising and cultural organisations. Finally, it will highlight the position held and the role played by Shetland lace in the burgeoning consumer markets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In conclusion, this thesis will argue that rather than remaining static, or going into a serious decline in the twentieth century, Shetland lace knitters continually adapted to the changing needs of the market and to consumer preferences and demands. It considers that non Shetland produced Shetland articles (and machine made) undermined not only the livelihood but the cultural identity of the producers. Through analysis of production and marketing it asserts that Shetland lace did not come into the market and then become commoditised, rather it entered the market fully commoditised. Similarly, it contends that that just as the Shetland lace was produced, so were its consumers produced, created through advertising and cultural organisations. This in turn created consumer groups whose purchases might be considered political acts with the intention to channel profits back to the knitters themselves. In highlighting the cultural and social position of Shetland lace, both within and outwith Shetland, it will illustrate the role played by Shetland lace in the construction of community identities. In doing this it will illustrate the geographical and temporal spread of Shetland lace suggestive of an expansive consumer market and wide global appeal, effectively demonstrating the connected histories between the producer, seller and consumer. It will conclude that the ‘power’ of Shetland lace rested not only in its aesthetic features but also in its embedded political and cultural values.

Chapter 2: Fine knitting before fine knitted Shetland lace



Figure 6: John Bruce of Sumburgh christening shawl c.1837, SM, TEX 7771, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01393.

As possibly the oldest extant Shetland fine lace knitted article, the John Bruce of Sumburgh christening shawl has the honour of occupying a permanent if not prominent position in Shetland Museum. Measuring 1829 mm (long side) by 1372 mm (short sides) it is carefully stretched to best showcase its fine spinning and beautiful stitch work, the shawl is exhibited within a sliding cabinet to protect it from light damage and is viewed by almost every visitor to the textile displays in the museum. From even a cursory glance it is apparent that while it may be the oldest surviving shawl, it unlikely to be the first, produced miraculously well-made at the first attempt (see figure 8). Knitted specifically as a christening shawl, it is the product of the next evolutionary stage in Shetland knitting.¹ As a material object the circumstances surrounding its production, including who, when and why it was made by necessity must recognise the different stages in its development and how it moved through different hands, contexts and uses. However an understanding of the formative years of the Shetland fine lace knitting industry cannot be realised without

¹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 'Why we need things', in *History From Things: Essays in Material Culture*, ed by Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1993), p.21.

a consideration of the period prior to its development. The industry did not create a skill set epitomised by fine spinning and fine knitting but rather the skill set created the industry and was essentially the next step in the evolutionary process of knitting in Shetland. Before the formation of the fine lace knitting industry, Shetland spinners and knitters were widely known for the fineness of the yarn they spun and the stockings they produced.

The earliest sourced evidence containing both Shetland knitting and its quality appears around 1685 when the Reverend Kay, minister of Dunrossness wrote 'But the wool is very rough, yet of it they make the finest stuff and stockings, that you will readily find of wool'.² When Robert Sibbald reiterated it in 1711, it remained unclear if 'the finest' refers to the thickness of the yarn or the general quality of the products produced there. Later references to fineness and quality of Shetland knitting are much more definitive in their viewpoints. The earliest source to make an explicit reference to fine wool and fine knitted stockings is found in a small publication from 1750 by John Campbell who spent five years in Shetland prior to the publication of his book:

The Gentlewomen, who make Stockings for their Amusement, work them very fine, even so much so, that one of that country who was here lately, and whom I knew there, told me, he had sold a Pair of his Wife's making for four Guineas.³

The production of high priced finely knitted stockings in Shetland can then be dated to sometime before 1750, however it is not clear if Campbell was witness to their production during his stay in Shetland or only through a later conversation. In describing the Mitchell family of Westshore Campbell wrote of 'one notable Mitchel of Girlesta, when I was there, but since dead'.⁴ The Mitchell family are well-documented and following the genealogy outlined by Campbell, this is a reference to James Mitchell who died in 1743, placing

² Cited in Andrew Charles O'Dell, *The Historical Geography of the Shetland Islands*, (Lerwick: Manson, 1939), p.296 with footnote reference G. Kay, 'A description of Dunrossness', in *Description of ye country of Zetland*, c.1685. Privately published in 1908 by Mrs G. Bruce from MSS. in Advocates Library (NLS, Scotland), p.40; Sir Robert Sibbald, *The description of the Isles of Orkney and Zetland*, (Edinburgh: Andrew Symson, 1711), p.21.

³ John Campbell, *An exact and authentic account of the greatest white-herring-fishery in Scotland, carried on yearly in the island of Zetland, by the Dutch only... : to which is prefixed a description of the island, its situation, produce, the manners and customs of the inhabitants, with their method of trading with the Dutch*, (London: printed for Joseph Davidson 1750), reprinted (Edinburgh: W. Brown, 1885), p.26. The 1885 reprint attributes the work to John Campbell, the 1750 edition says 'by a Gentleman, who resided five years on the island'.

⁴ Campbell, *White-herring-fishery*, p.20.

Campbell's five year stay in Shetland prior to that date.⁵ If Campbell did indeed see fine stockings while in Shetland, their production can be traced to sometime prior to 1743.

The chronology and evolution of later finely knitted stockings is more straightforward. James Robertson toured through Shetland in 1769, noting that the wool 'is sometimes so fine as to be wrought into stockings which sell for a guinea or twenty-five shilling a pair'.⁶ Five years later during his 1774 tour of Shetland George Low made note of a more expensive pair that were made in Lerwick and sold for 36/- .⁷ There is no reason to doubt such high prices. There was a demand for fine stockings during the eighteenth century with Shetland and Aberdeen often appearing to vie for the position of finest stocking producer. As with Shetland, the production of stockings in Aberdeen was a long standing industry employing large numbers of women.⁸ William Watt's, *History of Aberdeen and Banff* noted that as early as the mid seventeenth century Aberdeen merchant George Pyper had samples of stockings of such fineness that they cost over 20/- a pair.⁹ Referring to letters written in 1775, James Anderson's 1777 *Observations on a national industry* reported various instances of high priced Aberdeen stockings: 1707 Earl of Aberdeen £4/4/-; 1733 George Keith, advocate in Aberdeen £5/5/- or £5/10/-; 1750s Marshal Keith five guineas; and 1775 James Burnet, Aberdeen clothier, two guineas a pair.¹⁰ Somewhat contrarily to the observations recorded by Robertson in 1769 and Low in 1774, Anderson believed the value of early fine knitted Shetland stockings could not compete with those produced in Aberdeenshire:

the wool of the sheep in the Zetland Isles is so very fine, that a great many pairs of hose are annually manufactured of it, and sent to market, and sold at ten or twelve shilling a pair. – the filaments of the best Zetland wool are much finer and softer than Spanish wool. – in colour and softness it in some measure

⁵ James Mitchell of Girdsta, *Bayanne*,
<<http://www.bayanne.info/Shetland/getperson.php?personID=I5764&tree=ID1>> [accessed 15 January 2015].

⁶ James Robertson, *Observations made on a Tour thro' the Islands of Orkney and Shetland, in the Year 1769 in A naturalist in the highlands. James Robertson His life and travels in Scotland, 1767-1771*, ed. by D. M. Henderson & J. H. Dickson, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1994), p.140.

⁷ George Low, *A tour through Orkney and Schetland: containing hints relative to their ancient, modern, and natural history collected in 1774* (Kirkwall: William Peace & Son, 1879), p.67.

⁸ *The Topographical, Statistical, and Historical Gazetteer of Scotland*, Vol.I (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton, 1845), p.11.

⁹ William Watt, *History of Aberdeen and Banff* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1900), p.319.

¹⁰ James Anderson, *Observations on the Means of Exciting a Spirit of National Industry: Chiefly Intended to Promote the Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures, and Fisheries, of Scotland. In a Series of Letters to a Friend, written in 1775* (Edinburgh: C. Elliot, 1777), pp.86-87.

resembles Vigonia wool; - but the poor people there are so ill acquainted with the proper manner of sorting wool, that the coarse parts of the fleece are never thoroughly separated from the fine which makes their manufactures much less value than they would otherwise be.¹¹

Born in Edinburgh but later moving to Aberdeen, Anderson was possibly somewhat biased towards his 'local' stocking production. Anderson was not alone in demonstrating such bias; James Fea, surgeon in the Royal Navy and native of Orkney wrote about Shetland and Orkney in 1787. In the Shetland section of the publication he noted that Shetland produced knitted stockings, mittens and nightcaps sold to the Dutch fisherman as small articles with minimal monetary returns.¹² When discussing Orkney produced articles Fea briefly acknowledged that the manufacture of stockings applied to both regions, however with regard to his commentary on worsted stockings, noted under general remarks in the Orkney section it is less clear if he was again referring to both or making a direct reference to Orkney only:

They manufacture here, as well as in Shetland, great quantities of stockings, caps, &c.; they also make a sort of worsted stockings, which are the finest in the world, and often superior to those of Jersey and Guernsey. This article they dispose of abroad, for a much greater price than silk; some having been sold at thirty shillings a pair and more. But these stockings are rare, and not made for a general market, being rather calculated to display the great ingenuity of the people in spinning and knitting.¹³

Although the 'as well as in Shetland' may acknowledge that this also refers to Shetland, by placing it in the Orkney section of his book Fea placed greater emphasis to Orkney production. His comparison of the fine stockings with those produced in Guernsey and Jersey is striking in that no other early commentaries make this comparison. Guernsey and Jersey stockings were considered amongst the finest produced in Britain. An 1813 description bears no small resemblance to the descriptions applied to Shetland producers and production:

the dexterity and expedition with which they dispatch a pair of stockings are almost incredible...A woman seen walking without her stocking in her hand is

¹¹ Anderson, *Observations on the Means of Exciting a Spirit of National Industry*, p.87.

¹² James Fea, *Considerations on the fisheries in the Scotch islands: to which is prefixed a general account elucidating the history, soil, productions, curiosities, &c. of the same, the manners of the inhabitants, &c.* (London: 1787), p.36.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.75-76.

stigmatised as idleness...The quality is so excellent, that few, who have experienced the use of them will willingly lay them aside.¹⁴

While many accounts comment on ‘fine’ stockings and state a monetary value upon their resale, other than saying they were fine, very fine, or so fine they could pass through a finger ring, they do not adequately differentiate between varying degrees of fineness. The production of fine stockings was dependent upon the availability of fine worsted, and the skill of expert spinners. Of the eighteenth century accounts of stockings eliciting a high monetary value, it is perhaps Anderson’s inclusion of the 1750s gift of Aberdeenshire produced stockings originally presented to Marshal Keith, which were then re-gifted to the Empress of Russia which is therefore of special interest.¹⁵ Here Anderson documented that for the Keith/Elizabeth, Empress of Russia stockings the Aberdeenshire spinners produced 42,000 yards of fine yarn from one pound of wool, and in a second instance they produced 60,000 yards of ‘astonishing fineness’ although it is unclear if this is single thread or two-ply.¹⁶ Astonishing fineness indeed, at 8d a cut the finest Shetland spun wool gave 16 cuts per ounce, or 1,600 yards, therefore one pound of wool could produce 25,600 yards of reasonably fine worsted.¹⁷ However as Shetland fine spun worsted is two-, and sometimes three-ply, the total yardage could effectively be 51,200 if two-ply and 76,800 if three-ply. If indeed it was the more common two-ply, the Shetland fine spun worsted was still some 8,800 yards short of the finest Aberdeen hand-spun. Shetland 8d a cut spun worsted is as fine as human hair; as such it seems incredible, almost impossible, that there could be yarn spun even finer. Figure 9 illustrates two-ply hand-spun ‘moorit’ yarn by Eliza Sutherland (left) and a hank of two-ply hand-spun yarn by Mrs. John Sinclair, Fetlar, about 1924 (right). In both instances the finished article, even when plied, is much finer than can be achieved by machine.

¹⁴ Nicholas Carlisle, *A topographical dictionary of Scotland, and of the islands in the British seas. Compiled from the most authentic documents, and arranged in alphabetical order. Being a continuation of the topography of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*, (London: Printed for G. and W. Nicol, 1813), no page number.

¹⁵ Anderson, *Observations on the Means of Exciting a Spirit of National Industry*, pp.84-85. No date for gift but around 1750s as Keith died in 1758.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.

¹⁷ 1872 [C.555] [C.555-I] Second report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the truck system (Shetland), together with minutes of evidence. Vol. I. Report and appendix, lines 10,184-10,187. [hereafter Truck]

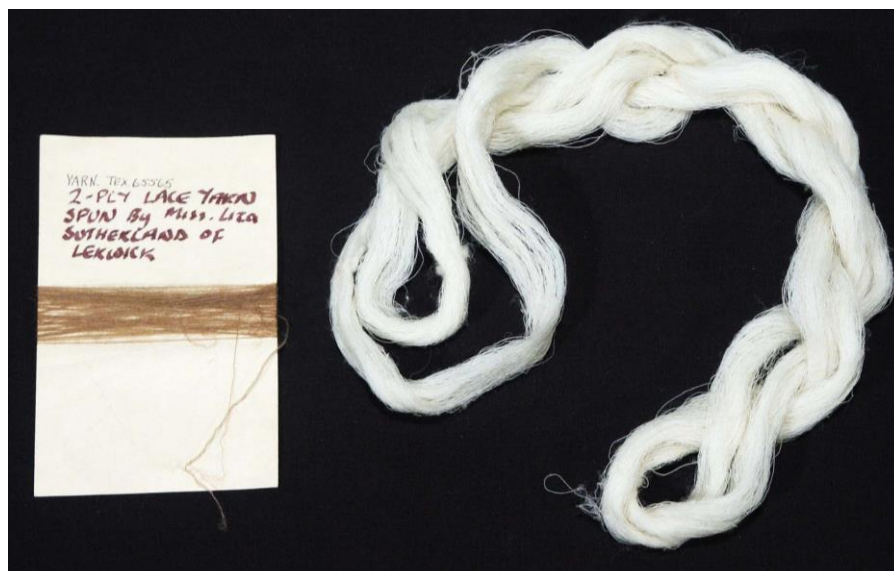


Figure 7: Fine hand-spun two-ply Shetland worsted. The worsted on the left was spun by Eliza Sutherland (Chromate Lane, Lerwick) and on the right by Mrs. John Sinclair (Fetlar). SM TEX 65565, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01366.

Nevertheless, in 1856 Eliza Edmonston, Unst resident and active supporter of Shetland knitters wrote that although uncommon ‘expert spinners can spin 6,000 yards of three ply thread from two ounces of wool’.¹⁸ This would give a total yardage of 144,000 per pound of wool and at first might appear somewhat an exaggeration, however later reports on especially fine spinning confirm that this may indeed have been possible. A shawl manufactured for Lerwick Hosiers, Messrs Laurenson and Co., in 1892 weighed two and a half ounces and was produced using 10,200 yards of two-ply worsted, equating to 130,560 yards per pound of wool.¹⁹

The fineness and delicacy of the spun worsted meant that eighteenth century Shetland fine knitted stockings were also considered an appropriate gift for royalty. Writing to Sir John Sinclair, compiler of the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland*, in September 1789, Sir Joseph Banks commented on a gift presented to King George III:

The Finest Shetland Stockings I ever saw passd thro my hands last year as a present to the King they were amply sizd for a large man & yet passd Easily both together thro Lady Bank’s wedding Ring in these tho no doubt the utmost care had been taken to clear them some Stichels were Observable.²⁰

¹⁸ Eliza Edmonston, *Sketches and Tales of the Shetland Islands*, (Edinburgh: Sutherland & Knox, 1856), p.175.

¹⁹ *Williamston Chronicle*, Victoria, Australia, 23 April 1892, p.3.

²⁰ Letter from Sir Joseph Banks to Sir John Sinclair, in *The Sheep and Wool Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks 1781-1820*, ed. by Harold B. Carter, (London: British Museum, 1979), p.187. ‘Stichels’ being their word for coarse hair fibres.

It would therefore be expected that Shetland's fine knitted stockings would merit a mention in the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-99*. While many entries in the accounts comment on coarse stocking production, observations on fine knitting are rare although noteworthy. The Reverend John Menzies claimed that the stockings from the United Parishes of Bressay, Burra, and Quarff were considered 'the best of their kind by the merchants of Lerwick', with some stockings selling at a high price, although not stating what price.²¹ Reverend John Morison of the Parish of Delting declared that stockings made there could sell from 15/- to 40/- per pair adding that they were so fine they weighed no more than two ounces and could easily be drawn through a common ring.²² The Rev. Mr Andrew Dishington of the United Parishes of Mid and South Yell acknowledged that 'All the women, of every rank and distinction, are employed in spinning wool, and knitting fine and coarse stockings' suggesting all women knitted but not all knitted the fine stockings.²³ This was not the case for Thomas Mouat of Garth and the Reverend James Barclay for the Parish of Unst who considered fine knitting widespread throughout the island:

Almost every woman in the island manufactures fine woollen stockings. These are much valued for softness and warmth. Considerable quantities are sent every year to Edinburgh. The price which they bring, is from 1s 4d to 2s 6d the pair.²⁴

From the early days of the Shetland fine lace knitting industry the northern island of Unst would become known as the region which produced the finest lace knitted articles, and it is therefore no surprise that this early mention reveals the widespread skill of fine spinning and knitting already in place.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century opinions on the value of stockings as a viable economic activity differed. Patrick Neill, referring to his 1804 tour of Shetland, declared 'the knitting of stockings being only a waste of time' while Arthur Edmonston writing in 1804, conceded that while stockings made in Shetland could sell as low as 5d sterling they had sold as high as 30/- per pair.²⁵ Certainly Edmonston may have been alluding to the

²¹ *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-99*, United Parishes of Bressay, Burra, and Quarff, Vol.10, No.XIV, p.198.

²² *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-99*, Parish of Delting, Vol.1, No.XL, p.394.

²³ *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-99*, United Parishes of Mid and South Yell, Vol.2, No.L, p.572.

²⁴ *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-99*, Parish of Unst, Vol.5, No.XII, p.19.

²⁵ Patrick Neill, *A tour through some of the islands of Orkney and Shetland*, (Edinburgh: A. Constable and Company, 1806), p.71; Arthur Edmonston, *A view of the ancient and present state of the Zetland Islands*, Vol.II, (Edinburgh: John Ballantyne and Co., 1809), p.1.

previous century, in contrast with but not necessarily conflicting with Neill's 1804 observations. However, thirteen years later during his 1817 visit to Shetland, Samuel Hibbert was shown stockings which, 'from the fineness of the workmanship, might be considered reasonable at half-a-guinea or fifteen shillings each' and not to be outdone by previous commentators of Shetland fine knitwear claimed that while he had not personally seen stockings of a higher value there were 'stockings so fine, that they have been known to sell as high as 40s per pair'.²⁶ These high prices in the early nineteenth century are confirmed by the first known advertisement for Shetland knitted goods which appeared in *The Scotsman* in 1828 and was for fine Shetland stockings being sold for one to two guineas a pair.²⁷

When consideration is given to the high cost of fine spun and fine knit stockings in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of note is the reduced value placed on fine stockings during the latter part of the nineteenth century. From the 1828 advertisement until the end of the research period in 1939 there is very limited evidence to indicate that Shetland fine knit stockings would again reach the dizzying heights of their pre 1828 value. As the fine lace knitting industry gathered pace comments on the quality and monetary value placed on stockings, both fine knit and coarse, continued. In 1844 the revised *Gazetteer of Scotland* noted that while fine stockings of exceptional quality had been known to reach 40/- per pair the most common quality sold for 3/- to 4/- but were also produced for sale at 5d or 6d.²⁸ In 1854 *The Topographical, Statistical, and Historical Gazetteer of Scotland* recorded that:

Stockings vary in price from 1s to 10s a-pair, and, in occasional extraordinary instances, bring so high a price as 40s.²⁹

This suggests that there were still occurrences of fine knit stockings selling for high prices; however there is no known supporting evidence to corroborate this. This is also the case with stockings valued in the higher bracket of 5/- to 10/- per pair. The same year as the *Gazetteer* was published, the highest value place on stockings by Unst merchant Alexander

²⁶ Samuel Hibbert, *A description of the Shetland islands comprising an account of their geology, scenery, antiquities, and superstitions* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co, 1822), p.441.

²⁷ *The Scotsman*, 29 November 1828, p.766.

²⁸ Robert and William Chambers, *The Gazetteer of Scotland. A new edition in two volumes, carefully revised with many additions*, Vol.I (Edinburgh: 1844), p.929.

²⁹ *The Topographical, statistical, and historical gazetteer of Scotland; with a complete county-atlas from recent surveys, exhibiting all the lines of road, rail, and canal communication; and an appendix, containing the results of the census of 1851*, (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton, 1854). Vol.II, I-Z p.664.

Sandison was 3/6 per pair rising to 4/6 in 1868 for a pair knitted by the ‘best knitter in Yell, who used to sell her stockings very high’.³⁰ By 1921, John White’s Shetland Warehouse in Edinburgh was selling hand-knit Shetland stockings with no indication of the fineness for 11/6 to 12/6 while machine knit sold for 18/6 to 25/6.³¹ These prices are, of course, the retail prices offered through an Edinburgh shop and offer no indication of the value of the stockings sold by a Shetland merchant or of the income, monetary or otherwise, given to the knitter.

While the Aberdeen hand-knitting industry declined, only to be revived later in the nineteenth century by organisations such as the Highland Home Industries and Scottish Home Industries Association, in Shetland the industry faltered but nevertheless maintained a highly skilled level of production, notably in Unst, Fetlar and North Yell.³² The industry also remained domestic based, which was seemingly impervious to technological change but which would grow and prosper, continuing to operate simultaneously within the local, national and international markets. Sourcing a market for Shetland produced knitted goods was nothing new to Shetlanders, who had been trading in knitted goods (mostly stockings) since at least the seventeenth century.³³ The extent of the eighteenth century stocking trade is evident when considering only exports to Hamburg with 1900 pairs of wool stockings in 1750, rising to 8000 pairs in 1760 and 10,000 pairs in 1790.³⁴ Generally trade was carried out as a direct contract between the producer and consumer, and although the early stockings were commonly made with thick wool it is evident that stockings of exceptional quality were also produced.

Having established that fine spinning and knitting was not uncommon in Shetland during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the popularity of which elicited commentaries in books and letters as well as high prices, recognising the beginnings of the production of lace knitting industry is less straightforward.

³⁰ SandArch Letter Book 1-1852-1856 & 1860-1862, p.130. 30 November 1854; Letter Book 4-1868-1871 (Uyeasound), p.142A, 22 July 1868.

³¹ SM, TEX 1994.456, John White price list.

³² *The New Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1834-1845*, vol.15, Unst p.47; Fetlar and North Yell p.28.

³³ Martin, Martin, *A description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, (London: Andrew Bell, 1703), pp.385-386; John Brand, *A New Description of Orkney, Zetland, Pightland Firth and Caithness* (Edinburgh: 1703).

³⁴ O'Dell, *The Historical Geography of the Shetland Islands*, p.322.

The origin stories

While mythical origin stories of fairy, troll and mermaid inspired production make for entertaining reading and certainly enhance the understanding of cultural myths in Shetland, determining the true origins of fine lace knitting in Shetland is problematic. Available evidence is disparate, ambiguous and often disputed. Although few publications deal with Shetland fine lace knitting industry in any depth, many of the technical publications provide patterns and guidance for the reader to create their own Shetland fine knitted lace article at home, and offer a short historical overview. Those that comment on the origins of the industry generally do so within the framework of the general consensus as set out below, but some proffer alternative theories. In *Traditional knitted & lace shawls* Martha Waterman acknowledges the difficulty in ascertaining the origins of Shetland lace but forwards the possibility that Shetland lace knitted shawls may be imitations of Kashmir and Paisley shawls.³⁵ This is based on the “paisley” shape or “pine” pattern which she says is included around the edge of an Unst produced knitted lace shawl. Other than the Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, there is no reference information or provenance for the shawl in question so this cannot be verified or denied, however the case for it being evidence of Kashmir or Paisley inspired shawls is completely dependent upon the dating of the shawl in question. In addition to this Waterman considers the rectangular Paisley shawls (or stoles) as likely inspiration for stoles made by the lace knitters of Shetland noting that Frank Ames’s diagram of Paisley stoles display a remarkable similarity to the diagram that Sarah Don provides for the traditional knitted lace stoles in *The Art of Shetland Lace*.³⁶ Sharon Miller in *Heirloom Knitting* also considers this theory from a design perspective, noting that there appears to be a ‘direct relationship’ between the two, highlighting the shape and commonality of pattern/motif.³⁷ Figure 10 illustrates the shape of the Paisley motif on two Paisley shawls and highlights the ‘commonality’ of pattern/motif, illustrating the possible influence on Shetland articles.

³⁵ Waterman, *Traditional knitted & lace shawls*, pp.7-8.

³⁶ Frank Ames, ‘Guide to Paisley Shawls’, in *The Paisley Pattern*, ed. by Valerie Reilly (Layton: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1987); Don, ‘*Art of Shetland Lace*’.

³⁷ Miller, ‘*Heirloom Knitting*’, p.4.; Sharon Miller, *The Queen Ring Shawl* (Okehampton: Heirloom Knitting 2009).

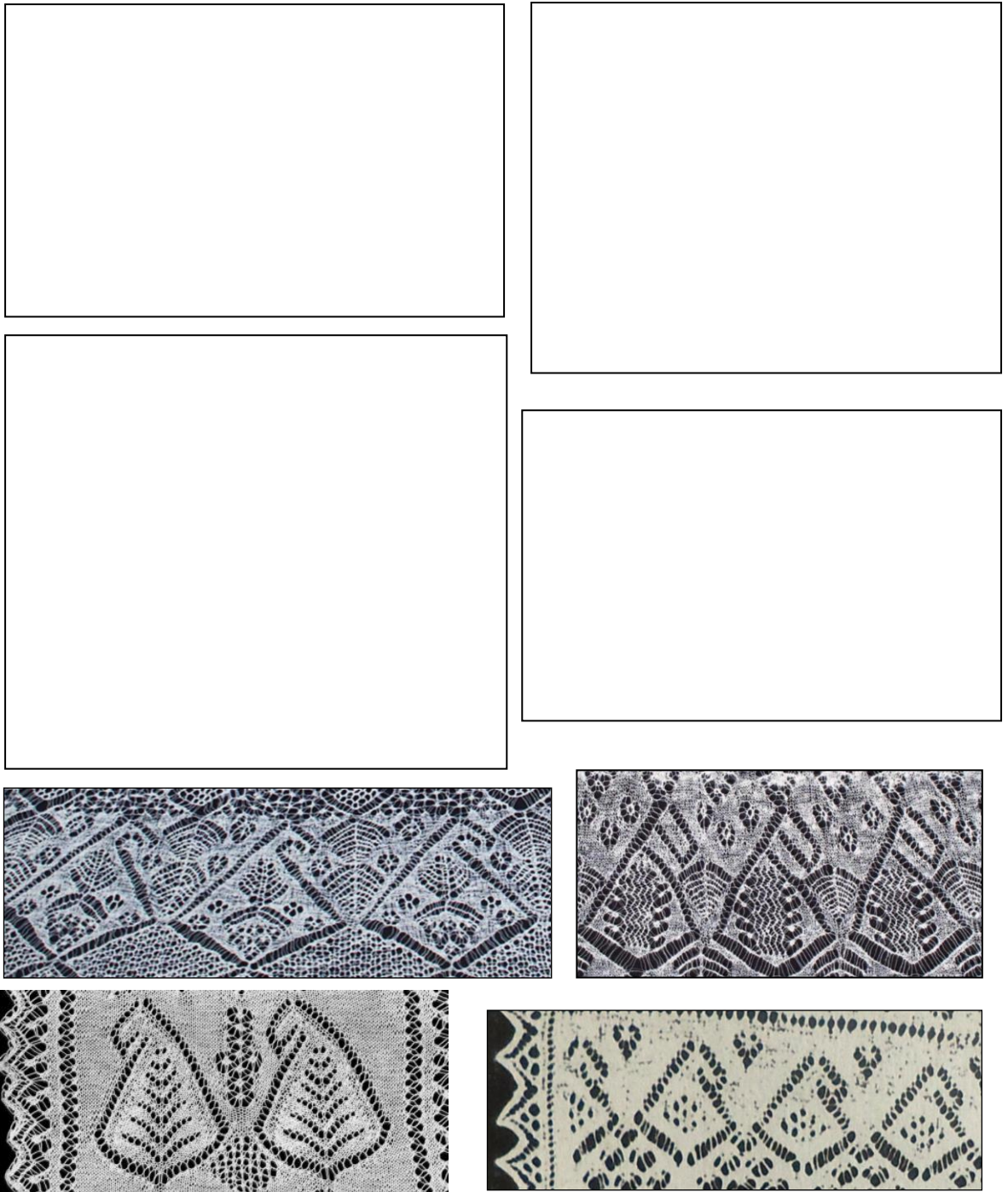


Figure 8: Composite of Paisley pattern and Shetland articles showing possible influence.

Top row: Paisley stole, 'Kirking Plaid', c.1855, Paisley Museum Photo Collection, <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/paisleyorguk/sets/72157630059582129/>> [last viewed 01 September 2015]. Images have been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Second row: Paisley shawl (1778 x 1778 mm, 1880s) <<http://www.1860-1960.com/z2828p0.html>> [last viewed 03 September 2015]. Images have been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Third row: medium fine lace shawl, SMA TEX 7789 (1450 x 1460 mm), image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01404; fine lace shawl, SMA TEX 7754 (1700 x 1720 mm, c.1890), image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01389.

Bottom row: Section of lace sampler knitted by Miss Julia Sutherland in 1951, image courtesy of SMA, photograph P05350. Although knitted after the research period, Julia Sutherland was a noted lace knitter and the inclusion of this pattern in her sampler would indicate it was regularly incorporated in designs; lace stole, Miss Joy Sandison Collection at the NMS, L.1985.70.2273(2), image courtesy of Miss Sandison.

Sarah Don, however, makes no similar assertion, opting for the theory that Shetland lace was influenced by Spanish lace having been introduced to the island at some point around 1830.³⁸ Linda Fryer in her 1996 book on the history of hand-knitting in Shetland, with a chapter devoted specifically to Shetland lace, presents a sound discussion of the origin stories noting theories as to the beginnings of the Shetland fine lace knitting industry which are worthy of consideration, and offering a considered analysis of each. One theory, supported by James Norbury, involves the elusive Mrs Jessie Scanlon, a visitor to Shetland and the Hunter family of Unst in the early nineteenth century. After Mrs Scanlon showed her hosts the lace she collected during her Grand Tour, the ladies of the Hunter family developed a method of re-producing the needle or bobbin lace in knitting. Upon accomplishing this, the work of the family became famous resulting in the presentation of a gift to Queen Victoria during the early years of her reign of one of the earliest shawls they knitted.³⁹ Fryer notes that while this account may indeed be true it is unsubstantiated by source material, noting that Mrs Scanlon is not mentioned in any other accounts of the origins of the industry and believes that Norbury used a secondary source, Barbara Walker's *A Treasury of Knitting Patterns*, which declared the Hunter family as being the originators of the first lace knitting.⁴⁰ There are elements of fact within the origin story which have maintained its popularity. There was a Hunter family living in Unst who became well known for their lace knitting and in 1837 Shetland businessman Arthur Anderson arranged gifts of fine knitted stockings and gloves to be presented to the newly crowned Queen Victoria. However, the knitters of these fine stockings and gloves are known, none of whom is a 'Hunter' or can be identified as a relative of the Hunter family. Furthermore, being a news story of immense general interest to the populace, information about the gift was covered in the *Shetland Journal* in 1837 and then the *Orkney and Shetland Journal* in 1838, so it seems at odds that the Hunter shawl gifted to the Queen would not merit a mention in a similar fashion.⁴¹ Fryer concludes that there is insufficient evidence to 'assess the extent' of the Hunter family's contribution to the origins of

³⁸ Don, *Art of Shetland Lace*, p.12.

³⁹ Norbury, '*Traditional knitting patterns*', p.173.

⁴⁰ Barbara Walker, *A Treasury of Knitting Patterns*, (London: Batsford, 1968), p.150; Fryer, *Knitting by the fireside*, pp.68-69.

⁴¹ *Shetland Journal*, 31 October 1837, p.4, Present of Shetland hosiery to her Majesty and the Duchess of Kent; *Orkney and Shetland Journal*, 15 February 1838, p.15, The Queen's stockings.

Shetland lace and in the 19 years since Fryer published her book little has changed with regard to Norbury's theory.⁴²

Fryer places more credence in Robert Cowie's account of the origins of the industry.⁴³ In *Shetland* published in 1874 Cowie tells of Samuel Laing, the parliamentary candidate for Orkney and Shetland, who stayed in Lerwick as the guest of Mr Charles Ogilvy, partner in Hay and Ogilvy, while visiting Shetland in 1833. Subsequently, Mr Ogilvy received a christening cap, hand-knitted in open work, as a gift for his infant son from Miss Laing, Samuel Laing's daughter. Much admired, the christening cap was duly copied by 'a lady related to the (Ogilvy) family' and in 1837 a fine invalid cap was knitted for Mr Frederick Dundas, then M.P. for the county. On visiting Shetland, with his cap, Mr Dundas supposedly showed it to his Lerwick landlady and encouraged her to get the younger knitters to imitate the fine work in knitted shawls. According to Cowie, although the technique of lace knitting was at this point already known in Shetland and practiced by at least a few knitters, Mr Dundas' suggestion met with no success. It is two years later, in 1839, and the visit to Shetland of Mr Edward Standen, Oxford and London merchant, which is given as the stimulus to motivate the knitters to produce fine lace knitted shawls which Cowie claims had been 'for a few years previously followed as a pastime, by a few amateurs'.⁴⁴ Standen, on seeing a fine shawl being knitted by the knitter of the invalid cap, commented that other knitters should do the same. Once production was underway he then sold the articles through his London shop subsequently opening up the London market.⁴⁵ Dr Cowie was born in Lerwick in 1842, leaving to be educated in Aberdeen and Edinburgh before returning to Lerwick first to assist in and then to take over his father's medical practice.⁴⁶ Although referring to a set of events prior to his birth and some 40 years after their occurrence, Cowie's intimate knowledge of the people and history of his native homeland, and detailed research into all things 'Shetland', places his conclusions as to the origins of the fine lace knitting industry among the most credible. Nevertheless, while the Ogilvy christening cap may be the inspiration for the earliest lace knitted article produced in Shetland it does not have the visual appearance of a Shetland fine lace knitted article. The whereabouts of the 'copy' is unknown, if indeed surviving, and without any articles

⁴² Fryer, *Knitting by the fireside*, pp.68-69.

⁴³ Robert Cowie, *Shetland: descriptive and historical: being a graduation thesis on the inhabitants of the Shetland Islands, and a topographical description of that country* (Edinburgh: John Menzies & Co., 1874), second edition, pp.184-187.

⁴⁴ Cowie, *Shetland*, p.185.

⁴⁵ Cowie, *Shetland*, pp.184-185; Fryer, *knitting by the fireside*, p.70.

⁴⁶ Anonymous, 'memoir', in Cowie, *Shetland*, pp.vi-viii.

which ‘copied’ the cap it is impossible to say whether they were indeed copies of the original patterns or if it only provided inspiration for subsequent articles. However, the survival and traceable provenance of the Ogilvy christening cap does add further credence to the origin story, and if accurate can offer a possible starting point of 1833 for the introduction of lace knitting to Shetland.⁴⁷

Possibly the oldest extant article which is clearly recognisable as an example of Shetland fine lace knitting is a christening shawl tentatively dated to circa 1837.⁴⁸ Provenance supplied with the christening shawl claims it was knitted for the christening of John Bruce, who became Laird of Sumburgh, a parish in the south of Shetland. This does not seem an unreasonable assertion. As a prominent and influential family in the islands, it is not unusual for articles such as christening shawls to become family heirlooms, passed from one generation to the next. If the provenance is accurate then it is reasonable to assume the production of the shawl began sometime in 1836 to be ready for Bruce’s birth on 9 June 1837. Large fine knitted lace shawls could take up to six months to produce, sometimes longer, and although the Sumburgh shawl is triangular and therefore half of a full sized shawl, it is still large, measuring two yards on the longer side and 1½ yards on the shorter side (1829 mm by 1372 mm). It is knitted in very finely spun two-ply worsted, with a slight peak in the middle of long side which would be used to cover the baby's head. Although the pattern is considered less intricate than those of later dates, this is not to say it is unsophisticated or not elaborately knitted. The symmetry and delicacy of pattern suggests that it is unlikely to be the ‘first’ knitted lace shawl produced, but rather a significant step towards the perfection of the craft. It is nevertheless a beautifully knitted shawl and undoubtedly an early creation in the development of the fine lace knitting industry. When this is considered in conjunction with the possible starting point of 1833 for the introduction of lace knitting to Shetland, then the early dating of a fully formed fine lace knitted shawl in 1837 is not unreasonable.

Although christening caps were undoubtedly produced, they are not mentioned in the early years of the Shetland fine lace knitting industry. There are at least three, but possibly five, early Shetland christening caps.⁴⁹ They are not overtly ‘Shetland’ in appearance, but there is a similarity in style and workmanship. Originally belonging to Jessie M. E. Saxby, the caps could date between the birth of her first child in October 1860, and her last child

⁴⁷ Fryer, *Knitting by the Fireside*, p.70.

⁴⁸ SM, TEX 7771 (SM, Photograph No. 01393).

⁴⁹ NMS, Joy Sandison Collection, L.1985.70.21 – L.1985.70.25.

August 1873. Rather it is the production of shawls in the formative years and then veils and stoles which are more closely associated with the industry. Referring to Shetland trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, A. C. O'Dell notes that '300 doz wool hose & 240 yards woollens & 2 woollen shawls' were sent to Norway in 1820.⁵⁰ This is a tantalising piece of text, notably as it contains the first known reference to shawls in Shetland. The inclusion of woollen shawls makes it clear that shawls were known in the area in 1820, but there is no indication as to whether they are woven or knitted woollen shawls. The remaining sources place knitted shawls in the latter part of the 1830s. Giving evidence to the 1872 Truck Commission, Arthur Laurensen asserted that shawl production became very common around 1840 or 1841.⁵¹ Born in 1833, the son of Laurence Laurensen, draper and hosier in Lerwick, Laurensen would have been seven or eight years old at the time he claimed shawls started to become very common and therefore may indeed be a memory. As the son of a draper and hosier, he is likely to have been in the shop and witnessed the articles brought in for sale, but this may also have been something discussed with his father at a later date. If Laurensen's dating is correct then it is reasonable to contend that they were being produced for some time prior to 1840. This dating of early production corresponds with Francis Groome's assertion in the *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* that the manufacture of Shetland knitted shawls was introduced in 1837-39.⁵² Certainly Shetland knitted shawls were being advertised for sale as early as April 1838 when W. B. Mackenzie, Prince's Street, Edinburgh, noted that they were 'peculiarly suitable' for 'invalids and aged people' offering the first direct evidence of Shetland produced knitted shawls being sold in the open market.⁵³ One month later on 16 May he expanded his description of the shawls to include the comment that some of them were 'real curiosities in knitting'.⁵⁴ With no price attached to the shawls it is impossible to determine if these were indeed fine knitted lace shawls, however his use of the expression 'real curiosities in knitting' would suggest that they were something more than a plain knitted article. At least until 1869 objects of clothing regarded as 'curiosities' were considered 'exquisitely prepared, dainty, delicate, *recherché*', exhibiting an elegant and artistic character with careful or elaborate workmanship illustrating a perfection of

⁵⁰ O'Dell, *The Historical Geography of the Shetland Islands*, p.323.

⁵¹ Truck, line 2138.

⁵² Groome, Francis H., ed. *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland: A Survey of Scottish Topography, Statistical, Biographical and Historical*, New Edition, Vol.VI, (London: William MacKenzie, 1882-1885), p.343.

⁵³ *The Scotsman*, 25 April 1838, p.1.

⁵⁴ *The Scotsman*, 16 May 1838, p.3.

construction.⁵⁵ Three years later, in July 1841, Mackenzie was the first to advertise with reference to Shetland fine knitted lace shawls noting that:

They are made in various qualities: some, which are knitted in imitation of lace, are so fine that a Lady of the first rank may wear them in full dress, and are considered curiosities both for the fineness of the thread and the knitting.⁵⁶

Mackenzie had been selling a variety of hosiery articles, including Shetland knit hosiery from at least January 1835 but his descriptive term ‘curiosities’ first appears in May 1838 and then only in connection with the Shetland knit shawls.⁵⁷ In this it might be assumed that the May 1838 ‘curiosities’ may indeed be early examples of the July 1841 ‘curiosities’ which he further described as imitation of lace and therefore the first record of Shetland lace knitting being produced for sale. Known to have visited Shetland on at least one occasion, March 1841, shortly before advertising the lace-like qualities of the shawls, it is likely that Mackenzie brought back the shawls for his shop during that visit.⁵⁸ These advertisements indicating this early production of shawls make it all the more surprising that there is no reference to the production of shawls, fine lace knitted or otherwise, in the *New Statistical Account for Scotland 1834-1845*.

Although covering an extended date range, many of the Shetland entries are dated around 1838 and almost all of them are annotated to say updated in 1841. The account makes a general observation that the women are typically employed in knitting stockings, mitts, and other articles of hosiery, but offers very little information with regard to fine knitting. Nevertheless, within the accounts there are two entries worthy of further consideration. Reverend William Watson, Minister of Fetlar and North Yell, recorded that while in the past stockings made in Fetlar had previously sold for £2/2/-, they were currently selling from 1/- to 5/- and upwards. Similarly, Reverends James and John Ingram recording for the Parish of Unst noted that while a few pairs of ‘extraordinary fineness’ sold for £2, stockings generally varied in price from 1/- to 10/- per pair.⁵⁹ The Unst account was written in 1838 and revised in May 1841 and the Fetlar and North Yell account revised in June 1841. Unst and Yell are notable for the continued production of fine knitted articles

⁵⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/46038?redirectedFrom=curiosities#eid> [accessed 16 January 2015].

⁵⁶ *The Scotsman*, 17 July 1841, p.1.

⁵⁷ *The Scotsman*, 14 January 1835, p.1.

⁵⁸ Census, 1841.

⁵⁹ *The New Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1834-1845*, Vol. 15. United Parishes of Fetlar and North Yell, p.28; Parish of Unst, p.47.

since the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-99*, furthermore Unst, Fetlar and North Yell are those areas singled out as producing the finest spun worsted and finest knitted articles in the Truck Enquiry interviews and eventually Unst as supplying the finest knitters in the islands.

The Origins of patterns

Having ascertained the difficulty in identifying the origins of Shetland lace knitting and the problems faced when trying to clarify the date of the first Shetland lace shawls, the identification of the origins of the motifs and patterns used in the articles is no less problematic.

Fine lace knitting was carried out extensively across Europe and based on the style of article produced can be roughly divided into two production areas: Southern and Northern Europe. Southern European lace knitting areas include Spain, Italy, France and Germany and generally produced lace knitting in silk, cotton and linen, often for display such as with doyleys or for use with regard to religious purposes for instance head coverings in church. Shetland is situated in the Northern Europe area which also encompasses Iceland, the Faroes, Estonia, Ukraine and Russia (Orenburg). In each of the Northern European regions lace knitting was initially knitted in wool or goat's hair in the case of the Ukraine, Orenburg, and early Shetland fine knitted veils. Articles were often produced with the intent to sell in an effort to increase household income and in this respect the majority of early northern European lace knitting took the form of shawls or stoles.⁶⁰ When viewing fine lace knitted articles from each of the regions there is an initial appearance of similarity between them all, and from this perspective it might be easy to assume that one tradition is a copy, or imitation, of another. However investigation and research have shown that this is not the case. While there are indeed similarities it is clear that there are also many differences and the region of production is often obvious from even this first visual encounter, notably when viewing Shetland or Orenburg productions. Elizabeth Lovick's research into pattern variation across various lace knitting traditions pays particular attention to the similarities and differences in patterns across cultures. Focussing on six patterns in particular Lovick has deconstructed and then reproduced the patterns in order to better understand both the similarities and differences in production methods. The patterns

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Lovick, *Northern Lace, The Same but Different. Shetland Lace in a European Context*, (2006), p.9. <<http://www.knittingbeyondthehebrides.org/lace/SameButDifferent.pdf>>, [accessed 15 April 2014].

chosen occur across each of the regions incorporating a lace knitting tradition: Cat's Paw (see figure 11); Old Shale; New Shell; Horseshoe; Diamonds; and Saltire (see figure 12).

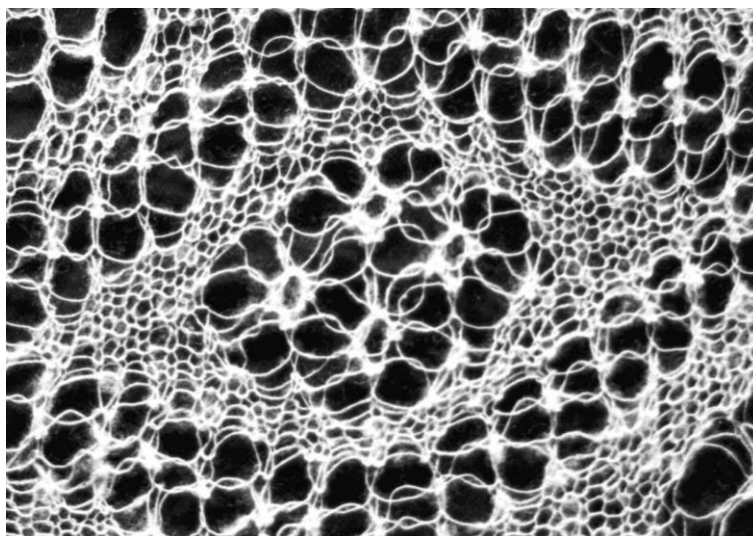


Figure 9: Cat's Paw motif, image courtesy of SMA, photograph NE00149.

The Cat's Paw (figure 11) is a pattern motif commonly found in Shetland lace knitting, a pattern that is also to be found in Orenburg lace knitting, but 'worked differently' and called the strawberry. Orenburg lace knitting also contains a motif called the cat's paw, but it is different from the Shetland cat's paw.⁶¹ The horseshoe motif appears in many lace knitting traditions: Shetland, Icelandic, Estonian, Russian and Faroese, all are similar in that the knitting of the holes creates a horseshoe shape, but all are visually different from one another.⁶² This is also true of the diamond motif, which appears in each of the lace knitting traditions but in a variety of ways. The Shetland and Iceland diamonds are popular all-over patterns and while visually very similar are made very differently. The other four traditions commonly use diamonds as either vertical or horizontal rows, or as individual motifs.⁶³ Shetland shawls often contained crown and flag motifs, notably the St Andrew's cross, or Saltire. While the Saltire motif might be considered initially a Scottish influence, it is also found on Icelandic, Faroese, Estonian and Orenburg knitting, again visually very similar but constructed differently.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.10.

⁶² Ibid., p.13.

⁶³ Ibid., p.14.



Figure 10: Saltire with cat's paw, Royal stole 1937, STM E0237, image courtesy of Shetland Amenity Trust (Dave Donaldson photographer).

The Saltire motif with a Cat's Paw (figure 12) in each of the triangles can be found in both Shetland and Orenburg shawls and although different both visually and in the production method, the similarities between the two remain apparent.⁶⁴

All six deconstructed pattern motifs appear in both Shetland and Orenburg lace knitting. Orenburg fine lace knitted shawls date from at least the mid eighteenth century, making them considerably older than Shetland fine lace knitting.⁶⁵ Noting that both Orenburg and Shetland fine lace knitted shawls have the distinction of being able to pass through a wedding ring, Galina Khmeleva and Carol Noble authors of *Gossamer Webs: The History and Techniques of Orenburg Lace Shawls* consider that the Orenburg shawls to have inspired if not directly influenced the early development of Shetland fine lace shawls.⁶⁶ If Shetland lace knitting was a 'direct copy' of the Orenburg lace knitting then it seems reasonable to assume they would have used the same production method, not only in knitting of the patterns and motifs but also in the construction of the shawl.⁶⁷ Inspiration, on the other hand, could explain the similarities between patterns and motifs while acknowledging the differing production methods and the individual aesthetic appeal in the styling of the pattern/motif. Shetland knitters produced their articles without the aid of a pattern book and many were able to reproduce a pattern from sight, analysing the visual representation of the stitches and using experience and highly developed knitting skills, to recreate the pattern.⁶⁸ In this respect it is entirely feasible that they may have drawn

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.15.

⁶⁵ Orenburg Regional Museum of Fine Arts, <<http://www.omizo.ru/kollekczi/kollekcziya-orenburgskix-puxovyix-platkov.html>> [accessed 12 January 2015].

⁶⁶ Galina Khmeleva and Carol R. Noble, *Gossamer Webs: The History and Techniques of Orenburg Lace Shawls* (Interweave Press, 1998), p.12.

⁶⁷ Miller, *Shetland Hap Shawls*, p.7.

⁶⁸ Edmonston, *Sketches and Tales*, p.177; also for example Sunniva Priest discussed in Chapter 3.

inspiration from any knitted lace article they encountered, copying the style of the pattern but using the production method most familiar to them. In doing this the Shetland knitters would not necessarily know the original names of the patterns and therefore given them names they thought appropriate as may be the case with the Cat's Paw. This issue is discussed via an online blog mainly between lace knitters and researchers Elizabeth Lovick, Sharon Miller and Kathleen Kinder regarding the naming and dating of two Shetland associated patterns Feather and Fan and Old Shale.⁶⁹ Old Shale (or Old Shell) is considered a quintessential lace pattern, which according to Richard Rutt, has long been considered one of the original Shetland patterns.⁷⁰ Miller believes that Old Shell is a pattern also known as 'Peacock's Feather' and can be dated to before the commencement of Shetland fine lace knitting, as evidenced by eighteenth century bonnet-back medallions on the Continent but asserts her opinion that the Feather and Fan pattern 'is derived from Old Shell'.⁷¹ Kathleen Kinder asserts that many of the 'lace' patterns which 'Shetland knitters consider to be their own ... did not originate in Shetland', noting that some, 'like Feather and Fan have an earlier reference in the 18th c[entury] framework lace tradition'.⁷² This may, or may not be the case as without detailed provenance and accurate dating of articles it is impossible to follow any chronological sequence in the recognition of the introduction and evolution of patterns to know which tradition used the pattern motif first.

In her 1856 publication *Sketches and Tales of the Shetland Islands* Eliza Edmonston wrote that her attempt to determine any influence, external or otherwise, placed upon the producers could trace nothing concrete. Writing around 20 years after the production of the first fine lace knitted shawls Edmonston made a simple statement with regard to fine lace knitting. She wrote that it was:

an invention for which the Shetland females deserve all the credit. From simplest beginnings, led on and encouraged by some ladies as a pastime, it has progressed from one thing to another, till it has attained its present celebrity, without the aid either of pattern-book, or of other instruction, than the diligence and taste of the natives themselves.⁷³

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Lovick, Sharon Miller and Kathleen Kinder, <<https://northernlace.wordpress.com/2010/03/12/feather-and-fan-versus-old-shale/>> [Accessed 25 March 2013].

⁷⁰ Rutt, *A History of Hand Knitting*, p.175.

⁷¹ Miller, *Shetland Hap Shawls*, p.8; <<https://northernlace.wordpress.com/2010/03/12/feather-and-fan-versus-old-shale/>>. [Accessed 25 March 2013].

⁷² Kathleen Kinder, personal communication. 25 February 2013.

⁷³ Edmonston, *Sketches and Tales*, p.177.

This would suggest that the inspiration perhaps indeed came from the simple act of seeing some pretty lace and copying the idea using the materials readily available to them. If inspiration was taken from Orenburg or any other lace knitting tradition, it was done so in a style which became unmistakably 'Shetland' in appearance. Figure 13 illustrates two Orenburg shawls and six articles of Shetland lace which exhibit 'possible' influence. Once seen, the distinctiveness of Shetland fine lace knitting is apparent and readily identifiable as neither Orenburg nor Ukrainian lace knitting. Nevertheless, whether trying to determine the origins of the first Shetland fine lace knitted articles or the first patterns used or even the industry as a whole, nothing is clearly defined or unambiguous. Each theoretical approach and individual opinion has its merits and weaknesses and as such the true origins may continue to remain elusive and contested. Whether the form and style of the article, the production method or the design, or produced as a gift or for an economic recompense it is clear that Shetland fine lace knitted articles were created and fashioned from numerous inspirations: point and pillow lace, other knitted lace, fine stockings and the exceptional qualities of Shetland wool and the finely spun worsted.



Figure 11: Orenburg shawls and Shetland lace articles illustrating ‘possible’ influence.

Top row: Orenburg (Russian) fine knitted lace shawls. Left SMA photograph S00031 (photographer M. Sutherland), image courtesy of SMA, photograph S00031; Baigulava Orenburg Shawl, image courtesy of Liliya Huff. Image has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Middle row: Two Shetland lace bed spreads knitted by Jessie Saxby, c.1918-19, Miss Joy Sandison Collection at NMS, images courtesy of Miss Sandison. On page 5 of her small publication *Shetland Knitting* (SA4/3000/17/26/1), Saxby comments on seeing Orenburg lace shawls at Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, noting ‘The beauty of the patterns and the spider-web fineness of the texture has never been excelled in Shetland’; Shetland lace Stole, SMA TEX 71650 (1420 x 470 mm), image author’s own.

Third row: fine lace stole, image courtesy of SMA, photograph P03820; lace pattern sampler in fine cotton thread by Miss Julia Sutherland, image courtesy of SMA, photograph P05352; cover or tray matt, Miss Joy Sandison Collection at the NMS, JS-NMS-L.1985.70.5. (2), image courtesy of Miss Sandison.

Chapter 3: Made in Shetland



Figure 12: Postcard showing a Shetland lace stole, produced by the Sutherland family, Chromate Lane, Lerwick, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 03365.

The back of the postcard reads:

Lerwick 14 November 1905, Sent to Mrs Joan Sutherland, Gritquoy, Uyeasound. Dear Sister, what do you think of it? I may tell you I am well pleased with it. It is larger and 20 grains lighter than I thought it would be so it ought to please the lady it is made for. It is 3 and a quarter yard long by 31 inches wide – weight 1 and one twelfth ounce, price £10. We have nothing new to say – all well and expecting Thomas and Agnes on Saturday – kind love to you all, David, Footnote – I am putting this in an envelope as I think it best to do so DS, David Sutherland.

Figure 14 above illustrates one of the finest Shetland lace stoles made in the Shetland Islands. Light and delicate with intricate and sophisticated patterning, it is designed, hand-spun and hand-knitted by members of the Sutherland family, of Chromate Lane, Lerwick (formerly of Unst). It is a perfect example of a specialised form of textile production, as are the production processes carried out in the creation of the finished article.

This chapter will describe the various steps required for the production of Shetland lace, from gathering the wool off the sheep's back to just prior to the point of sale. The production of an article of fine knitted lace involved many processes taking in rooing,

sorting, carding, spinning, knitting and washing/dressing and many individuals engaged in these processes from crofters and spinners to knitters, finishers and merchants. Each process was mediated by a range of influences internal and external to Shetland and varying levels of quality control.

There are two primary influences emanating from within Shetland which affected the production of fine knitted lace articles: the availability of and access to natural resources and the personal management of economic resources, notably the household economy. (There are also two principal external influences, fashion and marketing, which will be discussed later in the thesis.) While there are a minimum of six production processes in the creation of a Shetland lace article, influences exerted upon production processes are not equal across each process. Rather, in constructing a recognisable fine knitted article it is the knitters who experience the greatest influences (both in number and pressure of influences), whether by internal or external means. In highlighting the internal influences exerted upon the producers this chapter will demonstrate that while articles produced in Shetland are undoubtedly authentic, authenticity in a pure sense was always open to compromise.

Production processes

From starting as wool on a sheep's neck to being a fine knitted lace article, there is a series of distinctive and independent production processes that must be carried out in a specified order. A finished article cannot be completed in fewer than six stages: gathering the wool, sorting, carding, spinning, knitting and washing/dressing.¹ Should a non-natural coloured article be required, a seventh step is necessary to incorporate the change in colour and most likely an eighth step in order to re-dress the coloured article to render it a marketable product. Additionally, design is an important process but as early lace knitters did not record their patterns this was primarily a mental action, which may have occurred concurrently with other processes. Design will therefore be included in the section on knitting. This section outlines the production processes for each stage.

Gathering the wool

The preliminary stage in the long production process of Shetland fine knitted lace involved the gathering of the raw material, Shetland wool. The way in which the wool was gathered

¹ See Fryer, *Knitting by the Fireside* for description of the various processes and elements of hosiery production, pp.24–37.

and stored greatly impacted on the ensuing processing methods. Rather than using specialised tools such as shears, Shetland wool was removed from the animal simply by hand plucking, a technique known as ‘rooing’.² ‘Rooing’ as a method of collecting wool was first recorded in Shetland in 1615 although was likely prevalent in Shetland prior to the Norse settlement of the islands.³ By the twentieth century shearing had become more widely used; nevertheless, the practice of rooing continues until the present day.⁴

Before rooing can begin the wool must be thoroughly dry and therefore it is necessary to have a period of dry weather.⁵ With careful processing the wool from many part of most Shetland fleeces was suitable for producing the fibre required for fine lace knitting, nevertheless the fine and soft wool on the neck of the sheep was preferred by knitters for fine lace work. As the neck wool is the first to naturally shed (see figure 15), to ensure it was not lost, or damaged by wind or sun, it was necessary to collect it early in the season.



Figure 13: Sheep on the left showing neck wool being naturally shed first, image courtesy of Carol Christiansen.

The rooing method was perfect for this, notably as the wool was ready to detach naturally at the inherent thinning point of the wool fibres between the end of one and the beginning of the next year’s growth.⁶ This natural thinning point occurred consistently in the fleece

² Carol Christiansen, *Primitive Wool and Early Textile Production in Shetland* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2003), pp.84-85.

³ Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, p.85.

⁴ SA, D11/75/2, Prophet Smith, *Shetland Sheep and Shetland’s Wool Industries* (from World Knowledge, 1958); Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, pp.88-89.

⁵ Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, p.91.

⁶ Carol Christianson, Personal correspondence.

and as such would break naturally at the same point throughout the fleece, meaning that the fibres were of comparatively equal lengths.⁷ This method offered further benefits for the production of the very fine worsted as it minimised blunting the ends of the fibre as happens when cutting with shears and which results in a roughened texture.⁸

The value placed upon the natural resource made it a highly desired commodity and although records of incidences of stealing wool are rare, thefts did occur. In July 1899 two brothers, George and Magnus Smith (13 and 11 respectively) from Meal, Cunningsburgh, were charged with ‘rooing’ a sheep belonging to Laurence Laurenson, also of Meal. Although both pled not guilty, both were convicted and sentenced to be birched.⁹

Wool Storage

As an essential commodity in the Shetland knitting industry, the value placed on Shetland wool and the subsequently produced lace articles meant that any wool not intended for immediate use needed to be carefully stored. Improper storage could cause the wool to become damaged due to dryness or damp. Rooed wool could not be rolled, but was gathered together in the hands and gently twisted as more wool was added until a thick rope was formed after which it was stored until required.¹⁰ Shetland wool is generally very clean, rendering it unnecessary to wash fleeces prior to carding. This is particularly the case with the wool for lace yarn spinning, the natural oils making it easier to spin extra fine thread.¹¹ If the wool was old or had become dry during storage it would be sprinkled with oil prior to spinning. Whale and fish liver oils were commonly used, although at times elicited consumer comment.¹² Unst Merchant Alexander Sandison occasionally received complaints from his British mainland customers about the smell of articles received although none with comments on fine knitted lace articles.¹³ Indeed, when P. Harrison ordered large brown haps and a white lace shawl, only the haps were requested to be well draped to get rid of the disagreeable smell, not the lace shawl, possibly confirming as fine

⁷ Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, p.100.

⁸ Fryer, *Knitting by the Fireside*, p.2.

⁹ *ST*, 22 July 1899.

¹⁰ J. Tulloch: 1997 cited in Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, p.104.

¹¹ E. Johnston, 1994 cited in Christiansen, *Primitive Wool* pp.103-105.

¹² J. Tulloch: 1997 cited in Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, pp.105-106.

¹³ SandArch 1869.35, Mrs Armstrong, Brighton, 17 June 1869; 1884.40, Duncan Irvine, London, 17 March 1884.

worsted spinner E. Johnston noted, the sheep's natural oils were adequate when spinning the fine wool into worsted.¹⁴

Sorting

Once the wool had been removed from the sheep it no longer resembled a fleece, but was instead a pile of wool that needed to be sorted and graded.¹⁵ The much sought after neck wool would be kept separate from any other wool gathered for use by the spinners of lace yarn.¹⁶ Once the wool was gathered, it would either be stored until required or prepared for carding and spinning. The wool is sorted by removing any long, coarse fibres from the short, fine fibres and separating the different shades of wool in anticipation of preparing a singularly coloured yarn. This was carried out either by hand or by the use of wool combs. Hand sorting was a more precise, if more laborious, method of removing the coarse fibres. Wool combs, although a quicker method, left many long, coarse fibres behind.¹⁷ As such, the hand sorting of fibres was a more suitable method for the initial preparation of wool for spinning into fine yarn. Carol Christiansen suggests that the use of wool combs in Shetland stopped around the mid-nineteenth century, a time period which coincides with the rapid increase in the popularity of all Shetland wool articles.¹⁸ Once the wool had been sorted and graded it was then either lightly oiled or left in its natural state in preparation for carding or combing.

Combing/carding

In *A Shetland Knitter's Notebook* Mary Smith noted that the wool was cleaned prior to carding.¹⁹ However this is not normally necessary as rather than graze on cultivated land where contaminants such as mud or straw can cling to the fleece, the sheep graze on heather, which if attached to the fleece, removes easily.²⁰ Therefore it is not necessary to make any further preparations to the wool other than occasionally lightly oiling it to aid in the teasing process prior to combing or carding.

¹⁴ SandArch, 1866.23, P. Harrison, Montgomery, 30 January 1866.

¹⁵ Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, p.94.

¹⁶ Christiansen, *Primitive wool*, p.97; SA, SA 3/1/273 – oral history from School of Scottish Studies, Mrs and Miss Sutherland, Unst, with Tom Georgeson, Lerwick.

¹⁷ Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, pp.108-118.

¹⁸ Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, p.119.

¹⁹ Smith and Bunyan, *Shetland Knitter's Notebook*, p.5.

²⁰ Christiansen, *Primitive Wool*, pp.104-105.

The method adopted for the preparation of the wool and the subsequent process of hand-spinning the wool fibres can result in the production of two different types of yarn, woollen or worsted, and the type of yarn produced is dependent on the initial preparation of the fibres. In woollen yarn the individual fibres, commonly of different lengths, are aligned in different directions, crossing over and overlapping each other which leaves air spaces between them and results in a fluffy texture. In worsted the individual fibres are comparatively equal in length and run parallel to each other only overlapping at the ends and leaving very little space between the individual fibres.²¹ It is worsted that is used in the manufacture of Shetland lace and therefore the adequate preparation of the wool prior to spinning is crucial. This initial preparation is done either by combing or carding the wool.

Hand combing utilises fine toothed combs to straighten and align a mass of fibres parallel to the direction of spinning (see figure 16). This method results in a smooth, strong, very compact spun yarn with a sleek and at times glossy, appearance. This is the perfect yarn for fine knitted lace, as it allows the intricate patterns to be seen clearly while supplying strength to an article of very little wool weight. However, as noted above, it is probable that hand combing was seldom used after the mid-nineteenth century and hand carding is the most likely next step in the process of worsted production.



Figure 14: Wool combs, SM TEX 65181, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01362.

Unlike woollen yarn preparation, worsted fibre preparation is much more concerned with establishing fibres of the same length in a perfectly parallel alignment and in mechanised yarn production this is a simple process. Although combing will produce the perfect fibre

²¹ Elizabeth Johnston, Shetland Studies course lecture – 26/2/93, from SM stores filing cabinet.

for spinning worsted this can also be achieved by careful carding when the parallel alignment of the fibres can be enhanced. Furthermore, the preferred neck wool fibres used for Shetland lace are typically of a comparable length reducing the need for combing and indeed, on occasion, worsted would be spun direct from the wool without carding having taken place. When the wool fibres are long and uniform in quality it is possible to spin directly from the wool staple which, like combing, ensures the fibres are parallel but with no intermediary preparation.²²

Hand carding uses two pieces of wood, one side having fine wire teeth which are used to tease the fibres (see figure 17). When the wool is carded the tangles in the fibres are removed and the fibres encouraged to run in a parallel direction. Generally carding does not uniformly align all the fibres and there will always be some which remain unaligned and facing in different directions. The lightly oiled wool is placed between the two cards and then gently drawn apart in opposite directions to open out and separate the fibres. To limit any damage to the delicate fibres it is necessary to draw the hands far apart thus making it a labour intensive and exhausting process. Once the fibres are teased apart the back of the card is used to shape the wool into small tubular rolls ready for spinning the fine worsted necessary for fine knitted lace.²³ Hand carding could be a tedious and tiresome activity and ‘cairding’ parties and get-togethers were arranged to speed up the process while alleviating the boredom associated with the task. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries carding became associated with socialising and group activity, singing and chatting while the carding was done, sometimes culminating in dancing at the end of the day.²⁴

²² Carol Christiansen, personal communication.

²³ Johnston, Shetland Studies course lecture.

²⁴ SA, SA3/2/18/2, Mary Sandison and Bertha Sandison (Recorded by Drew Ratter for the School of Scottish Studies 10 February 1983); SA SA3/1/23, Thomas Robinson (Interviewed by Isobel Mitchell for Shetland Archives Community History Project 3/MSC, 21 July 1986); *Shetland News*, 5 September 1940, p.4. Carding Shetland Wool, (From "The Scottish Co-operator).



Figure 15: Wool cards, SM TEX 1990.483, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 0319.

The prepared wool rooded from the neck of one sheep would easily be sufficient to produce a six foot square fine knitted lace shawl, perhaps more, but this would be dependent upon the quality of the spinning.²⁵

Spinning

As the preferred worsted for fine knitted lace came from the very soft wool around the sheep's neck this made it a limited but highly sought after commodity. Production of the very fine worsted was dependent upon the spinner being able to source sufficient raw material. Some, but not all, fine spinners would have kept their own sheep and thus have had ready access to the raw material needed for the fine worsted. For those without their own sheep it would be necessary to acquire the raw material from merchants or farmers. As fine spinning was a highly specialised craft which produced an actively sourced commodity with a guaranteed monetary value it is to be expected that known fine spinners were approached to produce the fine worsted rather than the fine spinners seeking work.²⁶ Due to the high level of skill required and limited number of practitioners it is likely that these producers would have been afforded the opportunity to work consistently.²⁷ However the production of finely spun worsted was a time consuming and back breaking job, necessitating prolonged periods of time sitting in one position while maintaining the flow of a steady and uniform measure of raw wool into the spinning wheel.

Shetland spinnies were upright spinning wheels and were generally smaller than those used on the Scottish mainland so that they took up less space in the often small and cramped Shetland croft houses and could be easily moved to work outdoors in good weather. Most

²⁵ Mrs & Miss Sutherland with Tom Georgeson, Baltasound, Unst. School of Scottish Studies, SA, 1961/91, 02 August 1961, interviewed by Elizabeth Neilson.

²⁶ SandArch, 1868.12: Miss Robina C. Leask, 08 July 1868.

²⁷ Truck, lines 10,186-10,188.

Shetland crofts would have had at least one spinning wheel, or spinnie, for producing their own yarn from the wool of their own sheep although much of this yarn would be used in the production of hosiery and as such would have been unsuitable for fine knitted articles (see figure 18). Spinners of very fine worsted for lace knitting would often have kept a second wheel, to be used solely for spinning the prized and highly sought fine worsted.²⁸

They would also have had at least two 'pirms' (spinning wheel bobbins) (see figure 19). In the spinning process the pirm gathers the spun worsted, when the pirm was full it was placed in a 'sweerie box' (see figure 19) and a new pirm used to continue spinning. If the worsted was single thread would then be laid on a niddy-noddy to make it into a hank (see figure 20). The niddy-noddy came in different sizes, depending on the length of hank desired. If the worsted was two-ply then two full pirms would be placed in the sweerie box, then a third pirm was put on the spinning wheel, a length of worsted was taken off each of the full pirms and the spun wool was plied together in the opposite direction onto the pirm on the wheel. After which it would be made into a hank on the niddy-noddy. If three-ply was required, the same process was followed but with three full pirns in the sweerie box. Once the hank was formed, should the wool have required cleaning, it could be washed and dried under tension by attaching a weight to it.²⁹



Figure 16: A traditional Shetland 'spinnie' from Unst, SM TEX 1992.903, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01081.

²⁸ Smith and Bunyan, *Shetland Knitter's Notebook*, p.21.

²⁹ Carol Christiansen, personal communication.



Figure 17: A sweerie box and pirms, SM TEX 1995.219, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01341.



Figure 18: A niddy-noddy, SM TEX 1990.490, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01320.

There are two methods of spinning the prepared wool: as woollen yarn or worsted. Spinning woollen yarn can be a quick process, because the fibres are only partially aligned before spinning. The twist is allowed to enter the carded wool freely, without smoothing, so that the twist catches the wool fibres in whatever direction they are but the resulting yarn lacks the strength of worsted.³⁰ In addition to this a much fluffier yarn is produced which does not provide good stitch definition because it tends to produce fuzzy edges or a halo effect around the stitches, making it unsuitable for intricate stitch work of fine knitted lace. The better method of spinning for fine knitted lace is in using the worsted method. As noted, worsted refers to both a means of preparing the fibre to be spun and a method of spinning on a wheel. Spinning in a worsted method means that twist is allowed to bind the

³⁰ Carol Christiansen, personal communication.

fibres together only once they have been aligned and made smooth.. This makes for a slower spinning process, but produces a very even, smooth, compact yarn, strong enough to be spun very finely, a perfect yarn for fine knitted lace.

Fine spinning is a highly specialised craft, that not all spinners would be able to, or want to, master, in that the fineness of the spinning is directly related to the difficulty factor and the time consuming nature of the production process. Any inconsistencies in the spinning in the fineness of the worsted would be visible in a finely knitted article, as would any inadequately repaired breaks in the spun worsted. A glance at a Shetland fine lace knitted article instantly illustrates the quality of the spinning. Viewing two similar Shetland fine knitted lace stoles side by side highlights how the skill and experience of a spinner can create a differing end result in a finished article. In figure 21 both stoles have the same pattern, although the stole on the left illustrates an additional repeat of the pattern in the centre. However, as illustrate in figure 22, the stitch definition of the stole on the right is much more evident due to the quality of the spun worsted.



Figure 19: Shetland lace stoles, SM TEX 858 (1510 mm x 410 mm, c.1930s) and TEX 8938 (1420 mm x 390 mm), images courtesy of Shetland Amenity Trust (Dave Donaldson photographer).



Figure 20: Detail of Shetland lace stoles, SMA TEX 858 and TEX 8938, image author's own.

In 1872 worsted was sold and bought by the 'cut', a cut being one hundred threads and a thread measuring one yard. Priced between 2d and 8d a cut it was anticipated that 3d a cut worsted would give 6 cuts per ounce of raw wool, and following this 6d a cut would give 12 cuts per ounce and 8d a cut would give 16 cuts per ounce etc.³¹ Essentially the fineness determined the price wherein the less wool used per cut and the more cobwebby the feel of the article the higher the price per cut. Thus, the price of the worsted is not solely determined by the raw material but by the labour and skill necessary to produce it. When time constraints and the physicality of the labour are taken into consideration, producing very fine worsted may not have always been the most effective way of maintaining a balanced household economy. As worsted at 3d a cut was also considered a 'ready money' article, but one which would have involved a substantially reduced production time, it is possible that spinning a less fine worsted in a quicker time period entailing shorter intervals between cash payments received would be more economically efficient for the household. From this perspective it is possible that fine spinners did not only produce fine worsted but also worsted of a lesser fineness as a means of increasing the regularity of a cash income.

In addition to the advantage of receiving a monetary income, the high demand for finely spun worsted allowed spinners in the outlying islands to sell their worsted locally rather than necessitating a journey to Lerwick. Fine spinners had the option of selling to a lace

³¹ Truck, lines 10,184–10,187.

knitter or to one of the Shetland merchants outwith Lerwick who were keen to procure fine worsted where and when possible for their outworkers or to sell it on to the Lerwick merchants or consumers on the British mainland.³² Nevertheless, Lerwick merchants, eager to source the finest worsted for their outworkers, also purchased direct from spinners. Obtaining the very fine worsted could be a difficult task, and as a sought after resource the scarcity of finely spun worsted made it one that merchants were 'very glad to get for cash'.³³

Both in his evidence to the Truck Commissioners and regularly in correspondence, Unst merchant Alexander Sandison acknowledged that very few spinners could spin the fine and superfine worsted.³⁴ This is also borne out when trying to identify the fine spinners in the documentary record. While the census records identify many women as spinners very few are categorised as fine spinners. Between 1841 and 1901 only eight individuals are listed as fine spinners: six in 1881 and two in 1891.³⁵ Although spinning was a domestic industry throughout Shetland, the north isles of Unst, Fetlar and North Yell were famed for their spun worsteds.³⁶ It is therefore unsurprising that the eight individuals in the census records are Fetlar women but somewhat odd that there were none named from Unst. Business records, the Truck Inquiry and newspaper reports augment this number somewhat, yet still the number of known/identifiable fine spinners does not correlate with the quantity of extant fine knitted lace and there must certainly have been many more fine spinners than are currently known. Much of this discrepancy may be placed in the hands of the census enumerators who having noted that the occupant was a spinner would not necessarily indicate that she was a fine spinner, unless it was insisted upon. Possibly the six Fetlar women in 1881 requested such a distinction.³⁷ This may also in part be due to the lack of agreement as to what constitutes coarse, medium, fine and superfine worsted or possibly that spinners spun worsted of varying degrees of fineness. Although spinners may have simultaneously produced fine and less fine worsted, still it is evident that the number of non-fine spinners far exceeded the number of fine spinners and that many of the fine and superfine spinners may remain unidentified. It is unclear how many fine spinners

³² Truck, lines 3278-3279, 10,183; SandArch 1890.27(1) to Aberdeen; 1900.24 to Edinburgh.

³³ Truck, lines 3180-3182, 3278-2379.

³⁴ Truck, lines 10,186-10,188; SandArch 1867.18, M.B. Duncan: Letter Book 4-1868-1871 (Uyeasound) p.117, John Smith 04 July 1868; 1877.20(2), Robert Linklater 20 August 1877.

³⁵ Census, 1841-1901.

³⁶ Truck, lines 2297-8, 3278, 5183, 10186-7, 15397.

³⁷ See Chapter One – Introduction for a fuller discussion on the limitations of the census as a source for identifying producers of Shetland lace.

produced the fine worsted for personal use in their own knitted articles and how many produced the worsted with the direct intention to sell, either to other knitters or merchants.

The earliest sourced record of spun worsted being entered in a ledger account, and therefore the earliest identified spinner, is 1 June 1848, when Catherine Henderson of Quoy, Unst had her account credited with 4/11, corresponding with 13 cuts of worsted at 4½d a cut.³⁸ From this point until 1900, the last sourced ledger entry containing a price for spun worsted, there appears to have been very little fluctuation in the pricing with worsted maintaining a steady value of between 2d and 8d a cut.³⁹ Although considered a cash commodity, spun worsted was nevertheless also used to pay accounts with merchants. In April 1877 Laurina Robertson of Cullivoe, Yell wrote to Sandison about her debt to his Uyeasound shop and informed him that while she had almost finished the fine shawls she was knitting she had ‘about 80 cuts of the finest of worsted’ if he was interested.⁴⁰ Although there is no record of his response, the scarcity and desirability of fine spun worsted would suggest that it is unlikely he would have refused.

While many accounts show credits made by worsted, very few of them give any indication of the quantity or price per cut, rather they give the total monetary value credited to the account. Accepting that 8d a cut worsted is the finest, there is only one entry in the Sandison ledgers showing this price being paid to a spinner, in April 1866, when Barbara Sutherland’s account was credited with 8 cuts of worsted at 8d a cut.⁴¹ Barbara, from Colvidale, Unst is recorded as a stocking knitter and knitter in the 1861 and 1871 censuses respectively. It is clear that she was also a fine worsted spinner. Sandison’s records illustrate very few requests to purchase this super fine worsted. There are, however, several requests for 7d a cut worsted although he notes that he rarely got anything so fine.⁴²

An initial consideration of the pricing system suggested that documentary sources would elicit a set of standardised parameters set for determining the fineness and quality of the homespun worsted and as such permit the recognition of individual fine spinners in business ledgers. It was not as straightforward as was expected. First indications suggested that the 2d-4d a cut was used for coarse and medium articles and the 5d-8d a cut

³⁸ SandArch, Day Book & Ledger 15-1845-1864, p.30.

³⁹ SandArch, 1900.24, Mrs A.L. Traill, Edinburgh, 25 July 1900.

⁴⁰ SandArch, 1877.22 (2), 07 April 1877.

⁴¹ SandArch, Ledger 30-1865-1867, p.23, 02 April 1866.

⁴² SandArch, 1867.18, M.B. Duncan: 1877.20 (2), Robert Linklater 20 August 1877; Letter Book 04. 1868-1871 (Uyeasound) p.117, John Smith 04 July 1868.

from medium and then increasingly finer articles. However, examination of the commentaries on worsted in the Truck Inquiry, matched with letters requesting the purchase of fine worsted and ledger entries indicating prices paid to spinners it becomes less clear. What is evident is that there does not appear to be any standardisation with regard to where the medium spun ended and the fine spun began. This confusion with regard to the non-standardisation appears to have also applied to Shetland merchants.

In 1866 Lerwick draper and hosier Robina Leask was specifically sourcing worsted from Unst. Attached in the top corner of a letter to Sandison in Unst, was a small sample of the quality of worsted required (see figure 23), the letter noting that she had been advised he was the best source to procure more.⁴³ The sample is a very fine yarn, and would certainly have been intended for producing very fine work. While there is no record of what she received or what price was paid, two years later in July 1868 she wrote again commenting on the differing qualities of spun yarn available and reiterating the quality of the worsted produced in Unst. Sending her own wool to be issued to Sandison's 'best spinners', she requested that it was to be similar in fineness to his best 5d or 6d worsted.⁴⁴ On receipt of the worsted she informed him that she received 6½d fine worsted but had not wanted it that fine, just good worsted at 5d a cut. Her comment that while it was certainly 'very beautiful' it was 'too fine to be useful' would suggest that the 6½d a cut worsted was finer than the sample sent two years before.⁴⁵



Figure 21: Two-ply worsted sample sent by Robina Leask to Sandison, SandArch, 1868.12. Image author's own.

⁴³ Census, 1861, 1871; SandArch 1866.25: Miss Robina C. Leask, 20 October 1866.

⁴⁴ SandArch, 1868.12: Robina C. Leask, 08 July 1868.

⁴⁵ SandArch, 1868.12: Robina C. Leask, 19 December 1868.

Four years later, during his interview with the Truck Commissioners in 1872, Sandison explained that 6d a cut was a very fine thread that few could spin, but that he had paid as high 7d a cut, which was ‘just like a cobweb’ and even fewer were able to produce.⁴⁶ This raises the question that if, as Robina Leask said, 6½d a cut was too fine to be useful, and 7d a cut was ‘just like cobweb’ just how fine was 8d a cut? The low availability of 7d a cut worsted was reiterated by Inspector of the poor in Fetlar and North Yell, Peter Mouat Sandison, who claimed that 7d a cut was not common and that he had never bought any finer, nor was he aware of it being available.⁴⁷ This sentiment was echoed by Lerwick hosiery merchant Robert Sinclair who commented on the scarcity of fine worsted, noting that when it was obtained it was never resold, but always kept for distribution to their outworker knitters.⁴⁸ It was no doubt rare, but nevertheless produced from the earliest days of the lace industry (see chapter two) until the end of the research period in 1939. In 1935 a Shetland lace shawl was gifted to the duchess of Kent on her wedding. Hand-spun by Ann Sutherland and hand-knitted by Joan Sutherland, the shawl contained 6 miles of two-ply worsted and weighted 2½ ounces. If the measurements recorded are correct the shawl was knitted using worsted spun to the super-fine equivalent of 10.5 cuts per ounce.⁴⁹ Such fine worsted would take a long time to spin, and it is therefore likely that it was only used by the best lace knitters. Possibly not all fine lace knitters would have the experience to work with something so fine and it would therefore be purchased or distributed to those who would not only use it to its best effect but had the ability to do so.

In 1867 Haroldswick merchant John Spence noted that 6d a cut was used in the production of extra fine shawls as did Lerwick fine knitter Barbara Dalzell in 1872 when she told the Truck commissioners that 6d a cut was the finest worsted and it was used for the fine shawls and cloaks.⁵⁰ While 7d and 8d worsted was particularly fine, it appears that the 6d a cut worsted was most commonly used for fine knitting (making it feasible that the 7d and 8d was for superfine lace shawls). Nevertheless this pricing parameter is further confounded. Robert Anderson, shopman to Robert Linklater claimed that fine worsted was from 3-6d a cut and John Walker of Lerwick that a ‘fine’ white shawl was made using 4d a cut worsted.⁵¹ Although Robina Leask noted that the best 3½-4d a cut worsted should be spun of the finest pure Shetland wool but not be a very fine thread, in 1888 Lerwick

⁴⁶ Truck, lines 10,186-10,188.

⁴⁷ Truck, lines 5158, 5180-5183.

⁴⁸ Truck, line 2473.

⁴⁹ *The Scotsman*, 07 January 1935, p.9; *Shetland News*, 10 January 1935.

⁵⁰ SandArch, 1867.27, John Spence 19 January 1867; Truck, line 15,397.

⁵¹ Truck, lines 3180, 15,922.

merchants Laurenson & Co, anticipated that they could procure fine white worsted for 4d a cut.⁵² The expectation of fine worsted at a lower price extended beyond Shetland as in 1890 an Aberdeen customer anticipated getting very fine white Shetland worsted at 3½ or 4d a cut.⁵³

Towards the end of the nineteenth century problems of standardisation of yarn thickness were somewhat alleviated with the rise in sending wool to the British mainland to be spun, although it brought a different set of issues. As production levels of fine knitted lace increased, most likely due to the higher level of income which could be achieved, in 1891 Sandison informed customers requesting the fine worsted that the 'finest wool is eagerly knitted up by the knitters as fast as it can be produced.'⁵⁴ In 1897 the *Shetland Times* reported that wool was being sent south to be spun in mills, but that in doing so the worsted had lost its 'silky appearance' having become harder than had it been hand-spun.⁵⁵

After 1900 there was an increased use of machine spun wool in the production of Shetland knitted articles. Although this was mostly in connection with other forms of Shetland hosiery rather than Shetland lace, it nevertheless made an impact on fine lace production whereby hand-spun became an increasingly rare commodity. In the 1890s agents acting for Henderson's of Spiggie were actively sourcing fleeces to send to the Scottish mainland to be spun. Visiting the Harrow Wool Mill in 1902, J. M. noted the large consignment of wool delivered from Shetland to be spun into 'gossamer like thread' for the 'far-famed Shetland knitters' who sent their wool to be spun and returned to them.⁵⁶ By 1909 Hunters Woollen Mills in Brora had 14 agents operating in Shetland and were actively seeking more.⁵⁷ In 1909 Divisional Inspector of Shetland for the 1909 *Factories and Workshops Report*, Miss Meiklejohn, suggested that the 'inducement of a higher rate for homespun' might encourage a renewed interest in the production of hand-spun worsted. While this certainly may have helped, the increased earnings women could make from working in the fisheries may have made them reluctant to return to the time consuming labour of hand-

⁵² SandArch, 1884.41, Laurenson & Co, 15 February 1884; 1889.27 Robina C. Leisk, 12 January 1889.

⁵³ SandArch, 1890.27 (1), J.S. May, 23 October 1890.

⁵⁴ SandArch, Letter Book 10-1890-1892, p.679, letter from Alex Sandison to Mrs Smith, 04 December 1891.

⁵⁵ ST, 02 January 1897.

⁵⁶ J. M., *The Woollen Trade in Wick, a visit to Harrow Wool Mill* (1902), p.2, p.8. From the Northern Ensign 9 and 16 September 1902, booklet available at < <http://www.ambaile.org.uk/en/page-turning/page.jsp?collection=thewoollentradewick&pageid=0> > [accessed 25 January 2015].

⁵⁷ SA, D25/238/2, Tom Henderson papers, accounts of individuals in Dunrossness 1899-1914; Fryer, *Knitting by the fireside*, p.101.

spinning.⁵⁸ In 1923 the *Shetland Times* reported on the scarcity of wool, stating that merchants were cornering wool to the exclusion of the knitters and in 1924 that so much Shetland wool was being purchased and exported there was insufficient available for the knitters and as such was detrimental to trade in Shetland hosiery.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the demand for and the production of hand-spun worsted for Shetland lace continued.⁶⁰ Possibly those who did continue spinning fine worsted would be most likely to keep their precious commodity for personal use.

Knitting

Although most Shetland women knitted, the production of fine knitted lace involved a special skill set that, like the fine spinners, not all were able, or wanted to master. Knitters who produced the fine lace shawls and veils, stoles, scarves and clouds, curtains and bedspreads possessed an experienced eye (and good eyesight), good arithmetic skills and memory, using patterns and designs that were passed from one generation to the next or learned at the side of a female family member. In this each new generation placed their mark, not only by adapting patterns to suit their own tastes, but by creating new ways of combining old patterns, new patterns and new fashionable styles of finished articles to correspond with ever-changing consumer demands.⁶¹ Warm and protective hap shawls became finer and fancier, intricate patterns taking the place of plainer stitches. Fine knitted and fancy stitched shawls became admired and desired by fashion conscious consumers, and soon the lace stitches found their way into other articles. Utility clothing such as spencers, once hidden away below outer garments, were edged and embellished with the fine lace stitches, finely knitted veils and square lace shawls evolved into rectangular scarves, stoles and clouds and opera cloaks (earliest to date 1872), fitted bed jackets and dresses (1920s-1940s) and gossamer blouses and Shetland lace turbans (1930s-1940s), emulating fashion trends and consumer demands.

Some were able to recreate patterns merely by looking at a knitted item and memorising the design. After emigrating to New Zealand in 1927 Sunniva Priest, a fine lace knitter from Unst, continued to produce, and sell, her Shetland lace shawls. Visiting with 'a lady

⁵⁸ PP 1910 [Cd. 5191] *Factories and workshops*, p.167; Abrams, *Myth and Materiality*, chapter 4, esp. pp.111-117.

⁵⁹ *ST*, 29 December 1923, Shetland in 1923; 03 January 1925, Shetland in 1924.

⁶⁰ *ST*, 02 January 1926, Shetland in 1925.

⁶¹ Rae Compton, *The complete book of traditional knitting* (New York: Dover Publications, 2010, revised edition, first edition 1983), p.47. She calls this variations on a theme.

of standing', Sunniva appeared distracted with little to say to the women present, preferring to gaze at the view behind the lace curtains on the window, until pressed to participate when she declared 'Will ye hold your tongue till I get the pattern of your curtain.'⁶² The 1914 *Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on home industries in the Highlands and Islands* noted that the majority of the lace knitters could not provide details of the patterns they intended to include in the articles they were knitting, rather, 'the design develops during the progress of the work' forming and taking shape during the knitting process.⁶³ The most aesthetically pleasing shawls are those which are intricately designed, combining various motifs in a structured and symmetrical overall pattern that allowed each motif to be clearly visible while being incorporated into the design as a whole. As each individual motif had its own stitch pattern which had to be combined with the stitch patterns of numerous other motifs this involved a very complex set of mathematical arrangements. Furthermore, it was necessary to create this arrangement of motifs in such a way that the knitter did not have to continually increase and decrease stitches. Therefore it is possible that some knitters may have made illustrations or swatches when the design was very intricate and/or new to the designer/producer.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, there is evidence of some shawls being specifically designed. Between 1873 and 1884 Lerwick merchant Robina Leask designed Shetland lace articles, creating styles, shapes and patterns and was prepared to visit the outworker knitters in Unst to ensure they understood her patterns and were able to recreate them.⁶⁵ In this she is the only known Shetland merchant to supply patterns and designs to be reproduced by the knitters. David Sutherland (husband of Ann and brother-in-law of Joan) also designed patterns 'whose talent in this direction [was] so widely known' for Shetland lace in the 1920s. Notably David designed the shawls for both Princess Mary's and the Duchess of Kent's wedding gifts.⁶⁶ David may have been designing patterns for shawls much earlier than this. Written on the back of a postcard illustrating a Sutherland produced lace stole in 1905, David told

⁶² Sunniva Priest quoted in Iris Hughes-Sparrow, 'Mrs Soleva [sic] Priest and Shetland shawls, *The Web*, March 1979, pp.44-45, cited in Heather Nicholson, *The loving Stitch. A History of knitting and spinning in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998), pp.111-112.

⁶³ PP 1914 [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture*, p.85.

⁶⁴ Carol Christiansen, personal communication.

⁶⁵ SandArch Letters from Robina C Leask: 1873.18, 01 October 1873; 1879.32A, 18 October 1879; 1884.41, 24 December 1884.

⁶⁶ SN, 23 February 1922. The Princess Mary's marriage; 10 January 1935, Shetland's gifts to Duke and Duchess of Kent.

his sister-in-law Joan, still living in Unst, 'I may tell you I am well pleased with it' suggesting that he played some part in its production.⁶⁷

That David was a watchmaker may have gone some way in assisting him in his ability to visualise intricate details and patterns.⁶⁸ With his exquisite designs and his wife and sister-in-laws spinning and knitting skills, the Sutherlands produced some of the finest Shetland lace.

Fine knitted lace was always knitted using two knitting needles (or wires) which were held in place by a sheath or knitting belt (see figures 24 and 25). Both performed the same function, to fasten one needle to the knitter's side while the second needle was able to move freely. This support meant that the knitter was able to knit more quickly, and in this was able to produce at a higher rate. It also facilitated knitting while standing up and walking, as often occurred with Shetland knitters, but it is not clear if this ever applied to lace knitters. Shetland sheaths were made by wrapping tapes or cord around a central core of bird feathers and the needle to be supported was embedded into the quill end. Any bird feather would be suitable for creating the sheath, many of which are elaborately decorated. However recent research carried out by Shetland Museum has identified one sheath which has a centre of thinly whittled sticks. Sheaths predate knitting belts and may possibly have been in regular use when wooden knitting needles were commonly used, with knitters opting for the knitting belt with the rise in availability and popularity of the metal knitting needle. Knitting, or 'makkin', belts were made of leather or sealskin with a horsehair stuffed pad with holes to support a knitting needle.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ One of a series of at least nine Sutherland postcards. SM photographic database, photograph numbers 003365, 003367-003372, 003374, 003375. See postcard at top of chapter.

⁶⁸ *Peace's Almanac* 1878, p.150.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Shetland knitter's Notebook*, p.122; Carol Christiansen, 'Getting inside knitting sheaths', *Unkans* 23 (2010), p.4.



Figure 22: Shetland knitting belts, the newer one is from the 1950s, the damaged belt is from the 1930s, SM TEX 1999.20-21, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01355.



Figure 23: Shetland knitting sheaths, SM TEX 1996.267, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01347.

Although dependent upon the circumstances and skill set of the specific knitter, generally producers of Shetland lace had two options available to them: either working independently or as an outworker for a merchant. Working independently came with its own benefits and drawbacks. While independent knitters would need to source their own fine worsted, they could sell their fine knitted articles wherever they could command the best price, but any anticipated sale to a Lerwick merchant would only be accepted if the article arrived in a dressed condition.⁷⁰ In addition to the merchant not wanting the expense of dressing the article, undressed, it would be difficult for any buyer to see flaws in the fine knitted article so this was done to ensure the quality of the article when assigning a monetary value to it.

⁷⁰ See section on cleaning and dressing in this chapter.

Sourcing their own buyer increased the likelihood of ensuring a cash purchase for the article in question and although fine lace knitters had more opportunities to sell for cash, this was not always the case. While a direct transaction with a visitor would secure a cash transaction, sending articles to the British mainland to be sold through merchants or at ‘drawing room exhibitions and sales’ would not always guarantee a sale and additionally might entail a lengthy wait for the item to be returned should it not be sold. On the 9th December 1890, Mrs Mary Lyell, wife of the Liberal M.P. for Shetland and Orkney, was sent two large fine white shawls priced at £4 each which she agreed to sell through her London contacts. However, both shawls were returned unsold one year later on 11 December 1891.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the prospects of a cash sale proportionally increased in relation to the fineness and delicacy of the knitted article.

Rather than having to source a buyer, knitters producing Shetland lace as outworkers were obliged to submit the article to the employer-merchant once knitting was completed. While the practice of knitting for a merchant could secure regular employment it did not necessarily bestow a cash income. In his evidence to the 1872 Truck Inquiry, Robert Anderson, principal shopman to Lerwick merchant Robert Linklater, stated that outworkers were employed in the production of lace goods and that the knitters were ‘generally’ paid in goods.⁷² This would suggest that there were occasions when the lace knitters would receive payment, or partial payment, in monetary terms, but this was not assured. This type of knitting arrangement involved no initial outlay on the part of the knitter as the worsted was supplied by the merchant, who also accepted the returned articles undressed.⁷³ However the knitter’s production of Shetland lace was heavily influenced by the merchant employing them. As selling agents, who hoped to sell most of their acquired Shetland lace to markets in the south, it is easy to see how they would be influenced by the demands of that external market and how they in turn would redirect that influence to their fine knitters by dictating which items were to be produced, not only the size and shape but also the material used in the production. The high demand for fine worsted meant that it was often difficult for the merchant to procure Shetland worsted of any value, never mind of a fine quality. Although fine Shetland worsted was the most commonly desired it was not the only material used in the production of Shetland lace. When merchants were unable to procure Shetland worsted, veils and fine shawls were also knitted in mohair, Pyrenees, silk

⁷¹ SandArch, Letter Book 10-1890-1892, 09 December 1881; 1891.36, 11 December 1891.

⁷² Truck, lines 3150-3152, 3171-3178.

⁷³ Truck, lines 1739-1741, 2120.

and cotton.⁷⁴ Outworker knitters, wishing to remain in the employ of the merchant, would be obliged to use the material supplied. In July 1859 Unst merchant Sandison distributed mohair to his outworker knitters to knit veils, noting how much mohair was supplied and how many veils were returned. From this it can be calculated that between $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of mohair was used per veil.⁷⁵ In May 1861 he received an order for 20 dozen 'perfect mohair veils, according to pattern laid aside', and one silk veil.⁷⁶ The popularity of Shetland knit mohair veils continued through the 1870s and therefore, like Shetland fine worsted, the merchants kept the mohair for their outworkers only.⁷⁷ By 1889 the requests were for mohair Shetland falls (like veils only larger) and increasingly specific in the style of pattern desired, one request noting that they wanted very fine falls in grey native wool and mohair, square and circular in shape with 'eyelit' and 'spider' patterns only.⁷⁸ Pyrenees worsted was also distributed for the production of Shetland lace. In a letter to Sandison in 1879 Laurenson & Co, Shetland Warehousemen in Lerwick noted:

The prettiest this we have just now is a white lace shawl in the finest Pyrenees wool – not Shetland but equal in fineness to the very best Shetland thread. It is beautiful work and much clearer than our own wool can be made to look. The knitting is very choice, and altogether it is a shawl which in Shetland we would give £5 or £6 for. Indeed we have not had an equally choice one in pure Shetland for about a year and do not think we will have one soon. We have plenty real Shetland from 16/- to 70/- but the highest prices of these is not half as good as the one we name above barring always it not being pure. You can have it at 50/- if you wish it. Retail and to one who did not know the difference or care about the difference, it must be sold at £3,10 or £4. Of course we explain the thing to you fully, but many in this trade don't think themselves called on to enlighten retail customers as to pure or imitation Shetland wool. We have a beautiful white China silk half square in Shetland work at 70/- wholesale.⁷⁹

It is clear that they considered the Pyrenees worsted to be equal to the task of producing a particularly fine lace shawl, but considered it perfectly acceptable to omit any reference to it being knitted in non-Shetland worsted. Lerwick merchant Robert Sinclair also considered Pyrenees worsted acceptable for producing fine shawls, but declared to the Truck Commission that he always informed the consumer when Shetland wool was not

⁷⁴ Truck, lines 2224-2232, 2463-2464, 2470, 3221-3224, 9739, 9754; Census 1901, 1911.

⁷⁵ SandArch, 1859.10, Account book of hosiery given out to knit.

⁷⁶ SandArch, 1861.22, John Leisk, 13 May 1861.

⁷⁷ Truck, line 2471.

⁷⁸ SandArch, 1879.32A, 13 December 1879; 1889.25, Howard Hardy, London, 28 November 1889.

⁷⁹ SandArch, 1873.18, 02 October 1873.

used.⁸⁰ Also of note in the Laurensen letter is the offer of a China silk half square in Shetland work. Silk was regularly used in the production of Shetland lace and could command prices equal, if not higher, to fine Shetland worsted articles. In the early 1870s Joan Ogilvy of Baltasound, Unst received 25/- to 30/- for knitting silk shawls, although contended they took a long time to knit and in 1886 Mary Jane Sutherland, Unst received £4/10 for a silk lace shawl.⁸¹ British mainland businesses also sent Silk to Shetland merchants with the express purpose of it being issued to outworkers to be knitted. Sending two ounces of black silk in 1892, Munro & Co. requested two veils to be knitted:

One ounce into ordinary sized circular veil with a very small neat pattern. The other ounce into a square veil 33 inches long by 15 inches deep with only a small edging similar to this [drawing of a wavy line]. We enclose a veil which our customer thought was as fine looking a pattern as could be done but you are the best judge.⁸²

The popularity of this order prompted Munro & Co. to continue in the same vein, sending silk to be knitted to a specific size, 'not any less', 18 inches deep by 36 inches long.⁸³ Here Munro & Co. are not only supplying the material to be used but also the pattern to be followed leaving the knitters only to produce it. Munro's veils may be considered to exert both internal and external influences on the knitters. As the silk was being sent by a tertiary selling agent it would generally be considered an external influence, but to continue as an outworker for Sandison the knitters had no option but to comply with the directions set by him, making the influence simultaneously internal.

The naming of any lace knitter, noted for the excellence of her work, is a rare find, and even rarer to be able to compile a satisfactory narrative of the knitter from snippets of information gleaned from a variety of sources. In the twentieth century the names of fine knitters are listed as winners in the Highland Show's knitting competitions and some are intermittently named in newspaper articles. However, these tend to be the best knitters, having entered and won a competition for knitting. Many of the first, second and even third generation Shetland lace knitters, like the spinners of fine worsted, may remain invisible in the documentary record. There are the occasional exceptions. In a 1879 letter to Alexander Sandison, Lerwick merchant Robina Leask referred to three Unst knitters of excellence: Ann and Joan Nisbet and Robina Spence, noting the beauty of the shawls they

⁸⁰ Truck, line 2476.

⁸¹ Truck, lines 9739, 9754; SandArch 1886.40C, 17 March 1886.

⁸² SandArch, 1892.30 (2), 14 March 1892.

⁸³ SandArch, 1903.17, 14 March 1903.

produced and stating the price to be paid for each for shawls she bought from them: 26/- to Ann and Joan and 26/-and 30/- to Robina Spence.⁸⁴ An additional lace knitter not named in Robina's letter but recorded in Sandison's reply was C. Sandison.⁸⁵ Further names of the best Unst knitters appear in correspondence. In 1888 Thomas Sandison named Ann Nisbet, Gritquoy, Uyeasound; Mrs William Smith, Failzie, Westing, Uyeasound; Charlotte Sandison, Gunnister, Uyeasound and in 1890 Alexander Sandison named Joan Sutherland (née Nisbet), Ann Nisbet and Charlotte Sandison to be the best knitters in Unst.⁸⁶ The repetition of particular names in correspondence over an eleven year period illustrates the staying power of the finest knitters. Of note with the exception of Charlotte Sandison who is listed as a veil knitter, none of these knitters are listed in the census records as producers of fine knitted lace. Furthermore, with the exception of Ann and Joan Nisbet none of them have been previously identified as fine knitted lace producers. While this may be partly due to the recording methods by the census enumerators (see introduction), there is also the possibility that they considered their knitting as a secondary employment.

In some instances, such as with Ann and Joan Nisbet, a positive identification can be relatively easy. Much of Ann and Joan's knitting career, for that really appears to be what they actually had, is relatively well documented. The Nisbet sisters of Colvidale, Unst, married the Sutherland brothers, of Gritquoy, Unst, later moving to Chromate Lane in Lerwick. From around the 1890s the Nisbet/Sutherland women kept a photographic record of their fine knitted lace articles which were then used as postcards. Many images appear to have the intention of showing fine knitting patterns to its best advantage, shawls hanging over rails and on dressing frames.⁸⁷ Between them they produced some of the finest known knitted lace to leave Shetland, much of which was presented to royalty or won prizes at the Highland Shows and it is perhaps no surprise that their names are so frequently mentioned in Sandison correspondence.⁸⁸ However in other cases identifying knitters is less straightforward. There are various C. Sandisons in Unst, and as such she may be identified as one of a number of people. Later letters identify Charlotte Sandison as one of the finest knitters in Unst, and may refer to the initial C. Sandison. Sandison's ledgers, although incomplete, has accounts for two knitters named Charlotte Sandison, one

⁸⁴ SandArch, 1879.32, September 10 and December 31 1879; 1880.11B, March 31 1880.

⁸⁵ SandArch, Letter Book 7-1877-1881 (Uyeasound), p.533, 20 August 1879.

⁸⁶ SandArch, Letter Book 9-1888-1890 (Uyeasound), p.250, 26 October 1888; 10-1890-1892, p.31, 28 July 1890.

⁸⁷ SM, photographic database.

⁸⁸ SandArch, 1879.32 10 September and 31 December, 1879; 1880.11B, 31 March 1880; Letter Book 9-1888-1890 (Uyeasound), p.250, 26 October 1888.

from Colvidale and the other from Gunnister, both of whom regularly commanded high prices for their work. The dates for accepting work from them overlap and as such it is clear that this is not the same person who has moved home.

The account for Charlotte of Colvidale shows a limited trade with Sandison in knitwear, only three known entries between 16 April 1877 and 25 November 1879, a time period which fits well with the letter to Robina Leask.⁸⁹ Three ledger entries do not necessarily indicate a low level of production as it is possible she sold her fine shawls independently, or through a different merchant. However it is the inclusion of her name in another knitter's account which is of note, where Charlotte is credited with 12/6 for payment for knitting half a shawl along with Catherine B. Sutherland in 1879, although this only appears in Catherine's account and only the monetary value is mentioned in Charlotte's.⁹⁰ Although Ann and Joan Nisbet had a joint account at Sandison's Uyeasound shop and they are known to have worked together to produce fine knitted lace articles, it is not clear if this was the case in 1877, or if their two names on the account was merely a matter of convenience.⁹¹ Therefore, the first definitive account entry illustrating women working together in the production of a fine knitted item is that of Charlotte and Catherine in 1879, although further 'mini knitting networks' are recorded later.

Nevertheless it is Charlotte Sandison of Gunnister who is the more likely candidate as the named fine knitter in the correspondence. The first record available is 1867 where the ledger shows her providing a shawl for Sandison priced £1.⁹² After which she makes a further eighteen appearances from 1875 to 1882, a couple of which are worthy of note. Between 13 March 1878 and 04 December 1878, Charlotte's account was credited with £10/4/- which relates to three shawls, the first a fine lace shawl at £3/15/- (13 March), the second a cash credit from a 'lady for shawl £3,19/- (21 June), and by 'one shawl to pattern' £2,10/- (4 December).⁹³ From this we can see that in addition to selling her goods directly to the consumer, Charlotte operated her account at the Sandison Store in two ways: by selling her knitwear directly to him and by acting as an outworker producing articles to order following a set pattern provided. Robina Leask regularly provided patterns to be knitted up by Sandison's best knitters. A ledger entry for 1880 shows a shawl returned by

⁸⁹ SandArch, Ledger 45-1876-1880, p.143.

⁹⁰ SandArch, Cash Book 26-1861-1868 & 1875-1880, p.117, 25 November 1879.

⁹¹ SandArch, Ledger 45-1876-1880, p.74, 01 September 1877.

⁹² SandArch, Ledger-30-1865-1867, p.436, 22 June 1867.

⁹³ SandArch, Ledger 45-1876-1880, p.30, p.248.

Robina Leask as ‘returned’ to Charlotte’s account and from this it is reasonable to infer that Charlotte was the C. Sandison knitting for Robina Leask in Lerwick in 1879-80, but was not offered a cash payment for the shawl.⁹⁴

All the above examples are women, however Shetland men also knitted, although it is impossible to know how many of them participated at any one time or knitted lace. The census records show that from 1851-1901 there were only 11 individual males who recorded their occupation as knitters: seven under 15 years of age, one of 70, leaving three adult men. One of these men is James Moar. On 17 May 1881 James Moar, of Uyeasound, Unst, on the advice of local merchant Alex Sandison, wrote an unsolicited letter to a Lady.⁹⁵ In the letter he explains that he is an invalid who is supported by his sisters and to contribute to the household he has taken up the task of ‘female work’ and knitted up worsted that was spun by his sister. He explained he was forwarding the knitted article[s] to the Lady in the hope of a sale. It is unclear if he did indeed effect a sale, but it seems unlikely as the letter was found during the 1988 refurbishment of the old Sandison shop in Uyeasound, Unst. In 1885 James had a hosiery account with Sandison, there are only two known ledger entries and it is impossible to know what he produced.⁹⁶ Born in Gutcher, North Yell in 1856, the 1891 census identifies him as a knitter and in both the 1901 and 1911 censuses he is listed as a ‘lace knitter, of wool, silk and cotton’. On 10 October 1908, Peter Jopp wrote a short article in the *Shetland Times* on various items of fine knitted lace produced in the Uyeasound area of Unst, naming the knitter, the purchaser and noting the average cost. Tantalisingly, there is a comment on an unnamed male fine lace knitter:

...[the second finest] was, strange to say, knitted by a gentleman, residing in the same vicinity. It may be interesting to state that this gentleman, who has seen the life span of three score and ten years, has often knitted shawls to titled ladies...⁹⁷

The wording makes it clear that, for Jopp at least, a male lace knitter was somewhat unusual. In 1908 James would have been 52, somewhat short of the three score and ten that Jopp mentions in the article, however, the location of the knitter is correct and there is

⁹⁴ SandArch, Ledger 64-1880-1882, p.92, 24 March 1880.

⁹⁵ Unst Heritage Centre, U134, letter from James Moar, 17 May 1881.

⁹⁶ SandArch, Ledger 97-1885-1898, p.35, 28 October and December 1885.

⁹⁷ ST, 10 October 1908.

no evidence of another male lace knitter. Furthermore, in July 1914, James took first prize in the Highland Industries competition for the production of a fine white Shetland shawl.⁹⁸

Difficult as it is to identify fine lace knitters, matching a knitter with a fine knitted article is yet more problematic. With fine knitters such as Ann and Joan Sutherland (née Nisbet), the photographs play a vital role in this task. More commonly it is only possible to join fragments of information to create a reasonably satisfactory narrative. For example, on the 17th of February 1886 the knitting account for Jane Sandison of Muness is credited with 70/- for a Shetland lace cloak.⁹⁹ The 1881 and 1899 census records have only one Jane Sandison, knitter, listed for Unst and although neither list her as living at Muness the enumeration district is the same.¹⁰⁰ The dating of this transaction in the ledger book coincides with the supply of a Shetland Opera Cloak to John White & Co, Shetland Warehouse, Edinburgh, an article requested for inclusion in the 1886 Edinburgh Exhibition.¹⁰¹ Although the whereabouts of the cloak is not known, or even if it survives, we do have a direct response from the primary purchaser commenting on the quality of a fine knitted item produced by a known fine lace knitter:

On the whole are slightly disappointed, the cloak is good quality, and as you say might have been finer, but the shape is not full enough in front but for the exhibition that will not matter as much perhaps as that defect may be concealed....The Tassel and Cord of the cloak can easily be made right: it will be in real Shetland wool as we prefer to have it all native manufacture...¹⁰²

Jane received 70/- for knitting the opera cloak, but there is no indication of how long it took her to produce. Some fine knitters were able to make a reasonable living from their knitting. Between 19 February 1886 and 27 April 1888 (a period of 26 months) Charlotte Sandison of Gunnister received credits to her shop account amounting to £27/04/6 through the supply of shawls and 'super fine' veils, a not inconsiderable income, and certainly higher than what could be expected to be earned through hosiery supply, even supplemented with herring work during the fishing season or by shop work or domestic

⁹⁸ *Dundee Courier & Argus*, 25 July 1914.

⁹⁹ SandArch, Ledger 97-1885-1898, p.59, 17 February 1886.

¹⁰⁰ Census, 1841, 1891.

¹⁰¹ SandArch, 1886.48A, 04 March 1886.

¹⁰² SandArch, 1886.48A, 04 March 1886.

service.¹⁰³ This is particularly notable considering there is an interim period of 14 months with no payment into the account.

Households with a low cash income, especially all female households, would have to consider the benefits of producing Shetland lace with a high monetary value but an extensive production period against a lower value article of less fineness or lower quality which could be produced in a much shorter time and as such provide a more regular income. A fine shawl of reasonable quality would take around one month to produce while the finest shawls could take six months or longer.¹⁰⁴ Marion Nisbet produced a particularly fine Shetland lace shawl, valued at £40, which took the best part of two years to produce.¹⁰⁵ There are at least three levels of knitted lace: lace, fine lace and superfine lace but they are not always priced accordingly. Some 'lace' is more expensive than 'fine lace' and some 'superfine' less expensive than 'fine'. From this it may be assumed that the difference between these is the fineness of the worsted and the size of the article. Alternatively it may be a question of quality whereby damaged articles or those containing flaws were sold cheaper rather than have them lying in stock. There is, of course, the possibility that this may be an indication of a deliberate attempt to entice consumers from lower income brackets. Analysis of knitting accounts illustrates that Shetland lace producers did indeed produce articles of varying qualities and price ranges. Over a period of ten months, between 20 November 1879 and 09 August 1880, Catherine Winwick of Broomhill, Unst took six shawls valued between 20/- and 40/- to the Sandison shop. In the middle of this period, March 1880, she also supplied a lower quality shawl valued at 11/6.¹⁰⁶ Similarly Jane Sandison of Colvidale, Unst produced a shawl on 3 April 1880 valued at 12/2½ between producing fine knitted lace shawls valued at 50/- (25 November 1879) and 40/- (13 June 1881).¹⁰⁷

It has been cited that producers of fine knitted lace were solely occupied in the production of fine knitted articles and did not need to participate in other work for fear of damaging

¹⁰³ SandArch, Ledger 97-1885-1898, p.39, 19 February, 12 March & 16 October 1886; 12 February 1887; p.197, 27 April 1888.

¹⁰⁴ Truck, lines 1895-99, 11,537-8; SandArch Letter Book 5-1871-1875, p.604, letter to John Airth, 26 May 1874; Letter Book 6-1875-1877, p.212, 28 October 1875.

¹⁰⁵ SA, D1/135/p.178. James Shand scrapbook, The Shetland knitter at home II – (publication and date unknown, but next around 1900 due to comment about the forthcoming Paris Exhibition).

¹⁰⁶ SandArch, Ledger 45-1876-1880, p.84, 20 November 1879, 1 shawl 22/-, 12 December 1879, half shawl 25/-; Ledger 64-1880-1882, p.77, 19 March 1880, 1 shawl 11/6, 13 May 1880, half of shawl 32/6, 17 May 1880, half share of shawl 20/-, 02 August 1880, half price of shawl 40/-.

¹⁰⁷ SandArch, Ledger 45-1876-1880, p.147, 25 November 1879, 1 sup shawl 50/-; Ledger 64-1880-1882, p.93, 03 April, 1 shawl 12/2½ and 13 June 1880, 1 shawl £2/0/10.

their hands which would affect their ability to produce the very fine work.¹⁰⁸ However an examination of the ledger accounts of two known fine lace knitters, Charlotte Sandison of Colvidale, Unst and Charlotte Sandison of Gunnister, Unst, illustrates that this is not the case and that they supplemented the household economy with alternative occupations.¹⁰⁹ In addition to producing some of the finest knitted lace in Unst Charlotte from Colvidale also worked at herring gutting in 1879 and Charlotte from Gunnister, who regularly commanded between £1 and £7 for her work also supplemented her income in 1875 from cutting peat.¹¹⁰ Both of these occupations could be detrimental to the hands.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, it does not appear to have stopped either of the knitters producing fine Shetland lace. In this it might also be considered that the monetary income of other fine lace knitters, as well as spinners and dressers, income is likely to have come from multiple sources.

Nevertheless, the knitters maintained a degree of control over their production. On 22 September 1875, responding to an enquiry from A. T. Stewart over the delay in dispatching an order, Unst merchant, Sandison wrote that he found it:

...considerably difficult to get the goods made to pattern at the prices quoted, indeed some of the knitters have refused to make them as they are getting higher prices for the same quality in other patterns and have had to refuse orders.¹¹²

Undeterred, A. T. Stewart wrote again a month later in an attempt to have the order delivered. They were unsuccessful but Sandison's response on 28 October is telling:

I fear I cannot undertake to make up a large order to sample. You are no doubt aware that none of the manufacturers of Shetland hosiery have any control over their knitters, the girls take the work to their own homes and some of them make it out of their own material in this way we can never calculate when the work will come back.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ For example, Don, *Art of Shetland Lace*, pp.10-11; McGregor, *Traditional knitting*, p.43; Nixon, 'Cobwebs on Unst', pp.20-21, p.20. There are many more examples.

¹⁰⁹ SandArch, Letter Book (10)1890-1892, p.31, letter to Mrs Mary Lyell, 28 July 1890: Letter Book 9-1888-1890, p.250, letter to Mary Lyell, 26 October 1888.

¹¹⁰ SandArch, Ledger 45-1876-1880, p.143, payment for herring gutting 12 February 1879: Ledger 54-1874-1875, p.187, payment to account by peat, 04 August 1875.

¹¹¹ Abrams, *Myth and Materiality*, pp.113-114.

¹¹² SandArch, Letter Book 06-1875-1877 (Uyeasound), p.172, 22 September 1875

¹¹³ SandArch, Letter Book 06-1875-1877 (Uyeasound), p.209, 28 October 1875.

Sandison was not the only merchant to experience the force of the agency of the knitter. In 1932 the Shetland Woollen Industries Association held an 'original design' competition where the winning entry would be knitted as a new fashion item and sold through the Shetland merchants to businesses on the British mainland. However, while conceding the winning garment 'possessed certain merits', *The Scotsman* noted that the 'knitters were unwilling, or unable, to reproduce it; consequently, it could not be given a fair trial on the market'.¹¹⁴

Fine lace knitters relied on a steady supply of fine worsted to produce their articles and for many it would be necessary to procure the fine worsted either directly from spinners or from one of the Shetland merchants. However the production of fine knitted lace did not occur in a vacuum, but formed part of a wider knitting industry in which it was necessary to vie for available natural resources, not only with other fine knitters but also with local merchants who attempted to procure the fine worsted for use by their outworker knitters.¹¹⁵ Joan and Ann Nisbet were accomplished fine spinners and rated amongst the finest lace knitters in Shetland. As well as producing their own fine worsted they purchased it from a local merchant and received it from Robina Leask, a Lerwick merchant, to be knitted up. Here the independent fine lace knitters were not only working with a finite source material and a restricted number of accomplished spinners able to produce worsted fine enough for their needs, but also a commodity which if not home produced could only be obtained as a cash purchase. Credit facilities with the local merchants meant that knitters could have credit for goods held in the shop but not for worsted and so without cash fine knitters would need to find alternative sources.¹¹⁶ While many of the fine lace knitters were in the position to exact a cash payment for their articles, the receipt of such payments was reliant upon the quantity and quality of the lace produced. Although lace shawls regularly reached between £3 and £5, they took a long time to produce. A £5 payment may initially appear to be a high recompense, but it might be for six month's work with no interim cash payments. Economic factors, notably those of the household economy, would have played an important part in internal influences on production. For some women working in the fine lace knitting industry alternative sources of income may have been available, such as through husbands who earned enough to support the family or a family member who was able to provide for them. In such households it is possible that the producers could obtain

¹¹⁴ W. F. C., *The Scotsman*, 24 December 1932, p.8.

¹¹⁵ SandArch, Ledger 45-1876-1880, p.74, 30 October 1879; p.74, 27 November 1878.

¹¹⁶ Many Shetland merchants did not sell the fine worsted they procured, even for cash, preferring to keep it for exclusive use by their outworkers.

the fine worsted and dedicate their time to producing high value articles. However for others the household economy would play a major role in dictating the quantity and quality of goods produced. They nevertheless had options, and could actively choose how to manage their production, whether by working as an independent knitter, an outworker knitter, or both simultaneously.

Identifying previously unknown lace knitters allows a fuller analysis of the temporal and geographic spread of the lace producers, contributing to a better understanding of the extent of the industry. However, it must be noted that due to the bias in business ledger survival in the majority of cases these are in relation to Unst production. Similarly, many of the Shetland lace competition winners were from Unst or Lerwick, which does to some degree confirm the analysis of lace knitters interviewed for the 1872 Truck Commission. Even so, while it is not always possible to gain a complete understanding of the impact that lace knitting had on any individual's life, the Sandison ledger records names of knitters who would otherwise have been lost, women who do not self-identify, or are not identified by the enumerator, in the census records as fine knitters and who make no other documentary appearance. Where there are numerous entries it becomes possible to piece together the working lives of the producers and note areas of Shetland which appear to have greater numbers of fine lace knitters. These enhanced narratives illustrate that many of the lace producers knitted in a variety of qualities and fineness, most likely as a means to enhance household income. Also of note is the recognition that many of the previously held opinions are incorrect or exaggerated, such as Shetland lace knitters were not permitted to work at anything else for fear of damaging their hands.

Washing/Dressing

Whether a knitter was selling a fine knitted article to a local merchant, a visitor to the islands, or sending it south to the British mainland, it was necessary to have the article dressed prior to any selling arrangement being made. Undressed, Shetland lace would not necessarily be instantly recognisable as being Shetland lace: however the weight of the garment would be light, the fineness of the yarn clear to the eye, and flattening and stretching a small section would show the detail of the pattern used. In the 1895 *Scottish Home Industries* Provost Alexander Ross commented on what appeared to be a 'dirty uninviting bundle' open up into 'a very fine specimen of Shetland knitting'.¹¹⁷ But it is not

¹¹⁷ Provost Alexander Ross, *Scottish Home Industries*, (Glasgow: Molendinar Press, 1895), pp.28-29.

until the article is dressed that the full extent of the beauty of, or the flaws in, its manufacture can be determined. Expert dressing accentuates the often perfect symmetry of the knitted pattern, the evenness of the yarn and the delicacy of the stitch.

Correspondingly it can also make graphically conspicuous the inexperienced or undisciplined knitter and any inconsistencies in the fineness and colour of the worsted. In this a good dressing technique would simultaneously perform a step in quality control. The process of dressing highlighted flaws in the article which would require correction or repair. Stretching the article highlighted any weak points in the spinning, which could cause yarn breaks, the knitting to 'run' and holes to suddenly appear which would need to be mended prior to being sent to the merchant or consumer.¹¹⁸

Washing and dressing Shetland lace was the final step in the production process. Regardless of the skill of the spinner and knitter, the final quality of a fine knitted lace item would not become apparent until it was washed and dressed. Indeed a perfectly knitted item could be rendered unsellable if washing and dressing were not carried out by expert hands. As such, washers and dressers played a vital role in the fine knitted lace industry in Shetland. The business of washing and dressing involved various steps: washing the knitted items, whitening them with brimstone or sulphur, and stretching them to even dimensions on frames or on the grass, mending them where the stitches had given way when stretched and making them ready for the market.¹¹⁹ Once knitting was complete a fine knitted article was washed and rinsed ready to be placed in a smoking barrel which was used for whitening and fumigating. In the bottom of the barrel an iron pot was placed on top of red hot peat. Across the top of the barrel two clean sticks were positioned over which the article was hung; this was covered with a clean sheet and then a heavier blanket to hold the garment in place and to keep the smoke inside the barrel. Once these steps were carried out rock sulphur (brimstone) was placed into the iron pot and the barrel sealed. The smoke produced by the heating of the rock sulphur whitened the article. After four hours the article was removed, shaken out and the process repeated. This was followed by rinsing in lukewarm water with a little 'blue' and starch. Blue, or bluing, was used in laundering to whiten the fine lace knitted articles. As burn water was often used when cleaning the knitted garments this whitening was probably necessary in part due to the exceptionally peaty nature of burn water.

¹¹⁸ Truck, line 1872; Carol Christiansen, personal correspondence.

¹¹⁹ Truck, lines 1732-1784.

Once cleaned the article was ready to be dressed. First the item was stitched around the edges with a narrow cord, possibly cotton or wool, and then the item was gently stretched by placing the cord around pegs inserted into the edges of a wooden frame. This accounts for the perfect shaping on almost all of the lace edges on extant fine knitted lace articles as the cord sewing went in and out of these points which ‘sharpened’ them.¹²⁰ This process also allowed the dresser to see the full extent of the article and to manipulate the stretching process to ensure symmetrical alignment of patterns.

Articles could also be pegged on the grass to dry, or in the case of Sunniva Priest in New Zealand, on the sandy beach.¹²¹ However while there are records of haps being dressed on grass in Shetland, there are none showing Shetland lace being dressed in this way.

Some fine knitters would be fortunate in that they were able to clean and dress their finished articles themselves, but for others the services of an experienced dresser would have been required. Many women would have been known for their skill in cleaning and dressing fine knitted articles and may have been able to maintain a sufficiently established client base to suit their economic needs. Others actively marketed their services in publications such as *Manson’s Almanac*, the business directory for Shetland. The Almanac separated the islands into districts and then sub-categorised by type of business: however it is only within the Lerwick District directory that dressers and cleaners are listed. As there would have been a charge for inclusion in the directory there is the possibility that the absence of listed dressing businesses outside the Lerwick district meant it was not considered a cost effective way of securing new business. Even taking into consideration the census records, advertising, business ledgers and correspondence, it is impossible to determine the number of women working in the dressing business at any one time, and in most instances whether they dealt with fine knitted lace items or other forms of knitting. Dressers and cleaners of Shetland hosiery appear in the first edition of *Manson’s Almanac* in 1892 with three businesses included in the directory. From 1892 to 1939 there are some which make a regular appearance, for example: Mrs Gifford (1892-1918); Mrs Hurlock (1906-1925); Mrs P. Isbister (1913-1931, possibly 1939); and Miss Ollason (1912-1939). Between 1892 and 1939 the number of businesses listed in any one year ranged between three and eight. Several of these operated for many years and some underwent name changes such as P. E. Petrie, based in Lerwick’s Albany Street and then Charlotte Lane,

¹²⁰ Compton, ‘*traditional knitting*’, p.126.

¹²¹ Truck, line 1734; Nicholson, *The loving Stitch*.pp.111-112; Smith and Bunyan, *Shetland Knitter’s Notebook*, pp.29-30.

from at least 1891 until 1902, at which point the business name changed to Mrs Petrie until 1937.¹²² The continuous nature of these listings suggests that this was a secure and profitable venture for the individuals involved.

Although the Almanac only accounts for those dressers willing to pay the fee to be listed in the directory and thus is not an indicator of the true number of dressers in the islands, it is interesting to note the peak years for the business. From the first edition in 1892 to 1902 there was a slow but steady rise in the number of dressing businesses listed, reaching a peak of seven to eight between 1903 and 1908, all within the Lerwick district. This period is a time when it was anticipated, but not actualised, that all knitters, not just those producing fine knitted lace, were being paid in cash for their work.¹²³ A further peak occurred between 1913 and 1918, a period when production of fine knitted lace would have been reduced and is most likely the result of additional utility clothing being knitted for soldiers such as socks, balaclavas, etc. This might suggest that more articles were being produced during this time, or that more knitters were using the professional service rather than dressing themselves. Alternatively, the lure of a steady and immediate cash income rather than waiting up to six months to produce and receive payment for a fine knitted shawl may have contributed to the increase in the number of dressers offering their services. In 1872 Andrina Anderson, a Lerwick dresser, took up dressing because she needed cash and recognised that this was a means of having a cash income.¹²⁴ Dressing would have been a lucrative occupation to be in and without doubt, pre and post Truck Act, the potential of obtaining a cash income would have encouraged others to participate in the dressing business. The essential work of dressers may have given them significant standing within the communities in which they lived. It was also an occupation carried out by women. Between 1837 and 1939 there is only one record of a male dresser, Peter E. Petrie, operating from at least 1891 until 1902. Although *Manson's Almanac* lists Peter as a 'Dresser and Cleaner of Shetland hosiery', the 1891 and 1901 census records him simply as a hosier. Whether Peter actually cleaned and dressed articles is unknown and the directory listing under his name may simply be due to his being head of the household. Nevertheless, a photograph made into a postcard of the Petrie family dressing shawls has Peter in the background, winding the cord around a peg on the board (see figure 26).

¹²² *Manson's Almanac*, 1892-1938.

¹²³ The James Clark Archive indicates barter-truck was still in operation at his shop until 1933. Possibly some lace knitters were still participating in the barter-truck system, but as yet I have no direct evidence to confirm or negate this.

¹²⁴ Truck, lines 3495, 3504-3505.



Figure 24: Postcard showing the Petrie family with Peter in the background (originally from Snarravoe, Unst) dressing shawls, image courtesy of SMA, photograph Z00235.



Figure 25: Detail of Petrie family dressing haps illustrating how many shawls were dressed on one stretcher board, image courtesy of SMA, photograph R02678.

The images of the Petrie family show them primarily dressing haps and of interest is the number of shawls which are dressed on one board. Figure 27 illustrates a detail of the image in which it can be seen that at least four haps are being dressed simultaneously. Although it is unclear whether this also happened with fine knitted lace shawls, there is a

board containing what appears to be least one fine lace shawl positioned behind and slightly to the left of Peter.

Although articles supplied to Lerwick merchants, or sent to individual customers and markets in the south would need to be dressed prior to shipping, there are indications that goods sent between Shetland merchants would arrive undressed. Lerwick draper and hosier Robert Linklater, returned two veils to Unst merchant Sandison, noting that when dressed they were found to be ‘badly mothed’.¹²⁵ This might go some way to understanding why the advertised cleaners and dressers are Lerwick based, where the majority of Shetland knitted goods businesses were operating.¹²⁶ Dressers provided an indispensable service directly to the knitter, to the merchants or simultaneously to both. Like the spinners of fine and superfine worsted, dressers, whether dressing articles for independent knitters or merchants, were in a position to command cash payment for the services they supplied. Indeed, fine lace knitters who dressed their own articles were compensated for that service along with the knitted article.¹²⁷ Self-employed dressers, such as Helen Flaus, worked solely for independent knitters and on a cash-only basis.¹²⁸ Others, such as Ann Arcus, worked primarily for independent knitters, but also for merchants, offering their services on a cash basis. Although exceptions were occasionally made and credit given until the article in question was sold, those living some distance away from the dresser would at times have difficulty in obtaining such credit.¹²⁹ Living some 16 miles from Lerwick Sarah and Robina Leisk (Leask) had not been able to secure credit from Lerwick dresser Ann Arcus for dressing their shawls.¹³⁰ Dressers working directly for a merchant would receive articles to be dressed and then return them to the shop once the dressing had been carried out. In 1872 Helen Arcus was employed as a dresser by Robert Linklater, a Lerwick merchant, and was regularly given shawls, veils and neckties to dress and then return to the Linklater hosiery shop where a line was given for the work carried out.¹³¹ On producing this line at the Linklater grocery shop she received payment in cash

¹²⁵ SandArch 1866.25 Linklater, Robert, Lerwick, letter to Alex Sandison 6 November 1866.

¹²⁶ *Manson's Almanac*, 1892-1939.

¹²⁷ Truck, line 3220.

¹²⁸ Truck, lines 1976-1977, 2022.

¹²⁹ Truck, lines 1732-1784.

¹³⁰ Truck, lines 1374-1378.

¹³¹ Ann Arcus and Helen Arcus do not appear to be related.

or goods as she requested. Any balance was marked in the ledger book, from which she could request further cash or goods at any time.¹³²

Dressers could often find themselves handling the same fine knitted article on various occasions. As noted, articles needed to be dressed prior to an initial sale to allow the full value of the item to be determined. Should the buyer require the item but in a different colour, it would be sent for dyeing, after which it required redressing and possibly repairing should threads be broken in the dyeing process.¹³³ In addition to this, fine knitted lace was regularly returned to Shetland to be cleaned and redressed, occasionally with requests that the article be repaired at the same time.¹³⁴ Sending a grey shawl on behalf of a customer in 1881, John White, Shetland Warehouse, Edinburgh explained it had ‘met with an accident haven fallen over a large burner, and 4 rather large holes, wants to know if can match the wool and have the holes knitted in again.’¹³⁵ It is unknown if the repair was successful, however a cloud (similar to a stole) sent for repair in 1892 proved beyond the skill of Margaret Spence who declared:

I am sorry I can make nothing of this cloud. I mended every hole that was on it when I got it so that it was quite whole. But when I put it in the wash it just fell to pieces as you see it. So I can do no more with it.¹³⁶

Ladies’ columns in national newspapers recommended returning articles to Shetland to be cleaned and redressed while many Shetland businesses used the back page of their price lists to disseminate instructions for the care and cleaning of fine knitted articles.¹³⁷ This also acted as a reminder to customers that as great care was necessary when washing shawls and other finely knitted articles the best course of action, at a small cost, was to return the item(s) to Shetland for appropriate and competent cleaning and re-dressing. Unfortunately the price lists are undated making it impossible to know if they follow a chronological sequence however those price lists which can be dated to the first quarter of the twentieth century illustrate varying levels of service offered. In the mid 1920s, Andrina Aitken kept it simple, offering ‘goods cleaned at moderate prices’, Miss Johnston, enjoying alliteration stated ‘Shetland lace goods repaired, redressed and returned by post’;

¹³² Truck, lines 3072-3074, 3204.

¹³³ There are examples in the Sandison Archive, but it is not clear if the shawls to be dyed are fine lace.

¹³⁴ There are numerous examples of this in the incoming letters boxes of the Sandison Archive.

¹³⁵ SandArch, 1881.54, John White, Shetland Warehouse, Edinburgh, 15 January 1881.

¹³⁶ SandArch, 1892.34, Margaret Spence, Unst, 1892.

¹³⁷ *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post, Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury, Preston Guardian, Wrexham Advertiser and North Wales News*, all 03 January 1891.

E. B. Marcus noted that fine shawls were best sent to the knitter to be cleaned, while Margaret Sinclair declared that ‘On no account should lace work be put into the hands of any but an experienced dresser and charging 6d to 9d according to the size.’¹³⁸

Perhaps having read the widely distributed ladies’ column in January 1891, W. Monk Jones sent a shawl and two veils to be cleaned by ‘some of your skilful fishwives’, noting they valued the articles too highly to care to trust them to English cleaners.¹³⁹ Also recognising the skill of the Shetland cleaners and dressers, in May 1900 Mrs Sheddson of London sent her French shawl which had been badly cleaned in London.¹⁴⁰ There is no evidence to support if the shawl was indeed cleaned in Shetland, but it seems highly likely that, if it was a wool shawl, it was carried out. Mrs Sheddson acknowledged the shawl was not Shetland produced, but for others who had, perhaps inadvertently, purchased an imitation or machine-made article, the sending of their ‘Shetland lace shawls’ to be cleaned and redressed was effectively the first time the lace shawl had any contact with a Shetland worker.¹⁴¹

Dyeing

Fine knitted articles were sometimes dyed, whether for fashion reasons (crimson, scarlet, blue, green) or to gain a more even or intense colour. The dyeing process could be carried out in one by one of three methods. The first method involved dyeing the wool prior to spinning (in which case it would have to be washed first), in the second method the dyeing took place after the yarn was spun, and the third method would be to dye the whole article after it was knitted but before it was dressed, unless the article was returned for dyeing in which case it would be dressed a second time. The fineness of the yarn for lace may have required dyeing to be done before spinning, as otherwise there was a risk the yarn could be destroyed during the dyeing process and the article ruined.¹⁴² Although many advertisements illustrate the offer of coloured fine knitted lace articles, few articles survive, the most commonly cited one being a bridal veil from around 1851 (although it may in fact be a burnoose, an Arabic inspired long cloak, usually striped), of two-ply, wool

¹³⁸ SM, TEX 1992.916; SA, D6/263/11/1, E.S. Reid Tait Collection, Miss Johnson – Price list of Shetland goods; SA, D6/263/25 - Miss E. B. Marcus, Miss Margaret Sinclair. See Appendix 5 for Andrina Aitken business card.

¹³⁹ SandArch, 1891.38, W. Monk Jones, St Leonards on Sea, 16 May 1891.

¹⁴⁰ SandArch, 1900.22, Mrs Sheddson, London, 23 May 1900.

¹⁴¹ PP [Cd. 7564] *1914 Report to the board of agriculture*, p.91.

¹⁴² SandArch, 1873.20, letter from J. Pullar & Sons, Perth, 27 October 1873, noting concerns that threads would be broken when they dyed the shawls scarlet.

yarn of fine lace quality. Striped in red and white, the red wool may in fact be mill-spun as it is spun much tighter and is harder than the white.¹⁴³ Articles produced in the natural colours of Shetland wool have more commonly survived, with natural white being the preferred colour for fine lace shawls. Finely knitted lace mourning veils were a popular article purchased from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century and were often produced in grey or black. Shetland grey was ideal for half-mourning, the period after six months of full-mourning, but for many the natural black of the Shetland sheep was not quite black enough for full-mourning. With some complaints that Shetland black was closer to dark brown, veils were sometimes returned to be dyed in Shetland.¹⁴⁴ The difficulty in finding 'black' sheep which had no white fibres in the fleece, or the time consuming nature of removing every non-black fibre during carding and spinning meant that few, if any, black wool Shetland fine lace knitted articles were truly black, and for this reason it was common for mourning veils to be dyed black to ensure they were suitable for purpose.¹⁴⁵ This also involved rewashing the article to remove any remaining natural oils and to allow the dye to adhere to the wool.¹⁴⁶

In addition to buying a knitted article dyed to the required colour, Shetland wool was also sold to consumers in a variety of colours. In 1846 Cornelia Mee recommended fine white Shetland wool for knitting the pattern for her Shetland shawl.¹⁴⁷ The following year Mrs Savage recommended scarlet Shetland wool for her pattern for a Shetland shawl.¹⁴⁸ The popularity of finely spun Shetland wool did not create a dramatic rise in the colours available. Matilda Pullan noted in 1859 that while the scarlet and crimson were beautiful, fine Shetland wool was not usually to be had in any great variety of shades.¹⁴⁹

Quality control

The industrialisation of the textile industry whereby large quantities of textiles were produced in one place facilitated the development of strict quality controls on both textile

¹⁴³ SM, TEX 7780.

¹⁴⁴ SandArch, 1879.37, Miss B. Stephen, Bridport, 03 April 1879; 1880.16B, Annie Stewart, Pitlochry, 02 February 1880.

¹⁴⁵ SM, TEX 81411, dyed black mourning veils c1900-1910.

¹⁴⁶ Christiansen *Primitive Wool*, p.105.

¹⁴⁷ Cornelia Mee, *A Manual of Knitting, Netting, and Crochet* (London: D. Bogue, 1846), p.57.

¹⁴⁸ Mrs Savage, *The Winchester fancy needlework instructor and manual of the fashionable and elegant accomplishment of knitting and crochet*. Third edition (Winchester: Savage, 1847), p.45.

¹⁴⁹ Matilda Marian Pullan, *The Lady's Manual of Fancy Work: a Complete Instructor in Every Variety of Ornamental Needle-work* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1859), p.48.

design and production. Such controls would ensure that the textile would consistently match the product specifications and be made within budget limits which would facilitate its selling at a price which was attractive to both manufacturer and consumer. Where the textile remained hand-produced as a domestic industry with numerous producers working independently and merchants purchasing on an ad hoc basis dependent upon the individual producer to supply the finished article, quality is less easily controlled.

This is true for Shetland fine lace knitting where even a cursory glance over the extant fine lace knitted articles illustrates the extensive scope and disparity in the 'quality' of finished articles. The quality of any given Shetland fine lace knitted article can be measured in a variety of ways: the fineness, evenness, softness and strength of the spun thread; the evenness of colour or the subtlety in blending colours together; the intricacy, symmetry and neatness of the patterns used; and the (in)visibility of the grafting of sections. While the best fine lace knitting encompasses all of these specifications many fine lace knitted articles incorporate some but not all of the elements. Others exhibit only a few of the essential criteria necessary in order to be evaluated as fine lace knitting such as fineness of yarn and exhibiting a lace pattern. Many more articles present only one or two elements such as lace patterns using a soft and evenly spun but thick Shetland worsted. While certainly in the fine lace knitting tradition such articles cannot be considered 'fine', Shetland fine lace knitting would have been inspected for two specific levels of quality: quality of design and quality of production and/or manufacture, which while overlapping, are not the same thing. Quality of design incorporates not only the attractiveness of the article, its aesthetic appeal and the stylistic merits of the material and patterns used in its production, but also the size, shape and colour of the article. Quality of manufacture has a further more precise meaning, which while addressing the size, shape and colour of the article includes the quality of the material used, the production process including the adequacies of the stitches and grafted section joins and the ease with which it can be reproduced. What is more difficult to see is where control of the quality of such articles lay, if indeed there was any one control system in operation, and the direction, either internal or external, from which any controls were imposed.

Control of any quality issues would come from two main avenues: self-imposed by the producer or externally imposed by the consumer, whether as a Shetland merchant, mainland merchant or direct purchaser. While it might be assumed that the producer, knowing that the highest level of production would ensure a better and likely monetary payment and as such would continually produce to the highest level of their ability,

mitigating factors might play a part in the quality of article produced. A fine lace knitter may have been unable or unwilling to produce to their normal standard of workmanship for any number of reasons: necessity of a quickly finished article; inability to source appropriate natural resources; family or household commitments; or ill-health. However it is impossible to know the extent to which the producers themselves imposed quality controls on their own work. The first recognisable stage of quality control is seen at the time of initial purchase/trade, where the merchant purchasing the article would inspect the article and attach a monetary value to it dependent upon his/her idea of the quality of the workmanship. Although there is no known document illustrating set controls placed on the quality of articles produced, evidence from the 1872 Truck Commission indicates that quality was an issue and that standards, if not standardised criteria, were applied to the articles brought into the Shetland shops for sale. However commonly the control imposed upon the quality of the articles, this was purely in fiscal terms rather than attempts to create a regulated or standardised quality control which would be applicable to all fine lace knitted articles.

In 1908 Aggie Anderson was employed at Lerwick's Shetland Shawl Company and valued all knitwear bought by the company.¹⁵⁰ In this role Aggie would be able to offer a standardisation for any articles brought into the shop. However it is not clear if other Shetland businesses employed someone to specifically carry out the role. While Lerwick merchant Robert Sinclair valued and priced the Shetland lace himself, his shopman John James Bruce commented in his interview with the Truck Commissioners that 'we can easily judge of the quality of a veil by looking at it...and we know that at a glance by the quality of the work and the worsted.'¹⁵¹ This initial assessment also applied to the colouring of the article, where if there was an unevenness of colour the producer was informed that it would realise a lower monetary value.¹⁵² Similarly, Robert Linklater, merchant in Lerwick applied quality control by visually assessing the article. Knitter Barbara Johnston took veils to Linklater, whereby he valued them and gave her 'what he like[d]' when he saw the quality of the finished article.¹⁵³ Linklater also assigned numbers to batches of articles boxed for sale in the mainland depending upon the designated monetary quality, for example No.1 veils were valued at 18/- and No.7 veils at 27/- per

¹⁵⁰ SA, AD22/101/1908/150, Procurator Fiscal Records, Report against Thomas Young, manager of the Shetland Shawl Company, Lerwick, for Contravention of Truck Act. [see also AD22/2/43/66 Precognition: Shetland Shawl Company; Contravention of the Truck Act].

¹⁵¹ Truck, lines 2423, 2424, 2573, 3326.

¹⁵² Truck, line 3318.

¹⁵³ Truck, lines 383-384.

dozen, with varying prices in between.¹⁵⁴ This standard of pricing articles per dozen was also applicable to other fine lace knitted articles, although particularly finely made knitted lace were most commonly sold as individual articles. Furthermore, although Linklater's veils were principally produced by his own outworkers, there were occasions when to ensure quality they were requested and subsequently purchased directly from knitters in Unst.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this did not guarantee that the articles would meet the merchant's expected standard. Linklater's principal shopman Robert Anderson commented that in one consignment of veils the wool contained black lumps which as they were knitted into the veils made them 'imperfect' and necessitated the need to sell them as 'job lots' at greatly reduced prices. He further stated 'job lots', although at times sold at half-price, tended not to be cheaper veils but rather to be finer quality veils where the worsted was so fine that the 'slightest mistake injures them'.¹⁵⁶

That merchants were able to combine fine knitting into batches of one dozen items is not an indication of a uniformity of design but may be seen as a level of production quality where each individual item could be priced within that monetary bracket. Arthur Laurenson, partner of the firm of Laurenson & Co., Shetland Warehousemen and clothiers in Lerwick complained that there was a problem with uniformity of production:

You can never get two shawls alike; you cannot even get a dozen pair of half-stockings alike. If you were to get an order for twenty dozen socks of a particular colour, size, and price, you would not be able to get that number of socks alike in Shetland.¹⁵⁷

In addition to this, where it was possible to get a degree of uniformity in the items, this did not always guarantee a level of quality control. Each shawl needed to be examined and priced individually, with the pricing dependent upon the perceived quality of the shawl:

It depends a good deal on the size of thread and on the style of knitting. Of two shawls of the same size, and having the same weight of wool in them, one may be worth 2s. 6d. more for knitting than another, on account of the pattern the girl might put into it, and the style in which it was done.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Truck, lines 3078-3080.

¹⁵⁵ Truck, lines 3081, 3108-3110.

¹⁵⁶ Truck, lines 3115-3120, 3128, 3132-3133.

¹⁵⁷ Truck, line 2194.

¹⁵⁸ Truck, lines 2254, 2328.

Where multiple articles were requested, there is however evidence of attempts being made to create a level of homogenized production. Between June 1869 and April 1879, A. T. Stewart, Manchester department store and USA exportation depot, repeatedly made requests to Alexander Sandison, Unst merchant, for Shetland fine knitted lace goods in standardised sizes and patterns. The correspondence between the department store and Sandison illustrates the growing frustration felt by both parties that this was an unachievable task:

Size to be 72 inches (underlined), and give time you would require to fill order. Send us samples but what you can make some number of, to be exactly alike. As we cannot in future after fixing upon our styles, take a mixed up lot, just whatever you like to send. They must come up in every respect as ordered.¹⁵⁹

This sentiment is reiterated throughout the Stewart correspondence with consistent reminders of the importance of sending exactly the same patterns as ordered with no substitutions, emphasising the goods must be in every respect exactly as the samples submitted.¹⁶⁰ The issue of lack of uniformity was an ongoing problem. Twelve years later, in November 1887 an order from Mary Lyell requested 10 shawls to be produced to an enclosed pattern paying 22/- per shawl if they could be made under the following conditions: same size; same colour (bright mourat); same weight; and same thickness of wool.¹⁶¹ Like the A. T. Stewart orders this was a request that was not successfully fulfilled. Where more than one spinner or knitter is involved in the production of an article there is the high likelihood that differences in the spinning and knitting will be visible. This is equally applicable to multiple articles produced individually by one spinner and one knitter, where even working to exact specifications would be unlikely to produce identical articles.

Not all quality control was carried out at the point of initial purchase/trade. In first of two letters to Lerwick merchant Mrs Pole, Edinburgh seller Mr Blythe complained that the goods had arrived without a price attached and in the second commented on the unsatisfactory quality:

The dark brown is ill to sell, the white is not much in demand, and the quality of work of most of them is poor. The joining of the borders are loose, and not so strong as they should be...Any work that I buy must be of a good class and

¹⁵⁹ SandArch, 1875.39, Stewart, A. T. & Co, Manchester, 10 May 1875.

¹⁶⁰ SandArch, 1875.39, 12 June 1875.

¹⁶¹ SandArch, 1887.10B, 05 November 1887.

free of breaks joins in the body of the shawl, and the joining of the borders must be well and closely done.¹⁶²

It is not clear if Mr Blythe was purchasing Shetland lace, or thicker openwork or haps shawls, or if Mrs Pole performed any kind of quality control check when sending the items to him, but it is clear that Blythe imposed his own quality controls and returned those items he deemed unsatisfactory for purpose.

At times the less than perfect became part of the advertisement. James R. Spence, Lerwick merchant included in his advertisements that ‘no laid-in good taken, or mottled and streaked in colour’, although it is not yet clear what ‘laid-in’ goods refers to.¹⁶³ When lesser quality articles were sold, they were often at greatly reduced prices: John White & Co, Edinburgh advertised the selling of Shetland lace handkerchiefs and shawls ‘...at half-price, during the next few days, a surplus lot...not of the finest quality.’¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

While the origins of the fine knitted lace remain elusive and contested it is clear that very little changed in the physical production of fine knitted lace. From the first articles produced the fine knitted lace underwent continuous stylistic evolutionary processes. Many changes in its material form can be accounted for by the exertion of internal and external influences which played pivotal roles in the adoption and adaptation of functional and material attributes which were subsequently incorporated into the finished articles. Nevertheless, the producers exerted a high degree of agency, many taking control of the production by choosing whether to work independently or as an outworker, or both simultaneously. Similarly they maintained a control of the type of article they produced, knitting fine Shetland lace but also veils and non-fine articles when it was convenient or perhaps when household economics demanded more immediate attention. Furthermore, in operating their shop accounts in a variety of ways it is clear that although some lace knitters remained bonded to the barter-truck system, there was an inherent cultural inclination to continue producing Shetland lace. However this was often done on their own terms and with a demonstrably entrepreneurial purpose and sophisticated commercial

¹⁶² SA, D1/509/3/33, Joseph Pole Papers, 22 December 1892, letter from Henry Blythe, The Waverly Shirt House, 19, 21 & 24 Earl Grey Street, Edinburgh to Mrs J. L. Pole, 5 Albany Street, Lerwick.

¹⁶³ SA, D6/292/24/p211, E.S. Reid Tait collection, printed notices by James R. Spence, 87 Commercial Street concerning sales of hosiery, etc., and his agency for London Shipping and Mercantile Gazette, 1875.

¹⁶⁴ *The Scotsman*, 30 May 1891, p.15.

approach. Producers and merchants alike worked to develop new products and styles which matched consumer expectations and in doing this they participated in the creation of a strategy for strengthening local empowerment, notably that of the fine spinners, fine lace knitters, and dressers which contributed to the social sustainability of the industry.

Chapter one discussed the problems encountered when attempting to create a working definition for the recognition of Shetland lace. In order to understand a specific society and culture through a material object, it is necessary that the object is authentic. This chapter highlighted the production of Shetland lace articles which may be defined as definitively authentic: when an article is produced from material grown in Shetland, by a Shetlander in Shetland, and then sold by a Shetlander. With knowledge of the production processes, an understanding of the people who participated in each step and the articles they made it becomes clear that definitive authenticity is difficult to establish and indeed that the co-existence of a number of variables relating to materials, production and design indicates a spectrum of authenticity. Acknowledging that Shetland producers used a variety of source materials – Shetland wool, non-Shetland wool, mohair, silk and cotton – widens the material culture base of lace garments which may be considered genuine Shetland productions. This in turn assists in the identification of imitation Shetland lace, whether for commercial purposes or personal use. Shetland lace which falls into this category is nonetheless important in the understanding of the industry as a whole, notably in the external preconception of the genuine article.

Chapter 4: Not made in Shetland: real and imitation Shetland lace¹



Figure 26: Lace knitted shawl in Glasgow Museums' Collection, GM E.1984.49. Image author's own.

Glasgow Museums holds a shawl in its collection described as an 'infant's shawl or Shetland shawl', which at first glance may indeed be considered Shetland lace (see figure 28). It is quite large at 1320 mm x 1280 mm with a very evenly spun and knitted centre, suggesting perhaps mill-spun wool and machine-knit. The borders, in two 'L' shaped sections, are sewn/grafted onto the centre edge, with a few stitches between which also suggest a machine edge to the centre. The border and lace edge are much more loosely knit giving the impression that the shawl incorporated the work of two different knitters. The motif patterns are not typical of those found in other Shetland lace. The shawl comes with provenance, purportedly being the christening shawl of Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish historian and essayist born in 1795. If the provenance is accurate then it is too early to be Shetland lace which came into production in the 1830s. However, the style and construction do not conform to known designs and production methods carried out in Shetland which negates it being a misdated shawl. This example is like Shetland lace, but it is not in fact Shetland lace. It is perhaps this that makes the shawl so intriguing: where, when, how and who made this not-Shetland Shetland shawl?

¹ With thanks to Carol Christiansen for sharing her own research into early patterns books and for guiding me to further sources.

Whether a Shetland lace article is considered authentic and genuine or not is dependent upon its place within an established set of criteria which define Shetland lace: that it is knitted by a Shetland knitter, using established Shetland designs and styles.² From this perspective the Glasgow Museums shawl is not genuine Shetland lace. As Shetland lace is regarded as an integral part of Shetland identity, concerns regarding its authenticity have been broached since the earliest manufacture until the present day. In addition to this, issues of authenticity of production are fundamental in understanding the industry as a whole (although this is not to say that non-Shetland produced Shetland lace is not an integral part of the industry). Indeed, an understanding of non-Shetland produced Shetland lace illustrates the influence and impact of the authentic lace not only on Victorian fashion, culture and society but also within the wider trade and fashion networks of nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, Europe and beyond.

Chapter three discussed the production of Shetland lace within Shetland, by Shetland knitters. This chapter will examine the opposite end of the authenticity spectrum: Shetland lace produced outwith Shetland by non-Shetland knitters. Through the analysis of early knitting pattern books in conjunction with advertisements, newspaper and journal articles and extant Shetland lace items, this chapter will discuss the production of Shetland lace by home knitters and businesses alike. It will examine the rise of non-Shetland lace manufacture and demonstrate that there were effectively two Shetland lace industries, one authentic and one inauthentic. It will conclude that without understanding the external inauthentic it is impossible to fully comprehend the Shetland authentic. This understanding offers a new perspective on Shetland lace held in museum collections, whereby it is possible to differentiate between Shetland and non-Shetland produced lace. It is through this differentiation that it is possible to see how the inauthentic Shetland lace became the Shetland knitters' direct competition in the open market, impinging on the authentic article and undermining not only the livelihood but the cultural identity of the producers.

An overview of the nineteenth century knitting books

Fine lace knitters in Shetland did not record their patterns with just a few exceptions which apply to a later period. Records and documents relating to particular elements such as shape, size or colour, patterns or motifs for the articles relating to the nineteenth century are scarce. Where they exist they are from businesses and interested third parties rather

² See Chapter 1 – Introduction for discussion on defining Shetland lace.

than the Shetland knitters themselves. Working from sight and memory, from the very beginning the first fine lace knitters adopted and adapted knitting styles and techniques, using their already renowned technical skills to create new styles and patterns as part of an evolutionary production process. Having mastered these new skills, they were subsequently passed from one knitter to the next, one generation to the next, in an ongoing verbal and visual process of knowledge-exchange of the craft. From this perspective it is clear that the great advantage of nineteenth century knitting books is the array of information that they provide, not only for nineteenth-century hand-knitting in general, but for Shetland (fine and non-fine) articles in particular where there is a deficiency in early documented evidence of the industry. Rather than expand on information with regard to the Shetland-based fine lace producers, the knitting books offer a perspective from the ever-growing number of authors and hobby knitters in the Victorian era, notably regarding the style and design, or externally perceived style and design, involved in the manufacture of a Shetland article.³

The knitting books articulate an interesting picture of the changing nature of Victorian life, each of them attesting to the types of garments popular at the time of publication, representing what was considered fashionable, or would be fashionable if reproduced in sufficient quantities by the ever-growing number of hobby knitters. In this they support a method of identifying and dating articles of clothing and motif recognition for nineteenth-century attire as well as providing information about articles being knitted for the home such as quilts, cushions, pillows and even the frivolous but utilitarian Stilton cheese frill (although not in fine knitted lace).⁴ It is unknown how many, if any, of the knitting-book authors visited Shetland and saw the production of fine lace knitting first hand. Those who did not visit Shetland certainly had access to the articles from which they could copy the pattern, or at least the style. In addition to seeing the articles in shops, they possibly knew of someone who owned a Shetland shawl, or saw one through one of the many domestic servants from Shetland working in urban areas on the Scottish mainland who may have owned or knitted Shetland lace, or had knowledge of lace construction.

A careful analysis of the knitting books provides an invaluable insight into the externally perceived manufacturing process involved in producing a Shetland lace article, from choice of wool, needle size and pattern to cleaning and dressing the finished article. One

³ See Appendix 3 for layout of database relating to nineteenth century knitting books and sample entry.

⁴ Mrs Warren *The Family Friend* 2 (1850) p.341.

hundred and twenty-six nineteenth-century knitting books were examined for reference to Shetland, whether by the inclusion of a pattern for a 'Shetland' article, the inclusion of a Shetland motif or the recommendation to use Shetland wool. Of these, 50 publications were found to contain a direct reference to the production of a 'Shetland' garment (Shetland shawl, Shetland scarf, Shetland handkerchief, Shetland neckerchief, Shetland necktie, Shetland veil) or a Shetland pattern or motif. In addition to a pattern, 41 of the publications recommended needle sizes to best knit the article or pattern and ten provided an illustration of what the knitter could expect to achieve. With regard to wool recommendations, 63 of the 126 sourced books made suggestions as to the yarn considered most suitable for producing the garment to pattern, and of these 44 either had recommendations for using Shetland wool in knitting up the patterns within the book, or a short commentary on Shetland wool. Of these, only 22 directly recommended Shetland wool for knitting a Shetland article. Of all the books only 13 provide information on cleaning the finished Shetland article. Of note, while Gaugain provided the pattern for a thin lace-like fabric, commenting that the shawl was exactly like the Shetland shawls in appearance, even with the increased advertising of Shetland, through until the end of the century, there is no mention of 'Shetland lace' in any of the pattern books.⁵

The style and quality of the early knitting books varied, with some providing the minimal information necessary to produce a finished article, such as the number of stitches to cast on and stitch instructions for each knitted row. Others were more detailed; specifying needle size and the quantity and quality of wool required in addition to the stitch instructions. In some cases and for unknown reasons the names of the authors were suppressed but where the author is known, with one exception the books were written by women. There was often a reference or advertisement, indicating that they gave lessons and supplied all the materials to produce the articles in the book, as well as all the best materials for all kinds of needlework, which may go a long way to explaining the recommendation of specific brands of wool.

The first reference to 'Shetland' appears in 1842 in two separate publications: Jane Gaugain's *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting and Crochet Work* and Frances

⁵ As the knitting books are not in copyright many of them are available for online viewing: Knitting Reference Library, University of Southampton, <[<http://viewer.soton.ac.uk/library/browse/KnttingReferenceLibrary.RichardRuttcollection/-/1/-/](http://viewer.soton.ac.uk/library/browse/KnttingReferenceLibrary.RichardRuttcollection/-/1/-/)> ; Antique Pattern Library, New Media Arts, Inc. <<http://www.antiquepatternlibrary.org/html/warm/catalog.htm>> : Internet Archive <<https://archive.org/search.php?query=knitting%20books>>. Others were accessed in the National Library of Scotland.

Lambert's *The Hand-Book of Needlework*.⁶ That Gaugain and Lambert were the first knitting book authors to stipulate a Shetland article is of note. Gaugain's Edinburgh shop at 63 George Street was a short five minute walk from W. B. McKenzie, the first shop to advertise Shetland lace shawls, while Lambert's needlework shop at 3 New Burlington Road, London was less than half a mile from the Standen & Co. shop in Jermyn Street, the business credited with bringing Shetland knitted goods to the attention of the London market.⁷

From 1845 the number of publications increased considerably, indicating the public awareness of and interest in knitting books. Many of the books were later editions of earlier publications with few, if any, changes made between issuing editions. This increase in number does not coincide with the number of Shetland articles and motif patterns being included within their pages. Furthermore, with the exception of reprints such as the 1851 US edition of Lambert's *The Hand-Book of Needlework*, or the 1857 fifth edition of Gaugain's *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work*, of the publications sourced only one, Miss Ronaldson's 1855 *To the Mothers and Daughters of England. Gift Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting, Netting and Crochet Work* contained a Shetland article in the ten year period between Esther Copley's 1849 *The Comprehensive Knitting Book* and Matilda Marian Pullan's 1859 *The Lady's Manual of Fancy Work*.⁸ Thus, the known rise in popularity of Shetland lace throughout the 1840s and 1850s neither corresponds with nor is corroborated by an increasing number of Shetland patterns appearing in the books. Nevertheless, during these ten years, while excluding patterns for articles or motifs, there is the increasing inclusion of recommendations of Shetland wool for knitting other articles. In addition to this some pattern books discussed the various types of wool available and their best uses, including details on Shetland wool (see section on wool for further discussion).

Although the quantity of named Shetland articles and motifs is lower than was anticipated, of note is the use of 'Shetland' in the title of two knitting books: Mrs Gore's 1846 *The Royal Shetland Shawl, Lace Collar, Brighton Slipper, and China Purse Receipt Book* and

⁶ Miss Lambert, *The Hand-Book of Needlework, with numerous illustrations engraved by J. J. Butler*, (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1842); Jane Gaugain, *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting and Crochet Work* (Edinburgh: I. J. Gaugain, 1842), p.105.

⁷ See Standen & Co, Chapter 2.

⁸ Miss Ronaldson, *To the Mothers and Daughters of England. Gift Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting, Netting and Crochet Work* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1855), p.116; Esther Copley's *The Comprehensive Knitting Book* (London: William Tegg and Co., 1849); Pullan, *The Lady's Manual of Fancy Work* (1859).

Jane Gaugain's 1847 *Pyrennees and Shetland Knit Shawl and Scarf Book*.⁹ It is not clear what is 'Royal' about Gore's Shetland shawl or why it was changed to 'the Shetland wool shawl' and 'border for the Shetland wool shawl' once inside the pages of the book. Certainly the accompanying illustration is not suggestive of fine lace knitting and does indeed appear to be a Shetland woollen shawl not of lace weight. Gaugain's publication contained only one pattern for a Shetland shawl, although it did include a reprinting of her earlier pattern for the 'exactly like a Shetland' shawl. Nevertheless, while her book had Shetland in the title and a 'very handsome Shetland square knit shawl' pattern within its pages, it rather surprisingly recommended using two hanks each of coloured and white Lady Betty rather than Shetland wool.¹⁰

The Shetland articles included in the publications are generally shawls and scarves with additional patterns for motifs referring to shawls and scarves, however, other articles are included. Shetland handkerchiefs first appear in 1847 in Mrs Hope's *The Knitter's Casket* and Miss Ronaldson's *Lady's Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting and Netting Work*.¹¹ Patterns for Shetland veils are not included until Eléonore Riego De La Branchardiere's 1867 *The Abergeldie Winter Book*, although they make an earlier appearance in the *Lady's Newspaper* on 15 December 1855.¹² Occasionally the designation 'Shetland' was supplied naming articles which were not in fact Shetland articles, for example, the Shetland knitted pelisse and the Shetland wool ruffle.¹³

Many of the knitting books contained instructions for reading the patterns. At the beginning of *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work* Gaugain provided an 'index of signs used in the receipts', a necessary addition due to the complicated nature of her written patterns, consisting of 32 individual 'signs' for the knitter to follow, with examples such as A, Ar, V, Vr, S, SB, ST, Sd, S2.¹⁴ Gaugain

⁹ Mrs Gore, *The Royal Shetland Shawl, Lace Collar, Brighton Slipper, and China Purse Receipt Book*, (London: W.S. Orr & Co. 1846), in Frances Lambert, *The Ladies' Complete Guide to Needle-work and Embroidery*. (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson and Brothers, 1859), pp.315-327; Jane Gaugain, *Pyrennees and Shetland Knit Shawl and Scarf Book*, (Edinburgh: I. J. Gaugain, 1847).

¹⁰ Jane Gaugain, *Pyrennees and Shetland Knit Shawl and Scarf Book*, (Edinburgh: I. J. Gaugain, 1847), pp.31-32.

¹¹ Mrs Hope, *The Knitter's Casket; a series of receipts in ornamental knitting and netting*. Corrected edition (Ramsgate: I. Hope, 1847), pp.9-10; Ronaldson, *Lady's Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting and Netting Work*, p.169.

¹² Eléonore Riego De La Branchardiere, *The Abergeldie Winter Book*, (London: Simpkin, Marshal, and Co., 1867), p.24 – Round Shetland Veil; Supplement to the *Lady's Newspaper*, The *Lady's Newspaper*, issue 468, p3, 15 December 1855, p.3, knitted Shetland veil.

¹³ See section 'Not Shetland articles labelled as Shetland' for further discussion.

¹⁴ Gaugain, *Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work* (1842), pp.15-20.

persevered with this complex set of knitting codes in each of her subsequent publications: fortunately for the home knitter other knitting book authors created their patterns along simpler lines. Most opted for writing the pattern long hand (for example: bring the wool forward, slip one, knit one, pass the slip stitch over it, knit one, pearl one).¹⁵ With a few exceptions this remained the general style for recording patterns in the knitting books throughout the nineteenth century, with authors occasionally explaining the written knitting terminology in an introductory chapter. In following a style and creating a standardised terminology, it is clear that the knitting books were intended to render the instructions understandable which, if not within the knitting expertise of the Victorian lady knitter, were reasonably straightforward to follow.

This was not necessarily the case when choosing a knitting needle to commence work. The issue of early sizes for needles is complex and the introduction of the knitting-needle measuring gauge indicates the problem of needle sizes experienced by early knitters. Metal, wood, ivory and bone needles were available but needle-size numbers could demonstrate varying thicknesses showing a lack of consistency between needle manufacturers. The finished article therefore could not be guaranteed to successfully represent that which was suggested by the pattern or the illustration if one was included. While certainly there was no standardisation in the actual measurement (attempts to standardise the *filière* had been made in 1824 and again in 1847 with no success), British wire gauge sizes range from No.1 through to No.40, wherein the number increases as the diameter decreases.¹⁶ Well aware of the inconsistencies in needle sizes Lambert introduced her own knitting needle gauge, the *Standard Filière*, an ivory disc specifically designed to measure knitting and netting needles; it was expensive at 9/6, but it was the first of its kind.¹⁷ Commenting on the lack of a universal standard of knitting needle size, and possibly hoping to secure sales, Lambert's 1842 publication included an illustration of a *filière*, or gauge, similar to that used by wire-drawers to ascertain the thickness of wires, noting that this same method was applicable to the sizing of knitting needles.¹⁸ The illustration showed the size number and diameter increasing concurrently, this difference in gauge number classification may be explained by the fact that the only known available

¹⁵ For example, Frances Lambert, *My Knitting Book* (London: John Murray, 1843).

¹⁶ Aashish Velkar, *Accurate Measurement and Design Standards: Consistency of Design and the Travel of 'Facts' Between Heterogeneous Groups, Working Papers on The Nature of Evidence: How Well Do 'Facts' Travel?* (Department of Economic History, London School of Economics, 2007). < <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/22518/1/1807Velkar.pdf> > [last viewed 22 July 2013], p.15 & p.27.

¹⁷ Sheila Williams, *The History of Knitting Pin Gauges*, (Melrose Books, 2006), p.4.

¹⁸ Lambert, *The hand-book of needlework* (1842), pp.93-94.

copy of the 1842 book is an American publication which replaced the image to show an illustration of a US *filière*.¹⁹

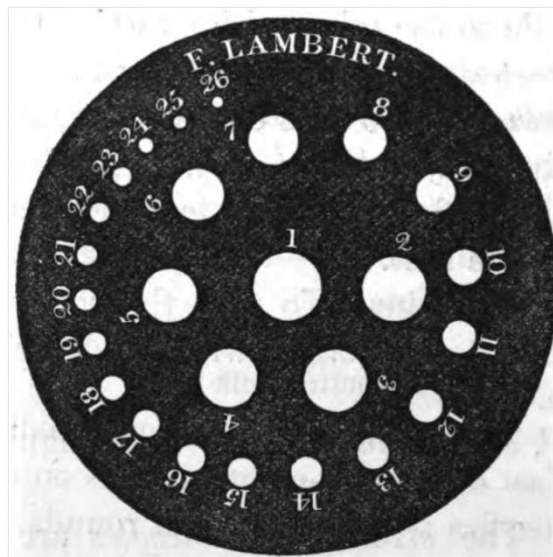


Figure 27: Frances Lambert's *Standard Filière* for British knitters in her 1843 *My Knitting Book*.

Lambert's 1843 *My Knitting Book* illustrated her *Standard Filière* available to the British knitter (see figure 29). Using Lambert's *Standard Filière* would ensure that knitters were able to, regardless of the size provided by the manufacturer, 'ascertain with the greatest of accuracy' the size of needle they were using and as such achieve the desired end result.²⁰ Lambert had succeeded where wire manufacturing luminaries had failed; she had introduced a standardised needle measuring gauge which would, before long, become a mainstay for all needleworkers. It was soon copied by other knitting book authors including Jane Gaugain (1842), Cornelia Mee (1844), Elizabeth Jackson (1845) and Eléonore Riego De La Branchardiere's beautifully designed silver plate on copper Chamber's Bell gauge (1846).²¹ When Lambert produced her *Standard Filière* in 1842 she did so according to the same method employed by the wire manufacturers of increasing diameter and decreasing number. Lambert's and Jackson's numbered from 1-26, Riego De La Branchardiere's went to 28, while Mee's somewhat strangely numbered 10-26. The narrowness of the higher number ranges reaffirm the Victorian fascination for very fine knitting and needlework, albeit not necessarily in connection to Shetland lace knitting.

¹⁹ Originally published London in 1842, the British publication was not found. It was published in the United States, using Lambert's name without her permission. She comments on this in the 1846 fifth edition of the book.

²⁰ Lambert, *My Knitting Book* pp.11-12, details on how to purchase in 1845 edition, un-numbered early page.

²¹ Williams, *Knitting Pin Gauges*, pp.7-19.

Similarly, they all indicate the long standing application of the numbering system for British knitting needles. Although a modern No.4 may slightly differ in diameter from those of the 1840s it is clear that in both time periods, needle No.4 sits within the thicker range of needle size.

In addition to needle sizes, many of the patterns recommended specific wools for obtaining the best results in knitting Shetland shawls, scarves and motifs. The hand-spinning of wool for Shetland lace knitting, whether within or outwith Shetland, is a central part of the Shetland lace industry, but the original source of the spun wool recommended in the knitting books is unclear. Wool purchased with the intention to knit a pattern from a knitting book could potentially have been hand-spun on Shetland, machine-spun on the UK mainland from Shetland-breed wool or machine-spun on UK mainland from any wool attempting to achieve Shetland yarn-like quality.

Most authors' primary focus was on the provision of technical expertise and patterns; however some, like Lambert's *The Hand-Book of Needlework* provided an extensive history as well as a technical manual of all forms of needlework and Esther Copley's *The Comprehensive Knitting Book* gave the reader a discussion of the various wools available.²² Nevertheless all knitting books were produced with a single purpose: to be consumed by the Victorian ladies-at-home who purchased the knitting books with the desire to knit something from within the pages.

Shetland articles, patterns, motifs and stitches in the knitting books

The inclusion of 'Shetland' identifiers within the knitting books provides multiple opportunities to better understand the Shetland lace industry in a period where few other sources are available. The inclusion of any Shetland article indicates at least a general awareness of the product, both by the author and the reader/knitter. Although articles and patterns written and/or illustrated in the knitting books may have been in circulation for any number of years prior to being written down, their initial inclusion provides a potential age in that they provide a *terminus ante quem*. That is, any article or pattern in the book must have an initial production date prior to the time of writing. The length of time any specific article/pattern appears in the publication suggests its level of popularity and when it is no longer included in the knitting book, an approximate dating of changing attitudes to Shetland lace. Such changing attitudes are not necessarily negative, nor indicative that the

²² Esther Copley's *The Comprehensive Knitting Book*, pp.2-5. See Appendix 4.

article/pattern/motif in question is no longer popular, or desired, only that the desire to knit one at home had diminished. From this perspective a detailed analysis of the early knitting books which chart the rise in popularity of home produced Shetland styled articles, and then the later books which illustrate the introduction of new articles and their subsequent decline provides not only information about the external perception of Shetland lace by the knitting public, but can also be an indicator of what is happening within Shetland.

The 50 knitting books containing direct reference to Shetland articles illustrate the most typical 'Shetland' garments are shawls and scarves with additional articles such as handkerchiefs, neckerchiefs, veils. Of interest here is that there are no patterns for 'Shetland' fine stockings, an established staple article in Shetland fine knitting. A pattern for fine worsted stockings with additional patterns for 'points at top and diamond throughout' and 'open diamond pattern for stockings, shawls, &c.' were included in Gaugain's 1840 *The Lady's Assistant* but without any Shetland reference.²³

Lambert's 1842 *The Hand-book of Needlework* provided patterns for a Shetland shawl, a Shetland scarf, and a Shetland 'stitch' giving knitting instructions, wool to be used and knitting needle size but did not provide any illustrations or any descriptions of the pattern. Although the pattern recommended using No.14 or No.15 needles for the Shetland shawl and No.17 needles for the Shetland scarf, this publication was for American knitters using a different needle measurement standard.²⁴ The same pattern in subsequent British publications, the 1843 *My Knitting Book* and 1846 *The Hand-Book of Needlework* came with the recommendation of No. 6 or 8 needles for the shawl and No.7 for the scarf.²⁵ Although these needle sizes are not thin enough to reproduce fine Shetland lace, her recommended needle sizes indicate the production of a finer Shetland article than that of Gaugain in the same year. Gaugain's 1842 *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting and Crochet Work* was her third publication but the first to contain a pattern for a shawl which, although not specifically named as a Shetland article, is identified as such in the description:

²³ Jane Gaugain, *The Lady's Assistant for Executing Useful and Fancy Designs in Knitting, Netting & Crochet Work*, illustrated by fifteen engraving, showing various stitches in the art of netting (Edinburgh: 1840), p.45-56.

²⁴ Miss Lambert, *The Hand-Book of Needlework*, (1842), p.199.

²⁵ Lambert, *My Knitting Book*, pp.11-12. Standard Filière; pp.80-82. Miss Lambert, *The Hand-Book of Needlework, Decorative and Ornamental, Including Crochet, Knitting, and Netting*, fifth edition, revised and considerably enlarged (London: John Murray, 1846), p.406.

XXIV. – HAND SOME SQUARE KNIT SHAWL, OF A THIN LACE-LIKE FABRIC. This shawl is exactly in appearance like the Shetland Shawls, only the centre stitch is more novel than any of them I have ever seen. The border is composed of diamonds, surrounded by open work; the middle or centre stitch, is the same stitch as the Open Mitten, described in First Volume, as also that of the Lace Cap, p222 of Appendix to First Volume... and 2 ivory pins of No. 4, about 13 inches long. Coloured ivory is preferable to white, as the stitches are more distinctly seen on them. If wishes, this receipt may all be worked without the plain rows that intervene between the open ones – and it makes the work much thinner if they are left out; (or, all the pearl rows, like the Shetland Shawls, may be worked in plain rows).²⁶

With this pattern, Gaugain gives a short description of how the shawl looks, specifying the needle size and offering alternative finishing touches. However, noting the needle sizes indicated by her knitting gauge, that Gaugain recommended using No.4 needles seems at odds with it being a Shetland fine lace shawl pattern and its description as a thin lace-like fabric. Shetland fine lace was knitted on fine or very fine needles with very fine worsted.²⁷ Although the exact needle sizes employed by Shetland knitters are not known, the extant articles indicate that they were knitted using finer needles, creating a cobweb light lace effect which draped well and displayed the motifs effectively. In using very fine yarn with thicker needles the effect of the pattern would be much more open, with the risk that the shawl would hang looser and the motifs appear less noticeable. There is no image with the pattern, but it does refer to the pattern being in the appendix to the first volume, published in 1840. Regrettably this appendix has not been found. Nevertheless, the description supplied corresponds with the illustrations provided in her 1845 publication *The Accompaniment to second volume*, in which it is renamed as a ‘Shetland Shawl’ (see figure 30).²⁸ The illustration quite clearly demonstrates that the shawl in question does indeed have the appearance of Shetland lace, although it is impossible to discern the fineness from an illustration.

²⁶ Gaugain, *Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting and Crochet Work*, p.105.

²⁷ Carol Christiansen, personal communication, ‘Generally Shetland fine lace used needles between 2.0 and 3.5mm, (14 and 10) depending on the fineness of the wool and how open or tight the knitter wanted the knitting to be. Choosing needle size came with experience, as the openness of the work is only really apparent once it has been finished and dressed, as is size and shape for very large items like shawls. Needle size/gauge also has consequences for not only the size of motifs but also their shape. Motifs like crowns, flowers, and diamonds need to be in width/height proportion and this could be compromised by the gauge, which is partly dependent on needle size’.

²⁸ Jane Gaugain, *The Accompaniment to Second Volume of Mrs Gaugain's Work on Knitting, Netting, and Crochet, illustrating the open patterns and stitches to which are added several elegant and new receipts* (Edinburgh: I. J. Gaugain, 1845), p.105.

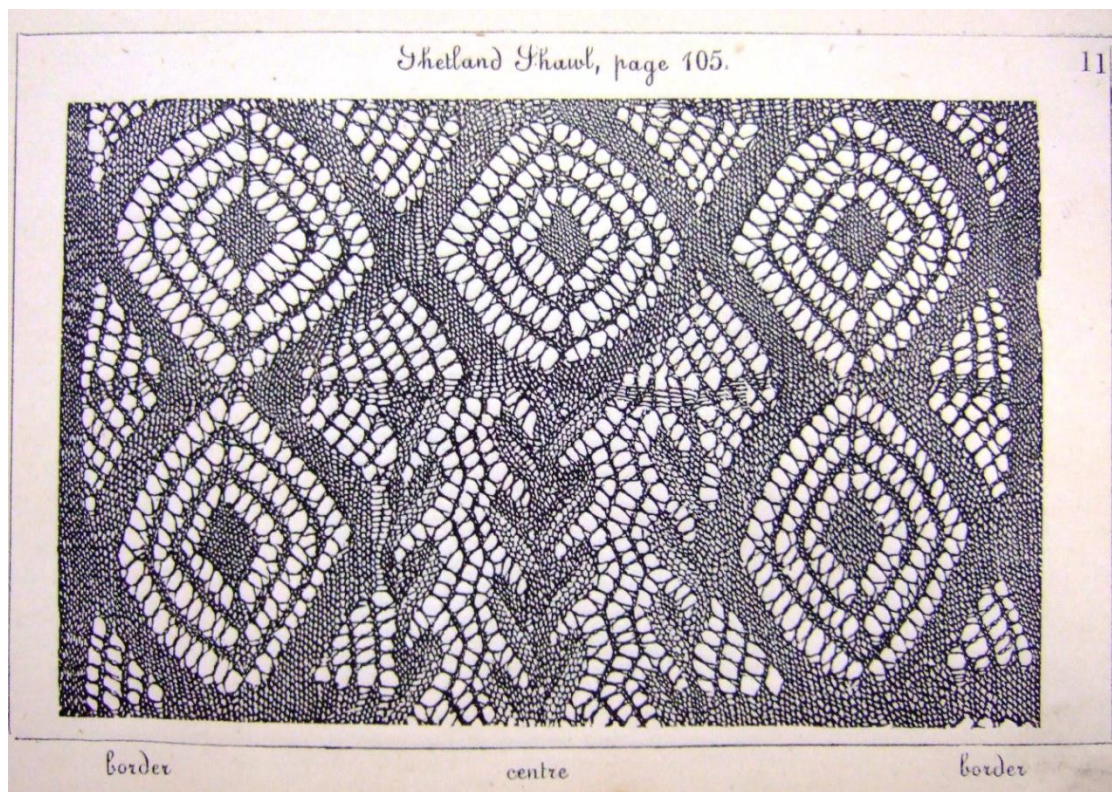


Figure 28: Jane Gaugain's 1845 Shetland shawl illustration, *Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting and Crochet Work*, p.105. The centre is the pattern referred to in her 1840 publication.

The centre stitch is a well-known and popular motif in Shetland lace, 'da print o' da wave', and as such her 1842 description of the centre stitch as being 'more novel than any of them I have ever seen' is intriguing. It is unclear if she was suggesting that she had only recently (1840) seen this particular Shetland motif and considered it better than any she had seen before, or if she had created a new 'novel' motif to be included in her 'receipt' for a Shetland shawl. Nevertheless, from this perspective it appears that the 'da print o' da wave' pattern must have been in circulation prior to its first published account in 1840. It is quite possible that Gaugain saw Shetland shawls in W. B. Mackenzie's Prince's Street shop in April/May 1838 when he was describing Shetland shawls that were 'real curiosities in knitting' but his July 1841 advertisement for Shetland shawls knitted in imitation of lace came after her publication of the pattern.²⁹ It is also possible that this motif had been around for some time, perhaps developed by Gaugain herself, and in this its origins may have nothing to do with Shetland, but rather was heavily adopted by the Shetland knitters and subsequently came to be associated with Shetland lace knitting from an early date. The other motif illustrated in the shawl, the diamond, is variable in Shetland lace and can

²⁹ *The Scotsman*, 16 May 1838, p.3.; 17 July 1841, p.1. See Chapter 2 for discussion of Mackenzie.

take many forms. To date nothing exactly the same has been found, but there is a similarity to the diamond motif on Shetland Museum's TEX 7771.³⁰

Also of note in Gaugain's 1845 publication *The Accompaniment to second volume* is the inclusion of an illustration referring to a pattern in the 1842 *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work* (see figure 31), a motif which appears on an early Shetland lace 'wedding veil' (see figures 32 and 33).³¹

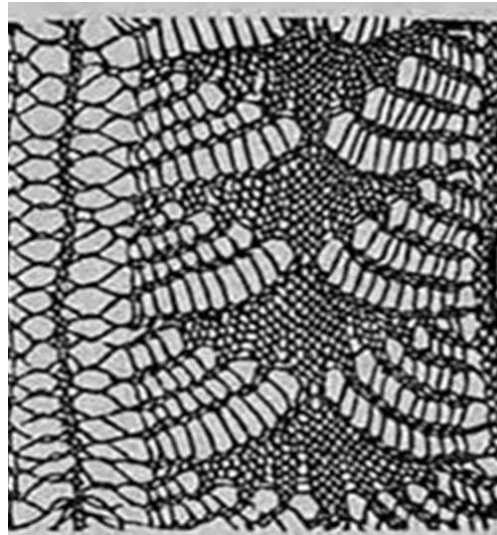


Figure 29: Jane Gaugain's 'Triangular Stitch' in *Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work*, image plate 15.

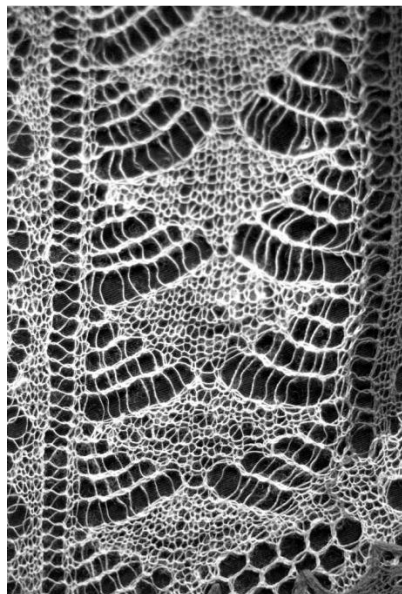


Figure 30: Motif on a Shetland lace 'wedding veil', SM TEX 7780, image courtesy of SMA, photograph NE00201.

³⁰ See image at start of chapter two.

³¹ Gaugain, *Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work*, image plate 15.

It is clear that the motif is the same in both. The ‘wedding veil’ is a remarkable article of Shetland lace, eye catching in its bright red and snowy white stripes, shaped rather than square or rectangular it is three-cornered with a head piece at the top and tassels on wool cord at the arms and sides of face. It is finely knitted and finely spun although it is possible that the tighter spun red wool may in fact be mill-spun.³² The styling of the article is more reminiscent of a burnoose (Arabic inspired cloak, usually striped), popular during the mid- to late-nineteenth century and often listed along with shawls and veils in advertisements for Shetland lace. Alternatively, there are similarities in design and structure to Shetland lace opera cloaks popular at the same time.



Figure 31: Shetland lace ‘wedding veil’, SM TEX 7780 (3600 mm x 2800 mm, possibly c.1850), image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01398.

When donated to Shetland Museum, the ‘wedding veil’ came with a specified provenance: produced for Standen and Co., Jermyn Street, London to be exhibited at the 1851 Great Exhibition where it won a gold medal. This provenance is somewhat doubtful. Although

³² SM TEX 7780.

various descriptions of Standen's exhibits list a hand-spun wedding veil, sometimes noting that it was white, there is no mention of a red and white striped veil, nor indeed any 'red' article, which might be anticipated due to its striking appearance.³³ Furthermore, Standen and Co. were not awarded a prize medal at the 1851 Exhibition.³⁴ However, a prize medal was awarded to W. B. Mackenzie for 'Shawls and veils knitted by the hand in Shetland from thread spun by machinery, composed of wool and silk combined'.³⁵ Gaugain made no reference to Shetland with regard to this stitch; rather it was just one of many stitch patterns in the book. She suggested it would be 'very pretty for stockings, &c.,' and should be knitted on four wires, noting that it was 'something like' the one on page 217 of the first volume.³⁶ This volume cannot be sourced, but if confirmed then, like 'da print of da wave', this motif can be dated to at least 1840. Also like 'da print o da wave', it cannot as yet be ascertained whether Gaugain copied the motif from a Shetland article, or whether the Shetland knitters, if indeed the 'Standen' veil is Shetland produced, used the motif after its initial publication. However, there are some points of interest here. Gaugain suggested using four 'wires' to knit the pattern for the stocking, a term used by Shetland knitters, while in all her other patterns she said pins or needles. Furthermore, the close proximity of the Gaugain-Mackenzie business premises and Mackenzie's hosiery buying trips to Shetland might suggest that he introduced the pattern to Gaugain through one of the early 'curiosities' he purchased.³⁷ In this, it is possible that the original pattern may indeed be a Shetland original and, if it did indeed win a prize medal, perhaps exhibited by Mackenzie.

Gaugain was not alone in recommending No.4 needles when producing a Shetland shawl. Elizabeth Jackson also advocated No.4 needles for knitting up 'A beautiful open pattern for Shetland shawls'. Likewise Marie Jane Cooper for a Shetland shawl and scarf while the Knitters Friend recommended 'large pins and fine wool' for the 'much admired' Shetland shawls.³⁸ Many knitting book authors gave no indication of needle size, and the majority

³³ *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851: official descriptive and illustrated catalogue*; VOL.II, ed. by Robert Ellis, F.L.S. (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851), p.499. Standen & Co., Exhibitor 281: 'White Shetland knitted shawl, Bridal veil. Pair of white stockings. Brown, grey and white gloves – natural colours. The Shetland wool of which these specimens consist is hand-spun'.

³⁴ *Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, 1851. Reports by The Juries on The Subjects in the Thirty Classes*, Vol.II (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1852).

³⁵ *Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, 1851. Reports by The Juries*, p.478.

³⁶ This is the volume I have been unable to locate.

³⁷ See chapter 2 for details on Mackenzie.

³⁸ Elizabeth Jackson, *The Practical Companion to the Work-Table. Containing directions for knitting, netting, & crochet work*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1845), p.126; Marie Jane Cooper, *The New Guide to Knitting & Crochet* (Hastings: Cooper, 1847), pp.14-17; Mrs Hope, *The Knitters Friend*. Original Receipts in Knitting and Netting with illustrations, pp.28-29.

who did suggested needles in the No.4 to No.10 range. There were exceptions. Although the pattern was for a Shetland wool scarf, rather than a Shetland scarf, the brief information provided would suggest that this may indeed be Shetland lace. The 1876 pattern provided by ‘A Lady’ in *The Home Knitter* contained the ‘spider-net pattern and diamond border’ and came with the recommendation of using one skein of Shetland wool, No.14 needles.³⁹

Gaugain described the look of a finished shawl as a ‘thin lace-like fabric...exactly in appearance like the Shetland Shawls’ but while there are increasing inclusions of ‘Shetland’ shawls, scarves and patterns, there is no instance where the proviso ‘fine’ or ‘lace’ is connected with the Shetland identity accorded to the article or motif. This is perhaps to be expected in the initial knitting books as the earliest sourced reference with the appendage ‘lace’ is found in 1851 in *Zaidee: A Romance*, a serialised novel published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in which Mrs Vivian is seated with ‘her snowy shawl of Shetland lace’ hanging over the back of the chair.⁴⁰ Furthermore, although W. B. Mackenzie, Shetland Hosier, advertised Shetland shawls knitted in imitation of lace in *The Scotsman* on 18 August 1841 the earliest advertisement to specifically note Shetland lace shawls is Shetland merchant, William Johnson in W. R. Duncan’s 1861 *Shetland Directory and Guide*.⁴¹

Otherwise the inclusion of a Shetland designation makes reference to a pattern or motif or in one instance Lambert’s Shetland stitch for a purse. Frequently the patterns are repeated from one edition of the book to the next, and often across different publications by the same author. Many are repeated in other publications, with a few authors using the preface of their books to complain about plagiarism of patterns.⁴² The patterns are provided in two formats: for complete garments and for individual motifs, such as for the borders or centres associated with the shawls and scarves. Occasionally the name gives some indication of what can be expected in the visual appearance of the motif such as the shell pattern or

³⁹ A Lady, *The Home Knitter. A Manual for Making Useful Articles for the Family* (Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter & Co., 1876), p.20.

⁴⁰ *Zaidee: A Romance*, Part VIII, Book II, Chapter XXVII – Mrs Williams’s Room. Serialised Fiction in *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, 78:477 (1855), pp.18-38, p.30.

⁴¹ *The Scotsman*, 18 August 1841; W. R. Duncan’s *Shetland Directory and Guide*, 1861, p.170. William Johnson, 119 Commercial Street, Lerwick, General Merchant...Draper, Clothier, and Hatter; Manufacturer of every description of Shetland Hosiery, Lace Shawls, Veils, &c., &c.

⁴² For example Eléonore Riego De La Branchardiere, *The Knitting Book*, third edition (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co, 1848) - In the preface complains about patterns and illustrations being plagiarised. Also Lambert, *The hand-book of needlework, fifth edition, revised and considerably enlarged*, (London: John Murray, 1846) – she considered the 1842 edition published in the United States as plagiarised.

spider net, but often the motif is named solely as a means of attaching it to a particular article such as a 'transparent pattern for Shetland shawls and scarfs' or 'a beautiful Shetland pattern'.⁴³ Nevertheless, there are a few motif patterns that are of particular interest. Motif patterns are named by labelling them as Shetland in one of two ways. The first offers no indication of how the final pattern will appear: 'a beautiful pattern for a Shetland shawl', 'another pretty pattern for a Shetland shawl'. The second format is more descriptive, providing an idea of how it might appear: star pattern for a Shetland shawl, spider web pattern for a Shetland shawl, etc. Nevertheless, even with a descriptive precursor unless an illustration is provided, or the knitter already knows the motif, there is no guarantee that the finished article will resemble either a Shetland shawl/scarf or a Shetland motif.

Although not specifically named as Shetland patterns, Lambert's 1846 *The Hand-Book of Needlework* gave twelve patterns for Shetland shawls suggesting using the finest Lady Betty or Shetland wool and needle sizes ranging from No.6-10: 'Zig zag stripe', 'Shell' and 'Oeillet' to be knitted with No.10 needles; 'Leaf', 'Leaf and trellis', 'Open diamond', 'Ladder', and 'Scallop' on No.8 needles; and 'Rocket', 'Fan', and 'Spider web' on No 6 needles.⁴⁴ This is the most extensive list of patterns for a Shetland article in all the pattern books and perhaps indicative of her recognition of the popularity of Shetland lace during the mid 1840s. Cornelia Mee's 1846 *Exercises in Knitting* also provided 12 patterns, noting that some of the most open patterns were suitable for Shetland shawls, although none of the patterns were identified as having a Shetland connection.⁴⁵ In naming a pattern 'beautiful coral pattern' Mee offered no indication that the motif may have a Shetland connection. This pattern has been knitted by a member of the online social networking site for knitters, Ravelry.com, showing that it is in fact 'da print o da wave'.⁴⁶ Conversely, the 'pretty spider-net pattern with open work between', which might suggest a similarity with the Shetland spider-web/net motif, in fact has no resemblance whatsoever and Mee's 'beautiful pattern for a Shetland shawl' is a simple zig-zag or wave pattern. Where there is no accompanying illustration it is difficult to know if there is any actual resemblance to Shetland motifs and without doubt, in knitting up samples of various motifs from the early knitting books, the knitters at Ravelry have provided much in the way of understanding the

⁴³ Jackson, *Practical Companion to the Work-Table* (1845), p.72, p.92.

⁴⁴ Frances Lambert, *The Hand-Book of Needlework*, fifth edition, pp.362-372.

⁴⁵ Cornelia Mee, *Exercises in Knitting* (1846), pp.2-26, esp p.6.

⁴⁶ Ravelry is a free social networking website for knitters, crocheters, designers, spinners, weavers and dyers: for print o da wave pattern see <http://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/chair-cover-4--beautiful-coral-pattern>.

visual imagery allowing comparisons to be made. In order to understand the relationship between the written patterns and known Shetland motifs it is necessary to have the patterns, or samples of the patterns knitted to facilitate a visual cross comparison between early pattern book motifs and Shetland lace articles in collections.⁴⁷

The earliest record for Shetland handkerchiefs is in an advertisement in November 1846, the year before their first appearance in the knitting books. Later price lists and brochures indicate that the lace knitted handkerchief would become a staple article of Shetland production.⁴⁸ The handkerchief first appeared in two 1847 publications: Miss Ronaldson's, *Lady's Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting and Netting Work* and Mrs Hope's *The Knitter's Casket*. Ronaldson's pattern for a Shetland handkerchief recommends Berlin wool and No.9 needles, suggesting a medium knit finished article, but did not provide any detail, or image, only noting that the pattern commenced at the centre of the neck.⁴⁹ Nineteenth century handkerchiefs are not what are currently considered a handkerchief and Hope's Shetland handkerchiefs were essentially a differently sized Shetland shawl: a handkerchief being three quarter of a yard square and a shawl being two yards square, or 27 inch² rather than 72 inch². Three motif patterns were provided, with illustrations showing the openwork stitches. While these illustrations exhibit similarities with known Shetland lace knitting they do not represent typical Shetland motifs.⁵⁰ Rather they are simplified versions of more complex Shetland patterns, exhibiting the essential character of Shetland lace in style and pattern but in a manner which was achievable for a competent knitter. Furthermore, in providing a facsimile of her Cornucopia Gauge it is clear that her recommended No.8 needles are large.

Only one knitting book, Cornelia Mee & Mary Austin's 1867 *New Work on Knitting*, contained a pattern for a Shetland neckerchief. Of interest is its dual function description which noted that it also made a 'light and elegant opera hood caught up with ends of ribbon at the back'.⁵¹

⁴⁷ The knitting of samples is part of a connected but separate project which will culminate in an exhibition in Shetland Museum in spring 2016.

⁴⁸ *Launceston Examiner*, Tasmania, Australia, 18 November 1846, p.5. Messrs Bennet & Sons, Real Shetland Shawls and Handkerchiefs.

⁴⁹ Ronaldson, *Lady's Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting and Netting Work*, p.169, CII – Shetland handkerchief.

⁵⁰ Hope, *Knitter's Casket*; shawl 1 illustration on p.8, shawl 2 illustration on p.14, shawl 3 illustration on p.18.

⁵¹ Cornelia Mee and Mary Austin, *New Work on Knitting*, ninth edition. First series of the Knitter's Companion (London: Mee & Austin, 1867), p.16.

Generally the inclusion of veils in the knitting books is included in the discussion of Shetland wool, or the patterns being included within the netting rather than knitting section of the books. In both her 1856 *The Lady's Dictionary of Needlework* and 1859 *The Lady's Manual of Fancy Work* Matilda Marian Pullan stated that the very fine and soft Shetland wool was used for many purposes including veils.⁵² The first known record of Shetland produced veils is 1853, when Catherine Williamson of Uyeasound, Unst paid two veils into her shop account but they were likely produced from a significantly earlier date, possibly 1848-49 as noted by Arthur Laurenson.⁵³ Giving evidence to the 1872 Truck Enquiry, Laurenson declared that veil production commenced around 1848-49 and that there was a considerable trade in them between 1852-56, coinciding with their inclusion in advertisements and knitting publications.⁵⁴ While Pullan may be referring to Shetland wool being used in netted rather than knitted veils, it should be noted that Shetland business records indicate a large proportion of Shetland-produced veils in the late 1850s to early 1860s were knitted in mohair wool. The first Shetland veil pattern was provided by *the Lady's Newspaper* in December 1855. The pattern suggested using black and scarlet Shetland wool, whereby a red pattern is placed on a black background, and a pair of Boulton tapered knitting needles, No.17 and No.14, noting that 'it will be found to hang very much better than Shetland veils usually do'.⁵⁵ *Godey's Lady's Book*, an American monthly magazine, published a pattern for Shetland veils in 1865, with no wool or needle recommendation but suggesting finishing it with a 'crochet border'.⁵⁶ Patterns for knitted Shetland veils were not included in the knitting books until Cornelia Mee's inclusion of a round Shetland veil in her 1867 *The Abergeldie Winter Book*. Knitted with one ounce of Shetland wool and No.14 needles this would have been a fine knitted veil, in line with those produced in Shetland.⁵⁷

⁵² Matilda Marian Pullan, *The Lady's Dictionary of Needlework* (London: Ward and Lock, 1856), p.48 ; *The Lady's Manual of Fancy Work* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1859), p.191.

⁵³ SandArch, Day Book & Ledger 015-1845-1864, p.129, 2 August 1853, Catherine Williamson, Uyeasound, by 2 veils 2/8; John O'Groat Journal, 30 September 1853, silk and worsted veils sent to the Queen; *Examiner*, p.639, 01 October 1853, Standen and Company's Shetland and Scotch Warehouse, 112 Jermyn Street, St James's, advertising selling veils knitted in the Shetland Isles.

⁵⁴ Truck, line 2138.

⁵⁵ Supplement to the Lady's Newspaper, *The Lady's Newspaper*, 15 December 1855, p.3, knitted Shetland veil.

⁵⁶ *Godey's Lady's Book*, Vol.LXX, January-June, 1865 (USA), p.557.

⁵⁷ Cornelia Mee's 1867 *The Abergeldie Winter Book*, (London: Simpkin, Marshal, and Co., 1867), p.24. Round Shetland Veil. Knitting. Materials – one ounce of Shetland wool and a pair of knitting pins No.14 bell gauge. Centre with diamond edge, it has an accompanying image and also a reproduction of Ravelry.com.

Borders, lace edges and fringes

Gaugain's 1843 pattern for 'beautiful lace edging' in her *Miniature Knitting, Netting and Crochet Book* proclaimed it was 'sometimes used for Shetland Shawls instead of a Fringe' suggesting that the Shetland shawls she had seen commonly had a fringe rather than a lace edging.⁵⁸ Similarly, in addition to providing a pattern for a 'good fringe for a Shetland scarf' Copley's 1847 *The Comprehensive Knitting Book* also offered a pattern for a 'strong vandyke border' which she said was sometimes used on Shetland shawls, indicating she had seen Shetland shawls with vandyke borders.⁵⁹ However her comment that 'their appearance is too heavy to be in good keeping with the light texture of Shetland work' is unusual in that the vandyke pattern is commonly used in Shetland lace without any adverse effect on the appearance or 'texture' of the article. It is not clear what she means by 'strong' vandyke border, so there is the possibility that it has a different appearance from the normal vandyke pattern. Lace edged articles are those which have survived; indeed extensive searching for extant Shetland lace produced prior to 1939 has only sourced one fringed scarf/stole as illustrated in figure 34.



Figure 32: Fringed lace stole, SM TEX 81467 (1150 mm x 270 mm), image author's own.

⁵⁸ Jane Gaugain, *Mrs Gaugain's Miniature Knitting, Netting and Crochet Book* (Edinburgh: I. J. Gaugain, no date, possibly 1843), p.24.

⁵⁹ For example, Copley, *Comprehensive Knitting Book* p.58, p.60,

In addition to being a common feature throughout the knitting books, Shetland business records indicate fringes were requested until at least the end of the 1890s. In April 1880 John White, Shetland Warehouse, Edinburgh requested a very fine white shawl with ‘a good deep fringe all round’, to cost no more than 40/- from the Sandison shop in Unst. Six weeks later Sandison informed him that ‘the knitters of the shawl with the fringe also say they cannot do it for 40/- as the fringe took up so much wool’ although they did not receive the additional payment.⁶⁰ This may explain why the Shetland-produced lace shawls became predominantly lace rather than fringe-edged and why fringes were specifically requested rather than attached as normal practice.⁶¹ However, fringes were not only requested as individual articles, in March 1886 Ann Sutherland of Colvidale, Unst was paid 9/9 for attaching fringes to 13 shawls.⁶²

In some instances the knitting books recommended knitting the borders in two rather than four sections. Hope’s 1847 *The Knitter’s Casket* noted that the border could be knitted in two lengths, ‘for convenience’ but that it would create a ‘fulled’ effect where it was joined with the centre.⁶³ Although the ‘fulled’ effect is not elaborated upon, it is likely that it refers to puckering along the grafted seam and that this method of knitting the border would mean that the shawl would most likely not be able to lie completely flat. Shetland shawl borders were not knitted in this way, Shetland lace knitters preferring to knit the border in segments, which produced an aesthetically more pleasing finished article. Shetland Museum has no shawls which conform to the pattern-book suggestion of knitting the border in two lengths. However, as noted in the introduction to this chapter Glasgow Museums has a ‘Shetland’ lace shawl in their collection which has two L-shaped borders, grafted onto what may be a machine-knit lace centre. Hope was not alone in making this recommendation. Mrs Gore’s pattern for the border for a Shetland wool shawl in her 1846 *The Royal Shetland shawl, lace collar, Brighton slipper, and China purse receipt book* also recommended knitting the border in two sections but provided instructions on how to form the corner by knitting two and three stitches in the centre and at the ends, commencing from the plain rows which may indeed eliminate the puckering or ‘fulling’ of the centre.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ SandArch, 1880.18A, John White, Shetland Warehouse, 10 Frederick Street, Edinburgh, 15 April 1880; Letter Book 07-1877-1881 (Uyeasound), p.800, John White, Shetland Warehouse, 01 June 1880.

⁶¹ SandArch, 1881.54, John White, Shetland Warehouse, 10 Frederick Street, Edinburgh, 17 November 1881. ‘Sent a black lace square some time ago to get a fringe put on it’.

⁶² SandArch, Ledger 083-1884-1886, p.484, 01 March 1886.

⁶³ Hope, *Knitter’s Casket*, pp.9-10.

⁶⁴ Gore, Mrs, *Royal Shetland Shawl*, p.321 – the Shetland wool shawl, p.322 – border for the Shetland wool shawl.

Similarly, Riego De La Branchardiere's 1848 *The Knitting Book* contained a pattern for a 'border for Shetland shawl, round corners' noting that the pattern would be 'sufficient for two sides of the shawl'. Once both are completed she informed the knitter that one should be sewn to the wrong side of the shawl so that when the shawl was folded both borders would face outwards, indicating the way the shawl should be displayed on the body.⁶⁵ It also suggested that there would be a problem in the sewing/grafting stage. There are no known 'Shetland' shawls illustrating this; indeed Shetland lace does not have a right or wrong side, both sides being almost the same. Not all authors recommended knitting two sides of the border in one. Gaugain's 1847 pattern for a 'very handsome Shetland square knit shawl' suggested that:

After the centre is worked, the border at one end is continued and worked by letting out each end of the pin, as working directions will guide. The other end and sides are also taken up and worked in the same way.⁶⁶

While not conforming to the Shetland method, it is closer than any of the other published border suggestions.

Not Shetland articles labelled as Shetland

The labelling of an article as 'Shetland' is not always an indicator of the article being of Shetland design, but rather may merely refer to the wool or motifs being used. In 1845 Miss Watts published a pattern for a Shetland wool ruffle, knitted using four No.17 needles and Shetland wool. Of note here is the identifying mark of the article: it is not a Shetland ruffle (circular scarf for the neck), but a ruffle made of Shetland wool.⁶⁷ The Shetland wool ruffle makes a further appearance in the 1848 publication *Parlour Recreations for Ladies* but then disappears from any future knitting books.⁶⁸

In 1848 Mlle Dufour's 'The Work Table' column in *The Lady's Newspaper* provided a pattern for a child's Shetland knitted pelisse, knitted using No.6 bone pins. The identifying mark of the article is significant: it is not a Shetland pelisse, but a 'Shetland knitted'

⁶⁵ Eléonore Riego De La Branchardiere, *The knitting book*, third edition, p.35 for pattern, p.36 for illustration.

⁶⁶ Gaugain, *Pyrennees and Shetland Knit Shawl and Scarf Book*, p31-32 - very handsome Shetland square knit shawl.

⁶⁷ Miss Watts, *The Illustrated Knitting, Netting, & Crochet Book* (London: J. Milland, 1845), p.19 – Shetland wool ruffle.

⁶⁸ Unnamed author, *Parlour Recreations for Ladies* (London: Orr and Co, 1848), p.90.

pelisse.⁶⁹ This is suggestive of two possibilities: that the pelisse was knitted in Shetland or that the only Shetland component is in the style of motifs used in the pattern rather than the actual garment pattern or location of knitting. Nevertheless, the Shetland knitted pelisse is notable for various reasons: it is the earliest record of ‘Shetland’ being attached to a pattern which is published outwith the knitting books; it is the only occasion where Shetland is associated with a pelisse; and although not Shetland produced, it is the first indication that Shetland lace knitting could be applied to any fashion item, a format which would soon be adopted with gusto by the Shetland lace knitters. The pelisse in one guise or another had been in fashion since the early 18th century, changing shape, length and fitting depending on the contemporary fashion. When Dufour’s pattern for a Shetland knitted pelisse was published in 1848, the pelisse came in one of two styles: the pelisse mantle and the pelisse robe. The pelisse mantle reached its fashion peak between 1838 and 1845 and was a ‘three-quarter to full-length cloak with a cape reaching the waist and draped around the arms to form hanging sleeves’.⁷⁰ The second style, the pelisse robe, was in circulation between 1817 and the 1860s and was a day dress which fastened down the front with ribbon bows or concealed hooks and eyes. After c.1840 it increasingly became known as a redingote which by 1848 had almost completely replaced the pelisse robe becoming close fitting with lapels.⁷¹ The image supplied by Dufour to accompany the pattern shows a combination of the two styles. Like the pelisse mantle it has three-quarter length with a cape reaching to the waist but also has the pelisse robe’s ribbon bow fastenings down the front. Although it is somewhat odd that Dufour would promote an almost out of date fashion to her readership, even noting the article was designed for a child, that this is the only example of this garment may be explained by the pattern being published on the cusp of a fashion change.

Not in pattern books

The knitting books generally provided patterns for shawls and scarves, with a couple adding handkerchiefs, neckerchiefs and veils. Shetland knitters also produced clouds (like a scarf) and opera cloaks, although they are conspicuously absent from the knitting books. Clouds are included in the knitting section, but never with a Shetland identifier. Shetland clouds had been advertised since at least 1870, after which time they grew in popularity, appearing in almost all advertisements for Shetland lace and in the price lists and brochures

⁶⁹ Mlle Dufour, ‘The work table’, *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 15 March 1848, p.244.

⁷⁰ Valerie Cumming, C.W. Cunnington and P.E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History*, (Oxford: Berg, 2010), p.153.

⁷¹ Cumming et al, *Dictionary of Fashion History*, p.153, pp.170-171.

for Shetland merchants. The absence of Shetland clouds in the knitting books is intriguing. The first inclusion of a pattern for a (not Shetland) cloud is in Mee & Austin's 1867 *New Work on Knitting*. Along with the pattern they provided a description on how to wear the cloud:

There are two ways of wearing these elegant coverings: sometimes they are worn with one end over the head, the tassel hanging down to the side, and the remainder of the length wound round the shoulders; at other times a piece of coloured ribbon or velvet is run into one edge, about 12 inches from the tassels, the knitting is drawn up on this, put over the head, and the ends of velvet tied behind.⁷²

Although there are no known extant Shetland clouds, this description corresponds with images in brochures and Lerwick merchant shop windows.⁷³ Opera cloaks do appear in the knitting books, however, although with the recommendation of Shetland wool they are included in the crochet section.⁷⁴

Wool

In the period to 1900, 44 knitting books had recommendations for using Shetland wool in knitting up the patterns, or had a short commentary on Shetland wool. Of these, only 22 directly recommended Shetland wool for knitting a Shetland article. Recommendations for the use of Shetland wool increased from the earliest knitting books through to 1870, not only as a knitting material, but also for crochet, embroidery and crewel needlework. After 1870, in conjunction with the ever decreasing number of Shetland lace patterns in the knitting books, there are fewer recommendations for using Shetland wool. Indeed, the last sourced 'Shetland' pattern which recommended Shetland wool was for a Shetland Neckerchief in Mee and Austin's *Knitter's Companion* which recommended 1oz of scarlet or Victoria Rose Shetland wool, 1½oz of white, and 5 skeins single black Berlin wool.⁷⁵ Of the earliest knitting book authors only three recommended using Shetland wool:

⁷² Mee and Austin *New Work on Knitting*, p.26.

⁷³ SM, photograph No.Y00186, window display of Laurenson & Co, Lerwick; Joy Sandison Collection, price list for John White, Shetland Warehouse, between pp.19-20.

⁷⁴ Laura Valentine, *The Home Book of Pleasure and Instruction* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1867), p.291, illustration on p.293. Preface says Mee and Austin provided the knitting and crochet patterns.

⁷⁵ Cornelia Mee and Mary Austin, *Knitter's Companion* (first series of the), ninth edition (London, c.1867), p.46.

Gaugain (1842), Lambert (1843, 1844) and Mee (1845). It is noteworthy that only Gaugain recommended Shetland wool for knitting a Shetland article.⁷⁶

Lambert suggested four-thread embroidery or Lady Betty wool for her pattern for a Shetland knitted scarf and Lady Betty wool or four-thread embroidery fleecy when knitting the Shetland pattern for a shawl but recommended knitting with fine Shetland or Lady Betty for 'other shawl patterns'.⁷⁷ She did, however propose a way of making four thread embroidery fleecy equal to Shetland wool:

If this fleecy be split, it exactly imitates the Shetland wool. In splitting, the wool will frequently break; but this is not important as by laying the ends contrarwise, and twisting them together, a few stitches may be so knit, that the joins are not perceptible. Both ends of the scarf are to be made alike, by reversing the knitting of the border. They may be finished with a tied, knitted, or netted fringe, of the same wool, without splitting, or of fine German wool.⁷⁸

The additional effort to create a yarn that 'imitates Shetland wool' would initially suggest that Shetland wool was difficult to obtain, or perhaps too expensive for the casual knitter. However, this is negated in her recommendation of 'fine Shetland' for other shawls. In a similar fashion Mee did not suggest Shetland wool for her 'pretty simple pattern for the centre of a Shetland shawl' or the 'very pretty pattern for a Shetland shawl'. She did however recommend it for knitting two cuff patterns and a baby's cap, and even offered further advice should the knitter choose the Shetland wool option:

Pretty pattern for a baby's cap. No 16 pins for English and No.17 for Shetland wool (a cap made in Shetland wool will require 6 of these stripes, or 180 stitches for the crown; but only 5 stripes in the English wool).⁷⁹

Many knitting books illustrate this initial continuing tendency to propose Shetland wool for non-Shetland articles and non-Shetland wool for Shetland articles. For example Miss Ronaldson's 1847 *Lady's Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting and Netting Work*, suggested knitting a Polka cap in two colours of Shetland wool but using Berlin wool for

⁷⁶ Gaugain, *Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work*, p.105.

⁷⁷ Lambert, *My Knitting Book*, pp.80-81, A Shetland knitted scarf four-thread embroidery, or Lady Betty's wool; p.82, Shetland pattern for a shawl, Lady Betty's wool, or four-thread embroidery fleecy.

⁷⁸ Lambert, *My Knitting Book*, p.80.

⁷⁹ Cornelia Mee, *Mee's Companion to the Work-table: containing selections in knitting, netting & crochet work* (London: D. Bogue, 1845), p.3, Another pretty cuff pattern; p.5 – Gentlemen's cuffs – p.34 – Pretty pattern for a baby's cap; p.103, Pretty simple pattern for the centre of a Shetland shawl; p.57, very pretty pattern for a Shetland shawl.

the Shetland handkerchief.⁸⁰ While Riego De La Branchardiere's 1846 *Knitting, Crochet and Netting*, recommended Shetland wool for her 'Taie D'Oreillier' (pillow), she omitted any mention of the wool to be used for her Shetland shawl or Shetland scarf although in the 1848 third edition of *The Knitting Book*, conceded to advocating the 'best Shetland wool' for creating the centre for a Shetland shawl.⁸¹ The rationale behind this is not clear. It may possibly have something to do with the thickness of the available wool or perhaps the fine worsted required for knitting openwork patterns for Shetland shawls and scarves was not easily available, or potentially quite expensive. While less fine Shetland wool, which could be used in any number of non-Shetland knitted articles, may have been more readily available, as noted with Lambert, both were suggested within the same publications. From 1847 there was an increase in the recommendations of using Shetland wool for knitting both Shetland and other articles. This coincided with a number of new authors entering the knitting book business: Mrs Hope's 1847 *The Knitter's Casket* recommended Shetland wool for Shetland shawls and handkerchiefs and Marie Jane Cooper's 1847 *The New Guide to Knitting & Crochet* recommended Shetland wool for her Shetland shawl and Shetland knitted scarf.⁸² One other recommendation worthy of note is Copley's 1849 inclusion of a pattern for mittens with the suggestion to use fine black silk or Shetland wool.⁸³ Clearly this is an indication not only of the fineness of Shetland wool, but also that it continued to be available for purchase, if potentially difficult to obtain. Nonetheless, it seems somewhat unusual that so many authors would propose non-Shetland wool for Shetland articles, but Shetland wool for non-Shetland articles. Shetland wool was available for non-commercial knitters although it is difficult to gauge how easy it was to purchase in UK mainland shops.⁸⁴ The 1857 fifth edition reprint of Gaugain's *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work* Gaugain noted the difficulties in 'procuring the proper wool for the Fine Shetland Shawl, page 105' and provided request and postage details.⁸⁵ This is the only publication to offer to send Shetland wool direct to the knitter and does not appear in any of the earlier editions. Certainly from the late 1860s

⁸⁰ Ronaldson, *Lady's Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting and Netting Work*, p.127 – LXXXL – Polka cap; p.169 – CII – Shetland handkerchief.

⁸¹ Eléonore Riego de La Branchardiere, *Knitting, Crochet and Netting*, with twelve illustrations (London: S. Knights, 1846), p.21, Shetland shawl; p.40, Shetland scarf; p.5 Taie D'Oreillier (pillow); *The knitting book*, third edition (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co, 1848), p.32.

⁸² Hope, *Knitter's Casket*, pp.9-10; Cooper, *New Guide to Knitting*, p.14, p.16.

⁸³ Copley, *Comprehensive Knitting Book*, p.167.

⁸⁴ SandArch, Letter Book 01-1852-1856 & 1860-1862, p.97, 06 April 1854, letter to W. B. Mackenzie, Edinburgh, offering 1000 cuts of worsted – this is the only record I have found for before 1860.

⁸⁵ Jane Gaugain, *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work; Illustrated by upwards of forty coloured patterns, Vol.II fifth thousand* (Edinburgh: I. J. Gaugain, 1857), front of book, page not numbered.

there is increasing evidence of Shetland wool being actively sought by individual and independent knitters as well as merchants both in Shetland and on the UK mainland and a commentary on the shortage of the finest hand-spun worsted so desired for Shetland lace.⁸⁶

While not all authors specified a wool type for their Shetland articles, those who did generally recommended super-fleecy, four thread embroidery fleecy, Lady Betty, very fine Lady Betty, fine cotton and fine German. Very fine needlework is most aesthetically pleasing when produced with very fine yarn or thread. Lady Betty did produce a fine yarn and as an easily accessible product it is reasonable that it would be regularly recommended for the Shetland shawls and patterns.⁸⁷ Without doubt, knitting book authors invariably had their preferences when it came to choosing which wools to recommend. While Berlin, Lady Betty and German wools were most commonly recommended wools in the knitting books, this is perhaps better understood not only in relation to availability, but also explained by the High Street shop presence of many of the knitting book authors who also supplied knitting materials. Furthermore, as the reprinting of revised knitting books attests, authors strived to ensure that the knitter had good prospects of successfully completing a knitted article and the yarn suggested would need to come close to producing the right stitch and row gauge for the specified pattern. In this light it is clear to see why some authors actively promoted their preferences with regard to wool quality and brand. They will not all be discussed here, rather the focus will remain on Shetland wool, or where a direct comparison has been made between Shetland and alternative brands, such as Mrs Hope in her 1847 publication *The Knitter's Casket*. Hope recommended Shetland wool for her patterns for Shetland shawls and handkerchiefs, explicitly stating that Shetland wool was 'a beautifully fine, soft, round-threaded article' and noting that 'the two thread Lady Betty, fleecy, gauze, or any of those inferior articles too frequently substituted' should not be used.⁸⁸ This type of short commentary on wool quality and brand preference is common in the knitting books and highlights the conflicting opinions about Shetland wool. Nevertheless, there are publications which provide a much more detailed account thus affording a better understanding of decisions behind wool purchases in a period where few other records are available. Esther Copley's 1849 *The Comprehensive Knitting Book* is the first knitting book to provide detailed descriptions of the various wools available in the market place. Copley included a section on Shetland

⁸⁶ See Chapter three for discussion.

⁸⁷ Phyllis G. Tortora and Ingrid Johnson, *The Fairchild Books Dictionary of Textiles* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), p.339. Lady Betty was very popular for knitting shawls in the nineteenth century, it was a fine linen spun from Leicester flax.

⁸⁸ Hope, *Knitter's Casket*, pp.9-10.

wool, commenting on wool quality, packaging and how it is sold, the shortage of colours available and a comparison with other wools on the market. Her commentary clearly demonstrates her perception of Shetland wool in 1849, which acts as a good facilitator for comparisons with the viewpoints of other knitting book authors:

This elegant wool is closely twined: and though extremely fine and light, is remarkably firm and wiry. The texture formed from it, though thin as lace, is strong and durable...[it] is about half the thickness of the single Berlin. It is generally done up in two-ounce hanks, tied, but not separated, in quarter ounce skeins. This division is most likely made for the convenience of small purchasers; but when a large quantity is to be used, it is better to wind the entire hank in one ball. Joins in knitting should be as much as possible avoided.⁸⁹

Warren and Pullan's 1855 *Treasures in Needlework* concurred with Copley that Shetland wool was 'very fine and soft', but considered Pyrenees wool to be of a better quality, noting that Pyrenees was 'incomparably softer than Shetland.'⁹⁰ The following year in *The Lady's Dictionary of Needlework* Pullan disagreed with Copley's assessment of it being closely twined, stating that Shetland wool was 'not very much twisted' and that although they were almost the same thickness, Pyrenees was in fact more twisted than Shetland⁹¹ This was repeated verbatim the following year in *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*.⁹²

Mrs Lewis's 1884 *Wools And How To Use Them*, published by Jevons & Mellor (wool manufacturers, importers and merchants and by implication discussing wools available through their shop), rather strangely lists two Shetland wools 'Shetland Summer' and 'Shetland Winter', although did not elaborate on the differences between them. She further noted that both Andalusian and Shetland wools were 'very fine, very soft and light, consequently there is a very large quantity of the weight', noting that both were available in a variety of beautiful colours.⁹³ Where the knitting books recommended a wool type, they occasionally suggested a colour scheme to follow which the author considered worked well in the finished article. With regard to Shetland wool such suggestions were not common. Copley noted that in 1849:

⁸⁹ Copley, *Comprehensive Knitting Book*, pp.4-5. See Appendix 4.

⁹⁰ Eliza Warren and Matilda Marian Pullan, *Treasures in Needlework; comprising instructions in knitting, netting, crochet, point lace, tatting, braiding, and embroidery* (London: Ward and Lock, 1855), p.124, p.337.

⁹¹ Pullan *The Lady's Dictionary of Needlework*, p.48.

⁹² *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, November-December 1857, p.455 - Full Instructions in Needle-Work of All Kinds.

⁹³ Mrs Lewis, *Wools and how to use them* (Birmingham: Jevons & Mellor, 1884), p.9, p.45.

There is not a great variety of colours in Shetland wool – probably because the demand is not extensive enough to encourage much speculation in dyeing. The Shetland wool is principally white; and when it is desired to introduce shaded colours for the ends of a scarf, or the border of a shawl, Berlin wool is commonly employed.⁹⁴

While coloured Berlin wool was recommended with some frequency amongst almost all of the knitting book authors, very little was said about the colours other than there were many available. Nevertheless, the knitting books give an insight into the Shetland colours available. Although black Shetland wool may be natural or dyed, it was first mentioned by Mee in 1846 with the first mention of scarlet Shetland wool by Mrs Savage in 1847.⁹⁵ In 1855, Warren and Pullan's *Treasures in Needlework* suggested using three different shades of Shetland wool, but it is not clear whether they were referring to three of the various natural colours of Shetland wool or dyed wool, perhaps leaving it to the knitter to choose. Their comparison of Shetland colours with coloured Pyrenees wools noted that the Pyrenees wool took dyes of a 'far more brilliant character than the Shetland'.⁹⁶ This was reiterated by *Godey's Lady's Magazine* who added that the 'dye of the colored [sic] Pyrenees is remarkably beautiful and fast' and that it was 'rarely met with genuine equal in this country.'⁹⁷ Pullan's 1859 *The Lady's Manual of Fancy Work* agreed with Copley that Shetland wool did not come in 'any great variety of shades' but considered the scarlet and crimson beautiful while Mee & Austin's 1860 *Manual of knitting* recommended pink Shetland wool.⁹⁸ Of note here is the first advertisement citing colour in 1862, when Linklater & Co., advertised scarlet, black, and grey Shetland lace shawls, it is clear that dyed Shetland wool was reaching the southern markets at an earlier date than first advertised.⁹⁹ Victoria Rose Shetland wool first appeared in Mee & Austin's 1867 *New Work on Knitting* after which the recommended colours remain the same as above with no mention of blue, pink, peach and salmon, colours that appeared in business advertisements of the period.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Copley, *Comprehensive Knitting Book*, pp.4-5. See Appendix 4.

⁹⁵ Cornelia Mee, *Exercises in Knitting*, (1847); Mrs Savage, *The Winchester fancy needlework instructor and manual of the fashionable and elegant accomplishment of knitting and crochet*. Third edition (Winchester: Savage, 1847), p.45.

⁹⁶ Warren and Pullan, *Treasures in Needlework*, p.88, p.124, p.337.

⁹⁷ *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, Vol.55, p.455.

⁹⁸ Pullan *The Lady's Manual of Fancy Work*, p.191; Cornelia Mee and Mary Austin, *Manual of knitting beautifully illustrated first series*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, n.d.), year of publication in book - 1860 allocated by Southampton knitting library, p.14.

⁹⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, Issue 22683, 10 June 1862, Linklater & Coy's, New Shetland Warehouse, Edinburgh.

¹⁰⁰ Mee and Austin, *New Work on Knitting*, p.16.

Cleaning and Dressing

The primary purpose of the knitting books was to generate the technical ability to produce specific articles, however once the knitted article was complete and used, it would need to be cleaned at some future point in time. As discussed in Chapter 3, great care must be taken when washing and dressing a Shetland shawl. Shetland merchants regularly ended their brochures and prices lists with the recommendation that the best course of action was to return the item to them to be cleaned and dressed appropriately for a small charge. Although it is difficult to precisely date many of the brochures and price lists, it is clear that many of them belong to the second half of the nineteenth century. While it is not known if this service was offered from the beginning of the industry, the knitting books make it evident that it was known that Shetland articles required specific care.

Jane Gaugain provided instructions for washing a ‘knit woollen shawl’ in her 1842 *The Lady’s Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work* which were repeated in her 1847 *Pyrennees and Shetland Knit Shawl and Scarf Book*, noting that:

it should be washed in water a little more than luke-warm, with white soap, which is preferable to any other. The white soap should be boiled and mixed up in the water before the shawl is put into it. It is necessary to wash in two waters; and in rinsing, the water must also be above luke-warm, so as to keep the pores of the wool open, to clear it entirely of the soap, otherwise it will get thick and hard. Take about one pint and a half of warm water, and put about two table spoonfuls of dissolved gum Arabic into it; (the gum may be had a druggists, ready dissolved.) Mix the water and gum well together; dip in the shawl, and squeeze it two or three times in it, so as to take equally all over it; then wring it well out of this, and again wring it in clean linen cloths; pin it square out until thoroughly dry, on a carpet, with a clean sheet or table-cloth under it. Note – all open wool knitting should be dressed in this fashion.¹⁰¹

While not quite matching the rigorous standards of the skilled Shetland cleaners and dressers, and certainly not recommending the setting up of a sulphur barrel in the home, the directions are reasonable and easy to follow for the southern household. Gaugain’s use of gum Arabic may possibly be to do with using coloured wools and the colour brightening effects of gum Arabic, or perhaps as a starching agent.¹⁰² A very light stiffening would have helped keep garment shape and stitch definition until it wore off rather readily during use. Gaugain’s suggestion of gum Arabic is in line with the Shetland process of cleaning

¹⁰¹ Gaugain, *Lady’s Assistant in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet Work*, p.118 - Directions for washing a knit woollen shawl: 1847 *Pyrennees and Shetland Knit Shawl and Scarf Book*, (Edinburgh: I. J. Gaugain, 1847), p.7.

¹⁰² D. Noemia Souza, *Fabric Care*, (New Delhi: New age International: 1998), pp.68-70.

and dressing in 1859. On 4 August Unst merchant Alexander Sandison sent gum Arabic and thirty mohair veils to be dressed by Anne Jamieson.¹⁰³ The first knitting book to specifically reference the cleaning and dressing of a 'Shetland' shawl appears in Elizabeth Jackson's 1844 *The Practical Companion to the Work Table* noting:

Make a thin lather of boiling soap and water, plunge the shawl well into it, and gently strip it through the hand; it must never be rubbed or wrung. When clean, rince [sic] it without any soap; pin it out on a sheet exactly square.¹⁰⁴

These are much more simplified than Gaugain's detailed instructions and while instructions for cleaning and dressing Shetland articles continued to be incorporated into the knitting books rather than improving with time, the instructions became less accurate and at times somewhat strange in their depictions on how to care for Shetland fine knitted goods. Ronaldson's 1847 *Lady's Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting and Netting Work* gives directions for washing Shetland work:

Wash in lukewarm water and boiled soap; put a little blue in the water; do not rub, but squeeze it, and press the water out without ringing; you then pin it out on a sheet on the floor, and iron it, putting paper betwixt the iron and the work; put it through thin starch.¹⁰⁵

While recommending putting blue in the water, to help brighten the shawl, she also unexpectedly recommended starching and ironing it. Although this is not to say that it did not take place, there is only one known Shetland reference of starch being used and none with regard to ironing during the dressing process.¹⁰⁶ However, as Shetland lace is soft and smooth to the touch, any excess starching would cause this effect to be lost. Instructions in the 1848 *The Drawing-Room Magazine* did not differentiate Shetland shawls from any other knitted shawl, noting that:

Previous to fringing, tack some strips of linen to the sides and ends, dip it in some sugar and water, 2 lumps to a rather large cup of water, then strain it out on a sheet to dry, it will not require pinning. The same process will do for Shetland shawls after washing.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ SandArch, 1859.10 1859 Account book of hosiery given out to knit.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Jackson, *The Practical Companion to the Work Table. Containing selections for knitting, netting, & crochet work.* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1844), p.78.

¹⁰⁵ Ronaldson, *Lady's Book of Useful and Ornamental Knitting and Netting Work*, p.176.

¹⁰⁶ Truck, line 104.

¹⁰⁷ Unknown, *The Drawing-Room Magazine: or Ladies Book of Fancy Needlework and Choire Literature, Vol. I* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1848), p.337.

Although in a publication with an unnamed author, the pattern and washing instructions which follow it are for a small knitted Shetland scarf designed by Mrs Warren. In designing a 'Shetland scarf' it might be reasonable to assume that Warren was aware of Shetland articles, and possibly of the care needed in their cleaning and dressing. However, her comment that the 'same process will do for Shetland shawls' shows that this indeed may not have been the case. Sugar is commonly used as a stiffening agent in crochet work, but one which would have created a hardness in the finished article.

Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century very little changed with regard to washing instructions. One notable exception is Elliot's 1890 publication which informed readers that 'All fine Shetland, or other finely-combed and spun Wools, should be washed in a lather of bran'.¹⁰⁸ Many of the later knitting books did not provide washing and cleaning directions, and those which did were inclined to reiterate those recorded in the earlier knitting books or offered very general instructions. This omission may have been due to changing fashions and the ever decreasing inclusion of patterns for Shetland articles in the later nineteenth century knitting books. Outwith the knitting books, instructions on the best method for cleaning and dressing Shetland lace did continue, often appearing in the women's columns of newspapers. Although most likely referring to purchased rather than home knitted Shetland lace, 'A Shetlander' writing in the *West Australia* newspaper in 1932 noted:

I would not advocate the use of a teaspoonful of gum when washing a Shetland shawl. It would make the wool hard and the beauty of the real Shetland is its softness. I am a Shetlander, and all we do is to wash the articles in a lather of melted soap and warm water. We never rub the garments, just strip them through the hands, and then stretch the shawls either on the grass or on special stretchers made for the purpose. To whiten Shetland wool garments put them through sulphur fumes when wet. For the very fine cobwebby lace shawls add very thin boiled starch to the rinsing water, but not for the ordinary wool.¹⁰⁹

While disagreeing with Gaugain's suggestion of gum Arabic and confirming the use of a light starch solution, 'A Shetlander' also suggested the use of sulphur for whitening. Although a central part of Shetland cleaning and dressing, it not unsurprisingly makes no appearance in any of the knitting books.

¹⁰⁸ M. Elliott, *The Book of Hats and Caps* (London: Faudel, Phillips & Sons, 1890).

¹⁰⁹ A Shetlander (Inglewood), *The West Australian*, Perth, WA, 06 May 1932, p.7.

Machine-knit

The non-Shetland production of Shetland lace directly impacted on sales from Shetland. The degree to which the home production of Shetland lace articles by home knitters on the UK mainland impacted Shetland knitters is not known, but it seems unlikely that it would have been excessive. However, the introduction of machine-knit Shetland lace did greatly affect the Shetland hand-knitted lace industry. J. H. Beardsmore in his 1909 *The History of Hucknall Torkard* stated that one Mr. Radford told him that around 1852:

Mr. James Wood, of Nottingham, bought a knitted fall in the Shetlands and asked Mr. Robert Widdowson, postmaster and stocking-maker, if he could not make something similar on a frame.¹¹⁰

From this the Nottinghamshire Shetland hosiery industry developed. Imitation Shetland shawls, veils and falls (similar to veils) were machine produced in large quantities, and varying qualities, and by the 1860s were being sold extensively throughout Britain and overseas.¹¹¹ The popularity of this industry in Nottinghamshire is confirmed by the number of Shetland lace and Shetland shawl manufacturers listed in the directories. In 1864, G. W. Vogel, Philadelphia department store, sold two types of Shetland shawls, 'real' and the 'ordinary kind': the real were hand-knit from Shetland and sold for twenty-five to thirty dollars; the ordinary were 'knit by machinery' and sold for seven dollars.¹¹² This early reference to the sale of machine-knit Shetland lace shawls suggests the possibility that Vogel's were purchasing Nottingham produced shawls alongside Shetland produced shawls. Felkin's 1867 publication *A History of the Machine Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufactures* noted with regard to the burgeoning fine Shetland Shawl industry in Nottingham workshops, that:

A far greater development would have been attained, had not the first productions been immediately copied of a depreciated quality, so as to be lowered in price...the folly of putting in jeopardy the demand for goods by infringing upon their quality.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ J. H. Beardsmore, *The History of Hucknall Torkard*, (Linney, 1909), available at <<http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/hucknall1909/hucknall26.htm>> [accessed 15 January 2012]. Chapter: The Hosiery Trade.

¹¹¹ Stanley Chapman, *A History of Beeston Lace*, (CP Walker & Son in association with Gilbert & Hall, 2005): SandArch 1867.23, McLaren & Son, 12 December 1867.

¹¹² *Godey's Lady's Book*, June 1864, p.390. The accompanying description of the shawls would suggest that they were knitted lace.

¹¹³ William Felkin, *A History of the Machine Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufactures*, (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1867), pp.390-391.

Felkin seems blissfully unaware of the hypocritical stance he has adopted. His contemporary analysis of the production methods taking place in Nottingham could equally be applied to the impact Nottingham's machine-knitted Shetland lace shawl production as a whole had on Shetland hand-knitted articles and its producers. Seven years later while reporting on the lace exhibits at the 1874 International Exhibition in London, Mrs Bury Palliser itemised the machine-produced lace being manufactured in the Nottingham workshops, including 'Shetland goods made on the lace frame', noting that:

...such is the bill of fare set out by the Chamber of Commerce of Nottingham, and the exhibition they make is such as to sustain the reputation of the machine-made lace of Nottingham, and of the admirable reproduction by intricate machinery of the labour of human hands.¹¹⁴

Much of this 'admirable reproduction by machinery' was at the expense of the livelihoods and economic autonomy of the labour of Shetland women's hands. In 1923 *The Scotsman* reported on the serious detrimental effect of 'goods bearing a close resemblance' to Shetland lace and emphasised the necessity for having the Shetland made goods trade-marked.¹¹⁵ This was indeed needed, there were claims that at one time G. H. Hurt, a Nottingham business which produced Shetland shawls from 1912, sold Shetland-type shawls to the Shetlands Islands' although there is no comment as to who bought them or why.¹¹⁶ Figure 35 illustrates two machine knit lace shawls, knitted on hand-operated frames by G. H. Hurt & Son Ltd at their Chilwell factory. The shawls are five and a half foot square, however it is not known when these shawls were produced and they may possibly be modern reproductions of historical shawls produced in the factory.

¹¹⁴ Mrs Bury Palliser, The International Exhibition, *Art Journal* (London: 1874), pp.173-174.

¹¹⁵ *The Scotsman*, 27 December 1923, p.7, Shetland in 1923.

¹¹⁶ *Nottingham Post*, 03 December 2012 <<http://www.nottinghampost.com/sacrilege-destroy-craft-says-boss-100-year-old/story-17485163-detail/story.html#ixzz3WFtME0W6>> [accessed 27 March 2013].

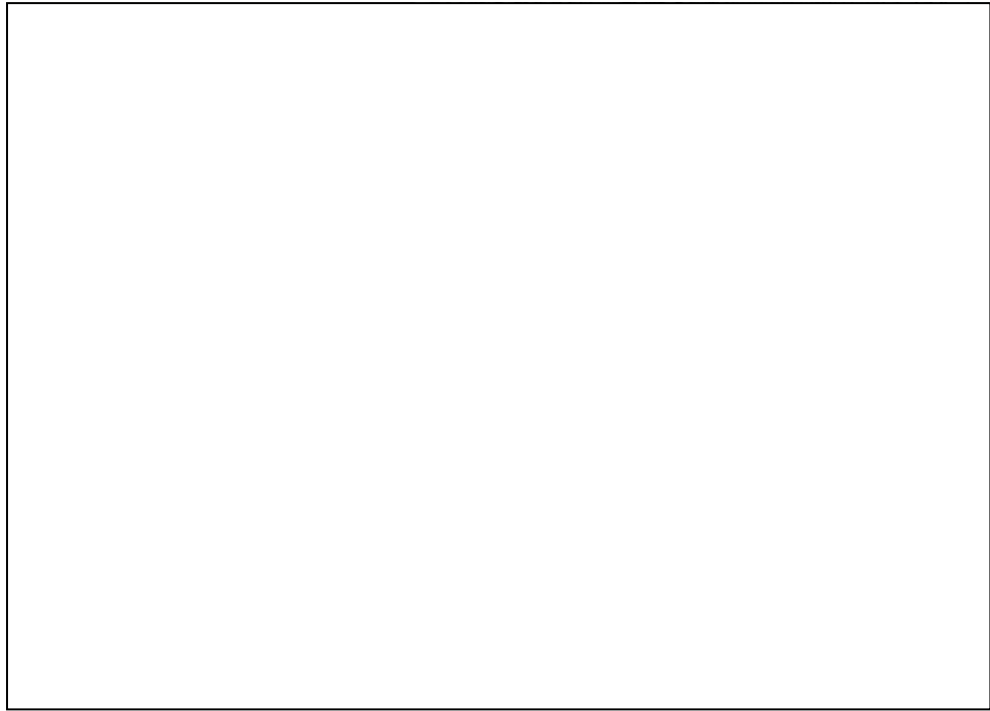


Figure 33: Machine knit lace shawls, G. H. Hurt & Son Ltd. The shawls are five and a half foot square and knitted on hand-operated frames in Hurt's factory at Chilwell (date unknown, possibly modern reproductions). Image from Mason, *Nottingham Lace*, p.194. Image has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Certainly the production of machine-knit Shetland lace continued through to the end of this research period (1939) and beyond. On 19 October 1935 the *Shetland Times* reprinted a short article, 'Hucknall Factories Busy: Royal patronage for Imitation Shetland Wool Industry', from the 12 October edition of the *Nottingham Evening Post*, noting that further comment was unnecessary:

The manufacture of imitation Shetland shawls, which is Hucknall's oldest industry, is just now enjoying a period of prosperity, all the factories being on full time, and in some cases working overtime. Additional fillip will be given to the trade by the fact that a shawl of this type has been purchased for the Royal baby. Information to this effect has come to a Hucknall firm from its London house, the purchase being made by the Duchess of Kent some weeks ago.¹¹⁷

Shetland lace shawls had been produced in Hucknall since the 1850s and in this it is unsurprising that royals would offer patronage to long standing British textile producers.¹¹⁸ However, the Duchess would certainly have been doing so in the knowledge that she was purchasing a Shetland shawl which had no connection to Shetland. Earlier in the year

¹¹⁷ ST, 19 Oct 1935.

¹¹⁸ Sheila A. Mason, *Nottingham Lace 1760s-1950s*, (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1994), p.11.

Shetland had presented a selection of 15 hand-knitted articles as a wedding gift to the Duke and Duchess of Kent which included a Shetland fine white lace shawl. Designed by David Sutherland, hand-knitted by Joan Sutherland from wool hand-spun by her sister, and David's wife Ann Sutherland (née the Nisbet sisters originally from Unst), the shawl, which took a year to make, was seven foot square, weighed 2½ ounces and was knitted from almost seven miles of two-ply finely spun worsted. Joan also presented a personal gift of an 'exceedingly dainty white lace jumper' with a lace bow in front and short sleeves.¹¹⁹

Shetland lace and real Shetland lace¹²⁰

The first known use of the appendage 'real' with Shetland shawls is an 1845 Australian advertisement offering 'Real Shetland Shawls. A few of the above truly elegant shawls on sale', which although does not specify fine lace in describing them as truly elegant, raises the possibility that they may have been.¹²¹ In describing the articles as real Shetland there is the inference that other Shetland shawls were not real, however 1845 is early in the Shetland lace industry, prior to any known mass production of non-Shetland 'Shetland shawls' being marketed. In 1863 The Scotch Worsted and Shetland Warehouse in London advertised a clearing sale of lace Shetland Shawls at 1/6 each and real Shetland veils at 2/6 and 3/6 each.¹²² Interestingly the warehouse was selling lace Shetland shawls but real Shetland veils and the veils were priced higher than the shawls. Two possible conclusions may be drawn from this: first that the lace Shetland shawls were not real, but imitations; or second, that the fashion for Shetland veils and the ease with which they could be copied was such that imitations were commonly made and therefore required the appendage of 'real' to assure the consumer of the legitimacy of the product. In fact it is likely that neither was the case. Although Shetland-produced Shetland veils were available in Edinburgh from at least 1851, as early as 1853 there were questions raised regarding their authenticity.¹²³ In response to a letter sent to the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, M. B. noted in her reply that her black knitted Shetland veil was made in Ireland.¹²⁴ The second conclusion above would also suggest that imitations of Shetland lace shawls were

¹¹⁹ *SN*, 10 January 1935.

¹²⁰ The use of words such as real, authentic, genuine etc in advertisements often refers to all Shetland knitted goods, not only fine lace knitting.

¹²¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, NSW, Australia, 14 October 1845, p.1.

¹²² *Morning Post*, 05 February 1863, p1; *Daily News*, 05 February 1863.

¹²³ *The Scotsman*, 04 June 1851, p.1 - W. B. Mackenzie, Shetland Warehouse, Edinburgh.

¹²⁴ M. B., Notices to Correspondents, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 01 July 1853, p.95.

not so commonly available that the shawls required authenticating. This, however, was not the case as evidence by the rise in Nottinghamshire machine-knit Shetland lace shawls.

From this perspective it is clear why Shetland lace shawls required confirmation of authenticity. In 1868, Malcolm Tulloch's Shetland Warehouse in Glasgow advertised 'real' Shetland lace shawls, half shawls and handkerchiefs.¹²⁵ From this point on the inclusion of 'real' became an increasingly commonplace occurrence to differentiate Shetland hand-knitted lace from the machine-knitted variety. Towards the end of the century a further differentiation was made by identifying some articles. In 1896 Glasgow business Neilson, Shaw & MacGregor advertised 'Real Shetland Lace Shawls' alongside 'Shetland shawls (imitation)'.¹²⁶ In 1900 Toronto-based John Catto advertised real Shetland as well as Orenburg shawls as imitation Shetland.¹²⁷ This confusion of Shetland with Russian Orenburg shawls is perhaps explained by the 1884 production of machine-knitted Orenburg shawls in the same Nottingham workshops producing the machine-knitted Shetland lace shawls.¹²⁸ The need to authenticate Shetland lace from other productions continued into the twentieth century, often focussing on the hand-knitted as illustrated in one 1907 advertisement for Maule & Son which used 'real' three times as well as 'guaranteed' and 'genuine' with reference to the articles being hand-knitted.¹²⁹ Their 1924 advertising guaranteed every Shetland article as authentic, continuing with the emphasis on 'real' hand-knit articles.¹³⁰ The overt use of 'real' and 'genuine' indicates that there was a consumer base who desired the authentic hand-knit article over a machine-produced one. However whether this was purely for aesthetic purposes or part of a purchasing ideology in the 1920s is unclear.¹³¹ Occasionally what appeared to be the same article could be simultaneously be categorised as real or not. On 10 November 1926 McDonald's Ltd, Glasgow, advertised real Shetland lace bed jackets while 6 weeks earlier Jenners in Edinburgh advertised lace bed jackets, noting the fabric was very similar to fine Shetland shawls.¹³² While it might seem reasonable that businesses on the British mainland and overseas might require the inclusion of 'real' as an assurance to their

¹²⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, 11 February 1868. Real Shetland lace shawls; *Glasgow Herald*, 09 April 1868, Real Shetland lace shawls, Real Shetland lace half shawls. Real Shetland lace handkerchiefs.

¹²⁶ *Glasgow Herald*, 17 November 1896.

¹²⁷ *Daily Mail and Empire*, Toronto, Canada, 20 December 1900, p.5.

¹²⁸ Beardsmore, *History of Hucknall Torkard*, no page number, Chapter: The Hosiery Trade.

¹²⁹ *The Scotsman*, 12 August 1907, p.1.

¹³⁰ *The Scotsman*, 23 May 1924, p.1.

¹³¹ See chapter 6, Being somewhere else for discussion of consumer ideologies and authenticity.

¹³² *The Scotsman*, 10 November 1926, p.13; 25 September 1926, p.12. The accompanying images appear to be the same garment.

discerning customers, it is somewhat odd that Shetland merchants, dealing in and operating out of Shetland, would be required to make the same assurances. Nevertheless, Shetland merchants were not immune to the need to specify the authenticity of the goods they were selling, other than perhaps that Shetland wool was used.¹³³ In 1862 William Johnson advertised that he was a ‘Manufacturer of Real Shetland lace veils and shawls’.¹³⁴ Coutts & Fairweather advertised the 1881 opening of the Edinburgh branch of their New Shetland Repository noting that it was for the sale of genuine Shetland articles, hand-knitted using Shetland wool.¹³⁵ Between 1862 and 1939 fifteen individual Shetland businesses described the articles for sale as being ‘real’, including Miss Johnson and Schoor & Muir (see chapter 5 for further discussion of both businesses).¹³⁶

Concerns regarding the production of imitation Shetland goods were an ongoing issue amongst Shetland producers and merchants alike. Section 16 of the Merchandise Marks Act, 1887 concluded that:

...a trade description which indicated particular class or method of manufacture, and includes the name of a place in or a part of the United Kingdom, and is thereby calculated to mislead’ mean such terms as Kidderminster Carpets, Windsor Soap, “Balbrigan” on hosiery or “Shetland” on shawls, and the like, which, although they might be held to be merely phrases descriptive of method of manufacture, are yet calculated to mislead as to place of origin.¹³⁷

A list of articles which were detained by customs due to inconsistencies in trade descriptions included ‘Shetland wool’ which was seized on the grounds that the description was intended to mislead.¹³⁸ The Act, however, only applied to imported goods and not

¹³³ Other yarns are known to have been used, including mohair and merino, as well as silk and cotton.

¹³⁴ Weekly in the *Shetland Advertiser* from 17 March 1862, Issue 11 until 05 January 1963 Issue 53.

¹³⁵ *Peace's Almanac*, 1881, p160.

¹³⁶ Advertisements placed in *Peace's* and *Manson's Almanacs*, or known through price list brochures. Dates represent first known Shetland business advertisement and end of research period, there are likely to be more examples but fifteen have been found to date.

¹³⁷ PP 1888 [C.5589] *Thirty-second report of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs on the customs* (for the year ended 31st March, 1888), p.64.

¹³⁸ PP 1888 [C.5589] *Thirty-second report of the Commissioners*, p.36.

goods produced within the British Isles, as such the naming of Leicester produced wool as ‘Shetland wool’ was still misleading but not illegal.¹³⁹

While this certainly would have fallen into the customs category ‘calculated to mislead’ Sir Albert Rollit, speaking to the Select Committee on merchandise marks stated ‘Shetland shawl, and the like...I would point out that such words after a time may become generic and may be harmlessly used.’¹⁴⁰ This was certainly not the case and in 1903 *The Scotsman* reported that:

...the demand for the more delicate work has fallen off, and shawls which at one time brought from £4 to £6 are now difficult to sell. The market has also been flooded with factory-made goods bearing a close resemblance to those of Shetland manufacture; and as those articles can be produced at absurdly cheap rates...¹⁴¹

At the time of *The Scotsman* article, the issue of machine-knit non-Shetland lace shawls had been ongoing for 50 years. W. R. Scott’s 1914 *Report to the Board of Agriculture on Home Industries in the Highland and Islands* included a detailed section on the problems faced by Shetland producers and merchants regarding the sale of non-Shetland produced Shetland articles. Scott acknowledged that ‘unscrupulous dealings’ by businesses on the British mainland were an ongoing issue but by no means a new one. Identifying the problems of imitation Shetland goods he suggested the introduction of a trademark, overseen by an independent body which would show consumers the provenance of the article by authenticating the origins. Recognising the issues surrounding the mis-description of factory-produced Shetland lace shawls and other goods, and the likelihood that this would divert demand from real Shetland lace shawls (and other goods) Scott noted that while he shared the producers and merchants concerns, he considered the imitation goods as part of normal commercial enterprise:

This, however, is only the usual tribute paid to the excellence of any material by the appearance of imitations...Immediately any commodity acquires reputation there is always an immense number of persons who wish to have it, but who cannot or will not pay the price. To meet this attitude there are always producers ready to place an imitation on the market. There are exceptional cases where the cheap substitute may destroy the demand for the original commodity, as in the case of articles of fashion or of personal adornment.

¹³⁹ PP 1897 (346) *Report from the Select Committee on merchandise marks; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, p.210, line 3545 evidence of Mr Mundella.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.64, line 1072, Sir Albert Rollit.

¹⁴¹ W.F.C, *The Scotsman*, 22 August 1903, p.7. Bygone industries in Shetland.

Apart from such instances, the general effect is that, as long as there are means of identifying the genuine thing, the flooding of the market with imitations tend to act as an advertisement.¹⁴²

As ‘articles of fashion and personal adornment’ Shetland lace faced declining demand, and a declining internal economy for the producers. However it would be 1925 before Shetland finally received its trademark. In addition to guiding consumers to the authentic article the trade-mark would shield the identity of the lace from imitations masquerading as the authentic article. In doing this it would act as a safeguard to an essential element of Shetland’s cultural identity: the skill of its spinners and knitters. The Shetland Woollen Industries Association Ltd (SWIA) was chaired by Jas A. Smith in Lerwick and the islands were divided into 22-24 districts (depending upon the year) and were allocated between one and nine district sub-inspectors.¹⁴³ The 1914 *Report to the Board of Agriculture* suggested that the country inspectors should be ‘in a position which was quite independent both of the merchants and the workers, so that they could judge fairly in each special case’.¹⁴⁴ Acknowledging the difficulty of finding independent inspectors in a geographical location where the vast majority of the inhabitants are in some way connected to the trade, the choices of sub-inspectors is still somewhat unusual. Of the three sub-inspectors for Unst in 1926, one was J. Mouat of Haroldswick, Shetland hosiery dealer, who had been in business from at least 1918.¹⁴⁵ The second was Miss Lizzie J. Spence, Dandies, Uyeasound, a knitter whose name appears in the Uyeasound SWIA ledger book for labels for having knitted and submitted spencers, shawls, nightdresses and petticoats for her own inspection and labelling.¹⁴⁶ The extent to which the inspections were carried out is unclear, however the Uyeasound SWIA ledger book shows that it was in operation in southern Unst and that at least between 1925 and 1934 some Unst knitters took their goods to be authenticated by the sub-inspector and purchased labels which would be a marker of authentication of genuineness of their articles. Each inspector kept a record of the articles inspected; the surviving record of the Uyeasound area shows the first entry as 02 December 1925 and last entry as 08 December 1934, covering a period of 9 years. While only for Uyeasound and the surrounding area it shows that whereas a variety of articles including Fair Isle, were produced and brought before the inspector for authentication and labelling, the majority of the articles in Unst were shawls and scarves. Although it does

¹⁴² PP 1914 [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on home industries in the Highlands and Islands* (Edinburgh: Neill & Co, 1914), pp.137-138.

¹⁴³ *Mansons’ Almanac* 1926, pp.170-171.

¹⁴⁴ PP 1914 [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture*, p.102.

¹⁴⁵ *Mansons’ Almanac*, 1918, p.73.

¹⁴⁶ UHC, SWIA ledger, p.6, registered certificate No.2218.

not specify if these were fine lace, there are instances where haps are recorded separately; as such they may indeed be lace, fine or otherwise.

Crossing over this time period was the Sandison Unst-Aberdeen-Edinburgh venture, known to have been trading between 1929 and 1934 where articles were produced in Unst for shipment to their newly opened depots.¹⁴⁷ It is unknown if knitters producing for Sandison took their shawls, scarves and camisoles to the sub-inspector for authentication, but there are no records of gossamer blouses in the SWIA records. Possibly Sandison did not require the SWIA trademark on the articles he sold as he was a known Unst merchant with his own depots on the British mainland. There is the possibility that he had his own 'trademark'. From at least 1943 he may have used his own label which contained the word Gossamer superimposed over a spider's web.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

Although it is not known how many knitters actually used the knitting books to produce their own 'Shetland' articles, there remains the possibility that with the increasing number of patterns included in the publications and the growing fascination for Shetland fine knitted articles that there was an ever growing number of 'Shetland' articles being knitted: that is, Shetland shawls and scarves not produced in Shetland. However, where style and design can be attributed to Shetland there is the emerging problem of distinguishing between those articles produced in Shetland and those produced elsewhere. When a Shetland lace article has an established Shetland provenance, regardless of the article's quality, design or material used, it is unquestionably considered authentic. Where no provenance is available the issue of authenticity is somewhat problematic. If a Shetland-styled lace shawl exhibits typical design motifs but has no provenance, determining its authenticity is doubtful at best. Understanding the authenticity of a Shetland lace article is fundamental in understanding the industry, both within Shetland and further afield with regard to the external capitalisation of Shetland lace, notably by non-Shetland businesses producing machine-knit Shetland lace. In this respect there are two Shetland lace industries and without understanding the external inauthentic it is impossible to fully comprehend the Shetland authentic.

¹⁴⁷ SandArch, Knitwear Orders 164-1929-1938.

¹⁴⁸ SandArch, no number.

However, through careful analysis of the published knitting books it should be possible to differentiate between some of the unprovenanced fine knitted lace articles to determine a Shetland or non-Shetland production. Established Shetland production methods are not always adhered to in the knitting-book instructions and as such in some cases it is feasible to determine a non-Shetland article on this basis.¹⁴⁹ By suggesting that borders be knitted in two parts the author has countenanced a production method significantly different from that carried out by Shetland lace knitters. In recommending this method for the ‘convenience’ of the non commercial knitter there is the implication that the author is aware of the Shetland method but has deemed her own technique an easier way to create the border. Certainly inexperienced grafting/sewing can render a finished article aesthetically unsightly while expert grafting is a skill developed with practice and time, one which the author may have envisaged as too challenging or time consuming for many non-commercial knitters of the British mainland. If indeed the production methods were amended to suit the requirements of the knitting public, this premise may also be applicable to the ‘Shetland’ motif patterns in the pattern books. While an accomplished knitter may have had the confidence to substitute and modify any motif patterns made by the author, it is likely that the less experienced or novice knitter would comply with the instructions provided.

Where a knitting book ‘Shetland’ motif is not identified on any provenanced Shetland article, it might be presumed that this was used exclusively on externally produced articles. From this perspective, with sufficient visual comparatives, there is the potential capacity to recognise the articles produced by non-Shetland knitters who have adhered to the patterns provided by the knitting books. Using the available illustrations from the knitting books and the samples produced by knitting groups such as Ravelry a contemporary comparison with provenanced fine lace shawls can be made. It is through this visually representational comparison that it becomes clear that the delicate and intricate alignment of motifs on Shetland lace was much more complex and eclectic than any of the knitting book images and knitted samples would suggest. As with the modification of production methods for the knitter’s convenience, it would appear that the Shetland designs were possibly simplified, perhaps at times over-simplified, to meet the demands of an ever growing but not necessarily very selective mass market in Britain whose aim was to achieve the ‘Shetland’ look, if not the ethereal complexity of a Shetland lace article.

¹⁴⁹ Such as grafting methods, knitting borders in two parts rather than four, etc.

This method is not without its problems. While it is known that Shetland fine lace knitters did not follow written patterns, there is nothing to indicate that they did not appropriate and imitate motifs they saw in other articles or indeed the pattern books. This may be applicable to the 'da print o da wave motif', where the published pattern for the motif can be dated to 1840 or earlier, but with no extant pre 1840 Shetland lace article incorporating the motif, it cannot be categorically confirmed to be of Shetland origin. Even so, the 'da print o da wave' is viewed as a quintessentially Shetland motif and its appearance in Shetland lace is often regarded as an identity marker of the article. However this should not be conceived as *prima facie* evidence of Shetland production. The inclusion of a pattern for the motif by more than one pattern book author may attest to a much earlier and wider geographical production than previously anticipated.¹⁵⁰ The Victoria and Albert Museum has an extraordinary hand knitted baby's dress which to all appearances is an article of Shetland lace. The V&A describes the article as:

Baby's dress of hand-knitted cotton thread with a wide neck edged with a straight scalloped border in a diamond pattern, straight sleeves to match, bodice with a triangular panel of lozenge diaper pattern and a band of diamond pattern in the front, opening at the back and fastens with four pearl buttons, and with a gathered long skirt. The skirt has a central panel of vertical stripes in a formalised leaf pattern, and the rest is worked in a lozenge diaper pattern with four bands of a fancy diamond pattern. Border round the bottom of the skirt matches that round the neck...These patterns of open stitches are similar to those of the knitted Shetland 'lace' shawls popular in the 1840s.¹⁵¹

They are indeed similar. The central panel described as a leaf pattern is in fact 'da print o da wave' and as such without provenance it would be most likely have been identified as Shetland lace. However the dress comes with an established provenance: knitted by Miss Sarah Ann Cunliffe of Saffron Walden, Cambridgeshire, the dress was displayed at the 1851 Great Exhibition, where it was awarded a bronze medal. Knitted with 1,464,859 stitches and 6,000 yards of no.100 sewing cotton, Sarah worked seven hours a day for five months to complete it. This is quite a detailed provenance, providing evidence of non-Shetland production but nevertheless is only a fragment of the narrative about the dress. Although there is no evidence that Sarah knitted from a knitting book, the dress was produced between 1850 and early 1851, when knitting books were readily available. It is also interesting to note that Sarah's use of 'da print o da wave' motif for her central pattern came shortly after Carter, whose patterns generally recommended knitting in cotton, which

¹⁵⁰ Jane Gaugain 1840 (1842, 1845); Cornelia Mee 1846; W. Carter 1849. Plus numerous new editions and reprints.

¹⁵¹ Victoria & Albert Museum: T.45-1964 <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78863/babys-dress-sarah-ann-cunliffe/>> [accessed 15 May 2013].

Sarah did, had included the pattern for the motif in his 1849 *The Royal Victoria Knitting Book*, No. 5.¹⁵² Although this is definitively not authentic Shetland lace, the complex nature of the patterning is consistent with Shetland lace shawls being produced at the same time, and being exhibited in the same place. This raises the contention that if there is one article such as this, there is likely to be more.

Although not pertinent to the baby dress, in naming an article as 'Shetland' the knitting book authors gave a distinct identity to the knitted article, however it is ambiguous as to whether these early authors believed that the 'Shetland' articles and patterns described originated in Shetland, or were simply ascribed a Shetland label because of their general style or knitted motif (such as da print o da wave). There is of course a third possibility, that due to the increasing popularity of Shetland lace, the provision of a Shetland designation was a calculated marketing ploy.

The decreasing inclusion of Shetland in the knitting books is not necessarily an indicator of a decline in popularity of the product. Rather it suggests a drop in the popularity of home knitters wishing to produce the article themselves. The dates which show decreasing numbers of articles coincides with the rise in charitable and philanthropic organisations, articles and advertisements actively encouraging people to purchase fine lace knitting from anti-truck shops to ensure the knitters fair remuneration for their labours. Much of the appeal of authentic Shetland lace is in its hand-crafted quality, the skill and expert eye of the spinner and knitter, and the individual design of every article that left the islands. That so many machine-knit lace shawls were produced and sold indicates that there was indeed a place in the market for both Shetland and non-Shetland produced fine lace knitted articles. The issue is that they were labelled 'Shetland' and this identity was used as a marketing strategy to effect sales to a specific sector of the consumer market. The machine-knit Shetland lace certainly did this. Rather than machine-knitting woollen lace shawls, or even fine woollen lace shawls, in recognising the marketability of Shetland lace shawls, non-Shetland producers chose to make and market them specifically as Shetland and in this they not only impinged on the authentic article, they also became Shetland knitters' direct competition in the marketplace.

¹⁵² W. Carter, *The Royal Victoria Knitting Book*, No.5, (London: W. Carter, 1849).

Chapter 5: Leaving Shetland: the distribution and marketing of Shetland lace

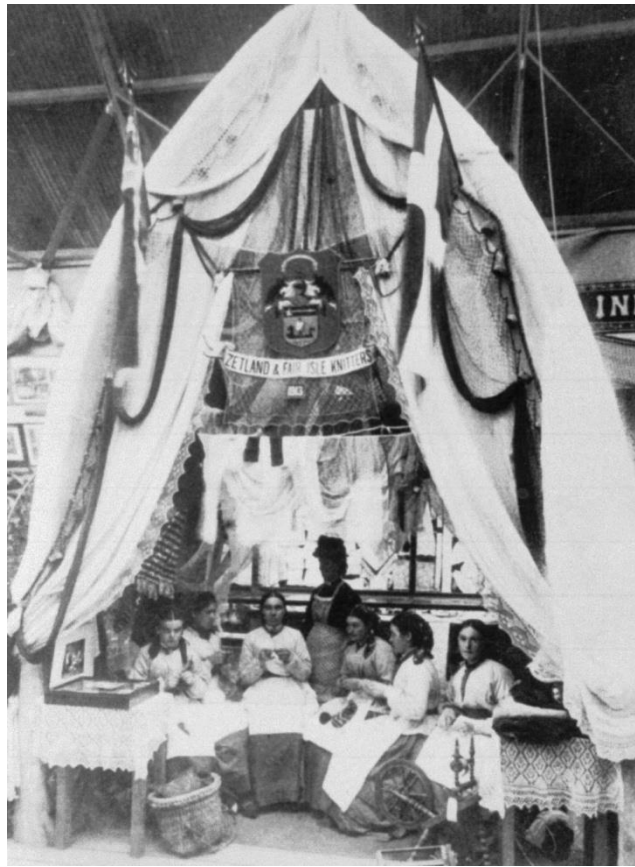


Figure 34: The Shetland knitters' stand at the 1886 Edinburgh International Exhibition, image courtesy of SMA, photograph NE04535.

Organised by Sherriff Thoms (Shetland), Currie & Co. (Shetland) and Mr Laurence (Fair Isle) the highly stylised, fun and informative Shetland Knitters' stand at the 1886 Edinburgh International Exhibition (see figure 36) attracted and maintained the focus of the national and international media, as well as receiving the patronage of Queen Victoria. The media attention ensured the stand was a major visitor attraction at the exhibition, encouraging many to come and see the spinners and knitters working, talk to them, see the lace and buy it. As a marketing technique it was hugely successful, and continued to be a successful marketing method well into the twentieth century. But the International Exhibition was only the most spectacular/prominent means of raising the profile of Shetland lace outwith Shetland. As this chapter will demonstrate, there were many other marketing strategies employed that facilitated the trade in lace goods beyond the shores of the islands.

In the life-cycle of a fine lace knitted article only a small fraction of time is spent in the hands of the producer. Unless made for personal or local consumption, the article moves

upon completion to the next stage in its life-cycle and enters the hands of an intermediary selling agent where it might spend months languishing in the storeroom of a Shetland merchant's shop or, on occasion, be sent direct to a selling agent on the British mainland or direct to the consumer. It is through consumption of the finished article that a new cycle of production can begin, for indeed without anticipated consumption there would be no need for further production. As the consumer base in Shetland was extremely limited, in order for the industry to grow and flourish it was essential that the fine lace knitting leave Shetland and for the sellers to develop a marketplace of willing and continuous consumers. Sourcing a market for their knitted goods was nothing new to Shetlanders who had been trading in knitted goods since at least the seventeenth century. Although early trade was commonly carried out as a direct contract between the producer and consumer, by the mid nineteenth century, in order to compete, prosper and expand in the marketplace it was necessary that the sellers of Shetland lace follow and develop the marketing techniques of the period.

This chapter will focus on this intermediary stage in the life of Shetland lace, between leaving the hands of the producer and before arriving in the hands of the consumer. Initially it will highlight the methods and techniques used to market the product from a local (Shetland), national (UK mainland) and international perspective, illustrating that while many of the marketing techniques used followed the same style and format, there were essential differences dependent upon the final location of the sale. In addition to discussing the placement of standard business advertisements, a vital source for understanding the availability and geographical and temporal spread of Shetland lace, the chapter will address the rise of free or paid for dissemination of information by planting commercially significant 'news' in a published medium. It will then demonstrate the publicity and favourable attention afforded to Shetland lace through the role of celebrity culture in the marketing process, with specific attention to the British royal household, aristocratic women, actresses and authors. Finally it will examine the role of exhibitions such as the Edinburgh International Exhibition which opened this chapter and public demonstration in the marketing process, highlighting the use of face-to-face producer-consumer interaction in the creation of a personal and tactile engagement with the product.

Shetland lace also featured in direct and indirect advertising strategies in France, Australia, Canada, The United States of America, and New Zealand. It was this extensive marketing that created sufficient distribution networks to guarantee the continuing demand for Shetland lace and ensured work for Shetland's lace knitters. The application of poor or

inadequate marketing in any industry results in lack of consumer knowledge with regard to the products available, resulting in low sales and a decline in production. Alternatively good marketing strategies can provide the gateway to a vibrant industry and increased production levels. Successful marketing involves three main aspects: trends (which affect the function, style and colour of a product); channels (the routes by which products go from producer to consumer); and outlets (the places which sell products to consumers). In discussing the above this chapter will demonstrate that the successful marketing of Shetland lace was not confined to direct (standard advertisements) and indirect advertising (news items, articles, advertorials, society and fashion columns) but also included exhibiting the articles whether as part of the gamut of British and International Exhibitions prevalent from the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth century or the more informal drawing-room sales of wealthy London-based ladies. Similarly, placing fine knitted shawls on the shoulders or veils on the hats of eminent women in the public eye did much for sales from the emerging middle classes who saw such women as fashion conscious and desired to emulate them. Furthermore, ‘fashion articles’ were used to advocate the dual functionality of Shetland shawls as both warm and beautiful but also a social and philanthropic purchase.¹ The chapter will conclude that both Shetland knitters and merchants took every opportunity to effectively market the lace in an attempt to create an environment where the consumer actively sourced the product.

The earliest sourced direct advertising is for UK mainland businesses. Shetland knitted goods, for fine Shetland stockings being sold for one to two guineas a pair, first appeared in *The Scotsman* in 1828.² The earliest advertisement to include a reference to fine lace shawls was just 13 years later in *The Scotsman* in 1841, noting that they were ‘knitted in imitation of lace, are so fine...are considered curiosities both for the fineness of the thread and the knitting’.³

This early reference to Shetland production of fine lace-like shawls comes shortly after the publication of Jane Gaugain’s 1840 knitting pattern for a shawl ‘exactly in appearance like the Shetland Shawls’.⁴ Although it would take some years until the appendage ‘lace’ was regularly ascribed to Shetland fine knitting, its comparison to lace continued. In 1844 *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* noted that:

¹ For example see the *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 03 January 1891.

² *The Scotsman*, 29 November 1828.

³ *The Scotsman*, 18 August 1841.

⁴ Jane Gaugain, *The Lady's Assistant in Knitting, Netting and Crochet Work*, second volume (Edinburgh: I. J. Gaugain, 1842), p.105. See chapter 4 for further discussion.

...the cottage girls knit a variety of elegant shawls and scarfs in numerous ingenious patterns, mostly their own invention, which are as beautiful as lace...⁵

Shetland veils, by their nature finely knitted, were first advertised in 1851; however, the first specific mention of Shetland lace is in an advertisement for Thomas Linklater's Shetland Woollen Warehouse, Lerwick, in the *Shetland Advertiser* on Monday 06 January 1862.⁶ This is also the earliest sourced advertisement for a Shetland business, although not its first foray into the sphere of marketing and promoting Shetland lace. Nevertheless, from this point on the appearance of advertisements (direct advertising) and articles (indirect advertising) in newspapers and journals, promoting and discussing Shetland knitted goods became increasingly commonplace and businesses in Shetland created marketing campaigns and brochures to actively encourage sales.

Sales and marketing at a local level

The first point of contact for the purchase of Shetland lace was directly from the hands of the producers or via a Shetland merchant. While producers could find a market for their knitting within Shetland, no Shetland merchant dealing in knitted goods would have assumed local sales to be a sufficient outlet for the goods. As such it was necessary to secure additional outlets for their goods, either through internal Shetland trading or directly to external markets, however for the majority of knitters there would have been limited opportunities. Producers had three options: in addition to trading with the local merchant they could sell directly to the consumer or sell direct to a Shetland House (a UK mainland shop dealing specifically in Shetland goods), or other clothing or fashion business on the British mainland. Selling direct to the consumer was reliant on two things: firstly sufficient numbers of visitors to the islands who wished/preferred to buy direct from the knitter while simultaneously being in the right place at the right time to effect a sale, and secondly, being requested to produce an article by a specific customer; this might be through a previous purchase, through a recommendation from one consumer to another or possibly as a direct result of a knitted article being viewed at an exhibition and the knitter contacted. Although selling direct to the consumer as a visitor to Shetland was a viable option for those knitters in Lerwick, for others, knitting from home in the country, effecting a direct sale was more difficult. With little contact with a consumer base other than by way of introduction through the local laird, minister, or their wives, who might

⁵ 'Life in Shetland', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 10 (1844) p.146.

⁶ *Shetland Advertiser*, 06 January 1862.

have been reluctant to side-step the local merchant's business, many country knitters remained reliant upon the local merchant. Selling direct to a Shetland House or other business was dependent upon the producer having made those business connections. Most commonly the fine lace knitting was routed to the British mainland markets via a Shetland merchant. In many cases the Shetland businesses were involved in the distribution of Shetland lace on more than one level, participating in the redistribution of the lace with other local business, but also in the national and international market simultaneously.

Shetland's geographical position meant the movement of goods, although steadily improving from the 1840s until the 1930s, remained somewhat problematic. While the irregularity of shipping and postal services proved challenging for the merchants in accessing markets outwith Shetland, it was an insurmountable obstacle for the majority of knitters and provided the merchants with a monopoly of the export market for some time.⁷ It would take until 1866 before a regular twice weekly steamer operated between Shetland and the mainland during both the summer and winter months and 1870 before it became commercially viable. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s the service gradually improved.⁸ Individual producers who were able to obtain cash payment for their lace knitting, were in a position to take advantage of the improving steamer and postal services to send their products to southern consumers and markets. Others, still obliged to barter their articles, benefited from the 1883 introduction of the parcel post. The 3d per pound weight afforded them a better opportunity to sell direct to the consumer at a reasonable cost.⁹ This, no doubt, actively aided and encouraged individual producers to deal directly with consumers and markets on the mainland, and possibly led the *Shetland Times* 1892 to report that the Shetland merchant's monopolies were being detrimentally affected by the arrival of steam and the parcel post.¹⁰ Discussing the parcel post in his *Historical Geography of the Shetland Islands*, O'Dell includes a table illustrating its growing popularity (see figure 37). Although figures relating to the period prior to 1890 would possibly allow a more nuanced comparison of articles leaving Shetland, the statistics for 1890, 1905, and 1937 are significant.¹¹

⁷ Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade*, pp.256-263.

⁸ Ibid., p.258.

⁹ The Great Britain Philatelic Society, *Parcel Rates 1883-1966*, <http://www.gbps.org.uk/information/rates/inland/parcels-1883-1966.php> [accessed 12 January 2015].

¹⁰ *ST*, 1892, cited in Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade*, p.263.

¹¹ O'Dell, *Historical Geography of the Shetland Islands*, pp.177-179.

Lerwick P.O	1890	1905	1937, based on weekly averages
letters delivered	826,486	1,689,636	2,620,000
letters posted	710,320	1,209,260	2,080,000
parcels delivered	24,219	86,143	218,400
parcels posted	23,036	75,920	171,600

Figure 35: Table illustrating postal deliveries, from Andrew Charles O'Dell, *Historical Geography of the Shetland Islands* p.179, footnote in O'Dell text states the table was 'by courtesy of the General Secretary G. P. O. and F. C. Young esq., head Postmaster Lerwick'.

While it cannot be said with any certainty that the dramatic increase in parcels delivered and posted is directly related to the hosiery industry as a whole and the Shetland lace industry specifically, the introduction of the parcel post certainly assisted in its development. The ability to respond quickly to consumers and merchants on the UK mainland offered benefits not only for merchants and knitters but also for dressers and cleaners offering previous consumers a reliable postal service for the upkeep of their Shetland lace articles. In this it is likely that a reasonable percentage of the parcels did indeed include the shipment of Shetland lace articles.

It is difficult to ascertain how many Shetland merchants dealing in Shetland lace were in operation at any one time. *Manson's Shetland Almanac* gives a good indication for a later period (post 1892) as do census records and advertisements in newspapers. By combining the three sources and using the census years as a base point, it is possible to gauge a reasonable estimation of their numbers. However, while the majority of Shetland merchants did indeed participate in the hosiery trade, where a Shetland business is described as 'merchant' or 'grocer' it cannot be ascertained as to whether the business dealt in hosiery or remained solely a provisions outlet. Furthermore, although Shetland merchants generally categorised all Shetland knitted goods, including fine lace knitting, as hosiery, recorded dealings in hosiery does not guarantee dealings in fine lace knitting. From this perspective it is reasonable to conclude that in 1891 there were at least 32 individuals trading in some aspect of the Shetland fine lace industry though this number may be considerably higher. Although Shetland merchants occasionally placed advertisements in the *Shetland Times* from 1872 and the *Shetland News* from 1885 they are not numerous and simply list the articles available in the shop. The advertisements appearing in *Manson's Shetland Almanac* and *Peace's Orkney and Shetland Almanac* similarly follow this format, often being direct reproductions of those placed in the newspapers. There are no known advertisements for individual spinners or knitters, however, from 1892 there are increasing listings for dressers and cleaners of Shetland

hosiery in the almanacs although between 1892 and 1939 in every instance the dresser is located in Lerwick.

The first edition of the *Shetland Advertiser* on Monday 6 January 1862 holds the first known instance of advertising of Shetland merchants.¹² Three Shetland businesses advertised that first day: William Johnson, Draper, General Merchant and Manufacturer of all kinds of Shetland shawls, veils and hosiery (Lerwick); Sandison Brothers, Cullivoe, ‘Shetland hosiery, ladies' stockings, shawls, veils’; and Thomas Linklater, ‘Shetland Woollen Warehouse ...various articles, knitted in the Shetland Isles...thick warm shawls and lace shawls, veils, mitts, neckties’ (Lerwick). This would be the only advertisement placed by Linklater however William Johnson and Sandison Brothers advertised regularly in the newspaper. The Sandison brothers’ family business became one of Shetland’s foremost businesses during the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, including acting as an agent for Shetland lace.¹³ The archive in Baltasound, Unst, holds a unique collection of business records relating to both the knitters on the island and also the Scottish mainland businesses purchasing it for resale and contains an extensive collection of ledgers and other records pertaining to the Unst business and its place within the lace knitting industry. Considering the extent of trade they carried out in fine lace knitting they did not appear to develop print form advertising to promote their business but rather relied on word of mouth recommendations, repeat custom and direct contact with various businesses in mainland Britain.¹⁴ Indeed after their first foray into advertising in the *Shetland Advertiser* in 1862 there are no further known print advertisements until 1930.

Sandison also owned the general merchants shop at Camb, Mid Yell, where James Clark was employed as the manager prior to buying it in 1902.¹⁵ As shop manager, Clark worked as per Sandison’s instructions, trading primarily as a general merchant and dealing on a small scale in general hosiery and haps. However upon taking over the shop he rebranded its image and began to expand the business, sometime later advertising himself as ‘James Clark, Manufacturer of Shetland Shawls, Hosiery, Underclothing’.¹⁶ The available records are patchy, but from around 1915 it is clear that Clark dealt primarily in haps and from the early 1920s increasingly in Fair Isle knitting. Nevertheless, he did occasionally trade in

¹² *Shetland Advertiser*, 6 January 1862.

¹³ Over the 100 year period they variously traded as Sandison Brothers, Alex Sandison, Alex Sandison & Sons and Sandison & Sons. Hereafter referred to as Sandison.

¹⁴ Illustrated by extensive correspondence held in the archive.

¹⁵ SandArch, Letter Book 012-1896-1889, p.19. James Clark, Camb, Mid Yell, 22 February 1902.

¹⁶ As per headed paper

fine knitted lace (shawls, lace cardigans and jumpers). Clark began his 'hosiery' business taking in knitted goods at his shop which he then marketed to independent shops and small businesses on the British mainland. These orders were small, commonly although not exclusively so. By the 1920s Clark had invested in an intermediary sales agent in London, F. O. Newman, who set up accounts with some of the major department stores of the day: Harrods, (Brompton Road, London); Gorrings (Buckingham Palace Road); Bon Marché (Paris); Fortnum and Mason (Picadilly); Forrest and Sons (Dublin); and Kauffmans (Pittsburg). Although the poor condition of most of the records make it impossible to know how many of these companies were buying Shetland lace goods they do show that Harrods and Gorrings regularly purchased Shetland lace and openwork cardigans and jumpers throughout the 1930s. This time period coincides with Sandison's Unst-Aberdeen venture producing lace blouses and jumpers in Unst to be redistributed through their Aberdeen shop. This new venture coincided with their return to print form advertising, although it cannot be said with any certainty that the Harrods orders were fulfilled with Sandison's Unst produced goods.¹⁷ Of interest is a note to Newman on 12 May 1923 stating 'I hope the city of Paris order would be in time', which nicely coincides with Shetland lace appearing in French periodicals.¹⁸

Margaret Currie's truck free shop in Lerwick (Currie & Co, opened in early 1870s), used a promise to treat producers fairly and always pay knitters in cash as their primary advertising policy. By paying the knitters in cash the shop would have had the choicest pieces available on the islands and as such Margaret was able to offer the finest quality lace products for sale through drawing room parties held by the aristocracy.¹⁹ From at least 1877 until 1926 Currie & Co., and the subsequent business names they operated under actively promoted their business in *Anderson's*, *Peace's* and *Manson's* Almanacs, using a variety of marketing techniques including specifically naming members of the immediate royal family and exhibition awards as part of their advertising feature.²⁰ Although they had extensive dealings on the British mainland, and there are suggestions

¹⁷ SandArch, Ledger 164-Knitting orders-1929-1938.

¹⁸ See section on Sales and marketing at an international level.

¹⁹ SA, D11/75/4/2, Helen C. Black, 'Womanhood, A Shetland Industry', *Womanhood* 1:4 (1899) p.287.

²⁰ Although the business continued to be listed in the trade's directory in *Manson's Almanac* until 1935 the last advertisement was placed in 1926.

that they traded internationally there is no known record of them advertising other than in Shetland and Orkney.²¹

Marketing at a local level was especially effective for visitors to the islands, who would be able to see the range of knitted articles available and those shops dealing in Shetland lace, or for those who had the newspaper sent to them. However, the overall impact was relatively limited. Advertising within the tight confines of the islands did not offer the opportunity for expansion and merchants were often reliant on contact from the southern businesses to ensure an ongoing turnaround in trade. Many merchants, like Sandison, relied on word of mouth recommendations, but nevertheless made attempts to increase the southern customer base by writing unsolicited letters to specific businesses offering goods on a sale or return basis.²² Similarly, while Sandison had an Aberdeen base of operations during the 1920s and 30s and some like Clark employed an agent to work on their behalf, most Shetland businesses did not have a UK mainland base. In order to effect higher sales it was necessary to expand beyond the confines of local advertising to incorporate a base of consumers throughout the United Kingdom. Sales and marketing by British mainland businesses at a national level dramatically increased the consumer demand for Shetland lace, however it would be through the marketing and advertising of the burgeoning philanthropic organisations from the 1870s that Shetland lace reached its maximum UK coverage and the Shetland lace knitters their first opportunities to capitalise on direct selling to the south.

Sales and marketing at a national level

The 1872 investigation into the Truck System publicised the situation of the Shetland knitters, and while this may not have had a directly beneficial impact on the majority of them, it certainly assisted in the endeavours of direct selling for the finer knitters, notably those producing Shetland lace. Newspaper articles, prior to and after the Truck Inquiry, sparked the interest of righteous and philanthropic Victorians who formed anti-truck campaigns to actively promote the hand knitted goods. Throughout the 1880s organisations such as the Highland Home Industries (HHI) and the Scottish Home Industries (SHI) were created to facilitate domestic crafts producers in by-passing local merchants to effect sales directly to southern markets and individual consumers. These

²¹ Black, *Womanhood*, p.288.

²² SandArch Letter Book 11-1892-1896, p.410, 10 March 1894, letter to Peter Robinson, London; Letter Book 13-1899-1909, p.417, 27 March 1902, letter to Scott Adie, Shetland Warehouse, London.

organisations aimed to promote all Scottish domestically produced crafts. However, to facilitate the sale of Shetland-specific goods depots such as The New Shetland Warehouse (1884) and The Shetland Knitter's Repository (1886), both under the patronage of Ishbel, Countess of Aberdeen, were set up with the specific purpose of selling truck-free Shetland knitwear and alleviating the plight of the Shetland knitter. In addition to this the SHI Exhibition and sale of Shetland lace and hosiery, held in May 1888 at the Willis Rooms, London was a widely publicised event organised under the auspices of the Countesses Rosebery and Aberdeen and Mrs Gladstone (wife of Prime Minister) and was visited by many eminent people. The primary objective of the exhibition and sale was to bring producers and purchasers of Shetland goods into direct contact. Indeed, as *The Scotsman* reported, the Countess Aberdeen in her opening address protested against the:

...grinding down of the poor workers in Shetland, insisted that they be fairly paid, that purchasers should not shift their responsibility on the shoulders of the shopkeepers, and said that the society under whose auspices the exhibition was held had been formed to counteract the evils of the "truck system", under which the workers were at the mercy of the local merchants...²³

The success of the exhibition resulted firstly in the decision to establish a permanent depot in London for the sale of all SHI products, not only Shetland goods, and secondly the decision to form the Scottish Home Industries Association (SHIA) to act as an umbrella organisation for Scottish domestically produced crafts.²⁴ Shortly before the SHIA formed, the SHI was involved in a controversy with regard to paying knitters for their work. The organisation of the 1888 Willis Room sale was carried out by Mr Coutts, an employee of the SHI and his assistant Mr Jamieson. Interested parties in the London depot were encouraged to contact Mr J. R. Jamieson, of the Caledonian Christian Club in London, an address which perhaps encouraged the knitters to believe him to be an honest man.²⁵ Mr Jamieson secured some particularly fine knitted items to be displayed and sold, however, did not pay all the knitters for their work. Mrs Harper from Uyeasound, Unst sent three shawls valued at £12, and was offered £9/15/00 for them, a sum she accepted but did not receive. She eventually received £5 payment but only upon enlisting the aid of Thomas Sandison, who threatened Jamieson with exposure should payment not be forthcoming.²⁶ Certainly Mr Jamieson was still working for Mr Coutts, manager at the SHI Shetland

²³ *The Scotsman*, 16 May 1888, p.8.

²⁴ Janice Helland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries 1880-1914. Marketing Craft, Making Fashion* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), pp.153-161.

²⁵ *Scottish Highlander*, 31 May 1888, p.3E.

²⁶ SandArch, Letter Book 09-1888-1890, p.310, letter to Mr J. R. Jamieson, 2 January 1889: p.422, letter to Mrs Mary Lyell, 23 March 1889.

Depot in Edinburgh, at this time and within a year Coutts had lost his position with the SHI to Miss Eliza Tait. As the patrons of the SHI and SHIA, with the exception of Princess Louise, were essentially the same, this was of some embarrassment to the organisation.

With non payment to knitters behind them, the SHIA formed in 1889 under the patronage of Princess Louise with Ishbel, Countess of Aberdeen, Hannah, Countess Rosebery and Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland acting as presidents of the Association for specific geographical regions. The Association had three main objectives: to find markets and promote the sale of products; to improve the quality of the products by instruction and the circulation of information; and to ensure the payment of a fair price to the workers, the latter no doubt still a contentious issue in light of the Jamieson/Coutts debacle.²⁷ All Shetland knitters were able to benefit from the assistance proffered by the SHIA; lesser skilled knitters could, theoretically, attain assistance in improvement, while skilled knitters were afforded assistance in selling their products and well-produced Shetland items were commonly to be found in their Edinburgh and London shops.²⁸ Shetland's fine knitted lace producers needed little, if any, instruction in the production and design of their articles as these skills already existed having been passed from mother to daughter, or by imitation though the keen eye of an accomplished knitter. Of most benefit to the lace knitters was the SHIA assistance in creating opportunities for an increasing number of them to sell their high quality products direct to the consumer 'for the lace and the hosiery which the people are clever enough to produce' and also to the luxury market by providing an additional opportunity to exhibit and sell through independent exhibitions and also through the Edinburgh and London depots.²⁹ Furthermore, they raised consumer awareness with regard to the paltry remuneration received by many lace knitters for their endeavours.³⁰ Indeed it was not only the Shetland lace producers who benefited from maintaining a connection with the SHIA as much of the Shetland hosiery produced was well suited to fulfil the association's marketing criteria. Exact details of how the knitters forwarded their lace are unclear, but they appear to have had two options, firstly to send it direct to the

²⁷ Alexander Fenton, 'Historical note' in Provost Alexander Ross, 1895, *Scottish Home Industries*, (Glasgow: Molendinar Press, 1974), p.63; PP 1914 [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture*, pp.42-43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.63.

²⁹ *The Standard*, 07 September 1895; p.2; Elizabeth Grierson, *Scotland* ('Peeps at many lands' series), (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), p.50.

³⁰ Janice Helland, 'Authenticity and Identity as Visual Display: Scottish and Irish Home Arts and Industries' in *A Shared Legacy: Essays on Irish and Scottish Visual Culture*, ed. by J. Morrison and F. Cullen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp.157-172.

depot, or secondly to take it to Currie & Co., in Lerwick, who had acted as Principal agents in Shetland for the SHI in 1884, who then forwarded it to the depot.

The association was run on philanthropic lines where only a sum sufficient to cover the cost of bringing the goods to market would be deducted from the sale price with the balance being paid to the knitter.³¹ This was intended to ensure that the knitter would receive a fair price for work produced. Such active marketing may certainly be said to have its origins in a middle class crisis of conscience.³² It was certainly welcomed and supported enthusiastically by many middle and upper class women who threw themselves into reviving and supporting cottage industries, organising instruction for workers and arranging the marketing of their goods, often through exhibitions and drawing room sales for their wealthy friends to attend. Others demonstrated their support by purchasing and wearing Shetland lace items in the belief that it would alleviate poverty, exploitation and the plight of the Shetland knitters.³³

Nevertheless, the SHIA would find itself embroiled in yet another mini scandal with regard to the procurement of knitwear. On Friday 20 July 1906 the Duchess of Sutherland was called before the Truck Committee to answer allegations of contravention of the Truck Act. Although the main allegation was in reference to Harris Tweed, there was also an allegation that the SHIA had purchased many of the lace shawls not directly from the knitters as publicised but through at least one Shetland merchant.³⁴ This was refuted by the Duchess, who stated that shawls were purchased direct from the workers and never through a merchant, continuing that dealings were done with ‘certain women’, although she did not know if these women had dealings with merchants themselves.³⁵ It seems likely that these ‘certain women’ were Schoor, Muir & Co., a later incarnation of Currie & Co., a Shetland business which did indeed pay its knitters in cash. In using them as intermediary agents the SHIA possibly considered it the same as buying direct from the knitters. Although not charged with contravention of the Truck Act, being brought before the Committee to answer allegations of such was of considerable embarrassment to the SHIA.

³¹ PP 1914 [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture*, pp.42-43.

³² David F. Roberts, *The Social Conscience of the Early Victorians* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), esp. chapter 9.

³³ Fryer, *Knitting by the Fireside*, p.86.

³⁴ 1908 [Cd. 4443] *Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts*. Vol.II., Minutes of evidence (days 1-37), evidence of Archibald Newland, District Inspector of Factories, lines 3329-3361, 3450-3453. Shetland merchant not named.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, evidence of Duchess of Sutherland, lines 4329-4331.

The active publicising of the principles set by the Associations encouraged other businesses to emulate these trading practices and precipitated a rise in the number of advertisements stating that the knitters were paid in cash, but as noted, neither the SHI nor the SHIA were the first to advertise payments in cash to the knitters. Currie & Co.'s 1877 advertisement stated that they 'adhere to the system of paying the knitters whom they employ in cash' although it is likely that this was in operation for some years prior to the first advertisement.³⁶ Similarly, while acknowledging the hardships caused by the barter truck system, in 1880 Coutts & Fairweather declared that their distinguishing advertising feature was that they offered the same price in cash as if taken from the shop exclusively in goods, perhaps being a surreptitious way of encouraging payment in goods rather than cash.³⁷ Their 1880 advertisement for the opening of their new establishment in Edinburgh notes:

...The distinguishing feature of this establishment is that in every instance MONEY IS GIVEN FOR HOSIERY, if of Shetland Yarn, and of superior quality. – This principle is antagonistic to the Barter System, which is the rule in the Island.³⁸

Not all businesses followed the principles of paying, or claiming to pay, the knitters in cash and the truck system continued. In 1887 Kennedy & Co advertised that 'all kinds of Shetland hosiery taken in exchange for shop commodities', a statement in direct contravention of the Truck Act and which was quickly removed from future advertising.³⁹ As noted previously, there is no way of knowing if the Shetland hosiery included any fine lace knitting or was generally socks and stockings. Shortly after this, in 1891, John Spence, a merchant at Voeseide, Unst wrote to Mrs Trail, Edinburgh, a known purchaser of Shetland lace and supporter of fair pay to the knitters. In the same vein as Sandison's unsolicited letters to mainland businesses, Spence wrote:

I now beg to say that I buy such from knitters here, and pay them with goods. Consequently were you to favour me with an order, I could put them in at cost price for cash or perhaps less than what you pay the knitters.

Suitably outraged, Mrs Trail reported Spence and the subsequent inquiry found he had 'been trafficking in Shetland knitted goods and supplying the knitters with tea, sugar and

³⁶ *Anderson's Almanac*, 1877, p.vi.

³⁷ *The Scotsman*, 8 June 1880, p.1.

³⁸ *Peace's Almanac*, 1881.

³⁹ *Peace's Almanac*, 1887, p.22; 1888, p.184.

other grocery and not paying them with money'.⁴⁰ Businesses on the British mainland purchasing from Shetland merchants rather than individual knitters, could not lay claim to paying the knitters in cash and their advertisements usually employed a simple format, merely listing the articles available for purchase. Some created promotional campaigns depicting a highly romanticised image of Shetland in an effort to enhance sales by playing to the already heightened sympathies of known consumer groups.⁴¹ These advertisements typically depict the gender stereotype of a lonely woman sitting at home waiting for her husband to return from the sea, knitting to pass the time and supplement his earnings. The gender imbalance in the islands meant that many women waited for no man, and knitted to maintain their independent households. Many marketing campaigns created by businesses such as Maule & Son were misguided in their understanding of the women producers and possibly may not have fully understood the dynamics of the industry.⁴²

As the popularity of Shetland lace increased so did the volume of advertisements promoting it. Its position as a fashion item ensured it was also regularly included in fashion columns in newspapers and ladies' journals. A new journalistic format of advertising, the advertorial, was becoming increasingly popular, one which although used for a variety of goods, was particularly suitable for the dissemination of fashion. At first glance these do not have the appearance of traditional advertising; rather they give the impression of actual editorial content and are thereby suggestive of an article containing a personal endorsement. Advertorials were often found in the 'supposed' letters from readers, or responses to correspondence columns of the periodicals. Occasionally styled in a similar vein to the society columns the initial impression is one of chit-chat gossip and the sharing of information between friends while positioning soft advertising throughout the narrative. Writers of advertorial content adopted the first-person, presenting themselves as the ever-observant fashion *flâneur*, meandering the streets with a keen eye and observing the fashions, whether on people or in shops. The readers themselves became companion observers of the girl-about-town, being encouraged by the author to actively participate in the *flâneurial* observations through purchasing the fashions mentioned.⁴³ In 1867, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine's* 'Spinnings in Town' regularly included Shetland lace in the column and in August reported on the fashions seen

⁴⁰ SA, AD22/101/1892/10/2; AD22/101/1892/10/3; AD22/101/1892/17.

⁴¹ For example, the advertisements of Robert Maule & Sons, *The Scotsman* 07 August 1905, 12 August 1907.

⁴² Abrams, 'Knitting, Autonomy and Identity', pp.152-154.

⁴³ Mary Gluck, 'The Flâneur and the Aesthetic: Appropriation of Urban Culture in Mid-19th-Century Paris', *Theory Culture Society* 20:53 (2003), p.55, pp.69-70.

at the Paris Exhibition with a special comment on Shetland lace *rotondes* (short circular cloaks) ‘...white with coloured borders are the prettiest little rotondes possible, so fine and delicate, yet warm enough to leave a ball-room in, or to throw over lightly covered shoulders in the garden. These graceful rotondes are made in all colours and trimmed with a loop of ribbon; two bows and two ends ornamented with crystal drops...’⁴⁴ In July 1901, Judy ‘on the jaunt’ shared details from her social diary providing a description of a lace Shetland shawl she purchased, ‘thin enough to draw through a ring and broad as a table cloth’, when she popped in to the Exhibition of Scottish Industries at Stafford House.⁴⁵

Although the ‘news’ stories carried by the Shetland and national press regarding royal gifts and celebrity purchases of Shetland lace are indeed a form of indirect advertising, advertorials take this further by blurring the separation points between the news and advertising, thereby creating a hybrid that was essentially advertising disguised to look like news or editorial content.⁴⁶ The reasoning behind this was two-fold: advertising was necessary to ensure the financial well-being of the publication, but too much would be off-putting to the reader, better to have more ‘content’ and fewer advertisements. Not all editorial content would have been advertorial. A society column commenting on a fashionable woman wearing Shetland lace was not (necessarily) requested and paid for by a business. In this it is very much indirect advertising, whereas informing the reader where to purchase the said item, notably providing a specific business name, falls squarely within the remit of advertorial content. Similarly, testimonial advertising blurred the line between direct and indirect advertising, and while often taking the format of letters from readers many of the testimonials were again thinly disguised advertisements making direct recommendations for specific businesses or products.⁴⁷

British mainland businesses regularly capitalised on the new journalistic format of advertising, including those who sold Shetland lace. In responding to a letter sent to the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* in 1853 enquiring about a knitted veil M. B. replies that it can be knitted at home although there could be some difficulty in obtaining fine

⁴⁴ The *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, 01 May 1867, p.270; 11 November, p.608; 01 August, p.440.

⁴⁵ *Judy*, (or the London serio-comic journal), 17 July 1901, pp.26-27.

⁴⁶ Narasimha C. V. Reddi, *Effective Public Relations and Media Strategy* (India: Prentice-Hall, 2014), pp.419-420; Frances Brassington & Stephen Pettitt, *Essentials of Marketing* (Essex: Pearson Education, 2012), pp.379-380.

⁴⁷ Marlis Schweitzer and Marina Moskowitz, eds, *Testimonial advertising in the American marketplace: emulation, identity, community* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), esp. chapters 2 & 3.

enough wool, recommending that ‘...It is generally to be procured at the Shetland Wool Warehouse, Jermyn Street, St. James’s...’, although not named, this is the premises of Standen & Co. However, should the enquirer prefer to purchase the veil rather than knit it, information is provided on its purchase:

I possess a black knitted Shetland veil, which was made by the children of a school in Ireland, under the superintendence of a benevolent lady, by whom they were sold with other articles of work for the support of the school. If your correspondent wishes for the address, I could procure it through the friend who sent me the veil. Mine is a spider net pattern...⁴⁸

Curiously, while M. B. recommends visiting Standen’s to purchase wool but not veils, genuine Shetland veils had been available since at least 1851 and were being sold by W. B Mackenzie Edinburgh.⁴⁹ Standen’s first advertisement for veils appears in October 1853, suggesting that perhaps Standen’s did not stock Shetland veils until after the M. B article in the July. The recommendation to purchase a Shetland veil made in Ireland is intriguing and an early indication of the problems Shetland knitters would face with regard to authenticity of the articles they produced.⁵⁰ It seems likely that M.B. is *Mlle. Riego de la Branchardiere*; if this is the case then her recommendation of buying Irish-produced Shetland veils coincides with activities as a benefactor for Irish industries.⁵¹

Shetland merchants also took advantage of advertising content in non-traditional advertising formats. In 1879 a ‘very chilly person’ wrote to *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion* extolling the virtues of one Mr Laurensen, Shetland Wool Warehouse, Lerwick who:

...supplies all Shetland goods at a cheaper rate than any other Shetland Warehouse in England or Scotland. Mr Laurensen will send lists on application, of all the goods he manufactures, and their prices...I beg to state that the above advice is purely disinterested and given solely for the benefit of these who suffer like myself.⁵²

The ‘very chilly person’ expressly advised going to Mr Laurensen. It is possible that this may indeed be the extolled Mr Laurensen, or someone writing advertising copy on his behalf. More commonly the column was longer, styled as a letter from one friend to

⁴⁸ M. B., ‘Notices to Correspondents’, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 01 July 1853, p.95.

⁴⁹ *The Scotsman*, 04 June 1851, p.1.

⁵⁰ See chapter 4 for discussion on non-Shetland produced articles and authenticity.

⁵¹ Kathryn Ledbetter, *Victorian Needlework* (Oxford: Praeger, 2012), p.68.

⁵² *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion*, 01 August 1879, p.187.

another, sharing news and gossip, and is in effect a series of advertisements for various fashion articles and household items occasionally with a few celebrity names dropped in for good measure. In telling her friend all the news around town, Beryl comments on her departure from the Coaching Club in London's Hyde Park:

But though the day was warm, the evening came in cold; and I was very glad to put on the Shetland wrap when driving home. The white lace goes into such a tiny space, and are [sic] so handy; besides we know, when wearing them, we are encouraging thrift, for they are made by the women on the islands, in the long winter evenings. Miss M Johnston, 48 Commercial Street, Lerwick, is at the helm, and she has shawls, scarves, veils and underwear, and a lot of other useful things in stock; so if you gave an order, you would not have to wait, as you did for that coat, and never had it after all...⁵³

Johnston's use of advertorials may certainly have contributed to her success in business. Her 1913 price list includes 50 women of high social standing amongst her clientele with whom she states she has the honour of doing business, comprising Countesses, Viscountesses, Baronesses, Ladies and The Honourables.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the price list is edited into a full page illustrated advertisement in *Gentlewoman*.⁵⁵ There were, however, fashion columns which either did not overtly advertise businesses, or focussed solely on fashion and society. Mary Marsh, writing 'Letters from a Town to a Country Woman' for the *English Review* in 1913, refrained from mentioning business names in the article, preferring to state in a footnote that names and addresses would be supplied upon request.⁵⁶ The popularity of women's columns in newspapers, journals and periodicals and the escalating number of publications produced especially for the female market, played a pivotal role in creating a much more widely dispersed indirect marketing campaign. Shetland lace regularly featured in news, general interest, nature, travel, fashion and society articles making it an almost continual presence in the minds of potential British consumers. Nevertheless, in order to continually expand upon the consumer base, the Shetland lace industry also looked beyond the confines of the UK mainland to the markets in other parts of the world.

⁵³ Beryl, 'A Lady's Letter' *Bow Bells: a Magazine of General Literature and Art for Family Reading*, 24 June 1892, p.623.

⁵⁴ SA D6/203/11/1.

⁵⁵ *The Gentlewoman*, 20 December 1913.

⁵⁶ Mary Marsh, 'Letters from a Town to a Country Woman', *English Review*, (1913:Mar.) p.8.

Sales and marketing at an international level

Shetland lace was exported to Europe as well as to Canada, The United States of America, Australia and New Zealand. That Shetland lace was exported to these countries is unsurprising: Europe for its close proximity and the others were common destinations for nineteenth century emigration. Regardless as to whether the advertising was taking place in Britain or further afield, both the direct and indirect advertising observed similar formats and styles. Simple advertisements were placed in newspapers and journals, news and general interest articles included stories of Shetland lace knitters and the wonders they had produced for the International Exhibitions, advertorials masked thinly disguised lists of businesses and society columns informed when a celebrity bought or wore Shetland lace. Many of the articles were reprints from British newspapers and journals; others placed them into the context of the country in question and as such will not be reiterated here. Nevertheless, there are specific advertisements that merit further comment.

Shetland hosiery had been exported to Australia as early as 1840, 'real Shetland shawls' in 1845 and by the end of the nineteenth century it was being advertised by multiple newspapers in all six states.⁵⁷ For a brief time Shetland knitters and merchants were proffered the opportunity to sell direct to the Australian market. Between 8 December 1862 and 23 February 1863, Gilbert Wood 198 Rundle Street, Adelaide placed a weekly advertisement in the *Shetland Advertiser*:

Gilbert Wood, late of Delting, Shetland, having for upwards of six years been established in the wholesale and retail grocery business in Adelaide, South Australia, is ready to receive consignments and transact business on the most reasonable terms. Parties, therefore, wishing to avail themselves of a better market for many articles in the shape of home produce will find this a safe and profitable opportunity. Remittances punctually attended to.⁵⁸

It is unknown if any Shetland knitter or merchant took up his offer, but his business thrived, expanding into one the largest commercial houses in South Australia with seven regional branches in three states and a London factory.⁵⁹

In Canada the fashion for Shetland lace shawls was such that between 1899 and 1914 John Catto & Son advertised the sale of Orenburg shawls labelled as imitation Shetland.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *The Sydney Herald*, 11 June 1840, June 11, p.3; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1845, p.1. See chapter 4 for discussion of 'real' and imitation Shetland lace.

⁵⁸ *Shetland Advertiser* Issues Nos. 49-60

⁵⁹ *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, SA, Wednesday 12 July 1933 p.43, G. Wood, Son and Co.

While John Murphy, Montreal department store, advertised that not only were they ‘appointed representatives of one of the greatest dealers in Shetland goods in all Shetland Islands’ but that:

American tourists especially should remember that the duty of these unique goods is less by about half than what is sold by importers in the United States. You know what a saving that means. Why not take advantage of our minimum prices while here in Montreal.⁶¹

Across the border in the United States, R. H. Stearns advertised the 1911 sale of ‘English Shetland’ shawls and the Kauffman’s Department store declared Shetland lace veils as being the latest vogue in 1911, with everybody (or eight out of ten women of fashion) wearing them, amply demonstrated in the number of illustrations of how to wear them to best effect on hats.⁶² In a letter to the *Shetland Times* in April 1888, G. T. Ridlon of Manchester, New Hampshire, USA, raised the issue of non-Shetland produced Shetland shawls, and offered a novel way of advertising the genuine article. He proposed to exhibit ‘beautiful samples at the close of my Shetland lectures, along with a description of their manufacture. This awakens an interest and orders are secured’ and purchases would be made from the selection he carried with him.⁶³ It is not known if his ‘way of advertising and introducing’ genuine Shetland lace was successful, or if indeed he made the initial purchases to start his venture.

Although much closer, and as such carries an expectation of increased activity, the earliest mention of Shetland lace in the French media is in the 1920s. Two French society magazines included Shetland lace within their fashionable pages, *Paris Vogue* and *Femina*. Both magazines were marketed at bourgeois and upper class French women and although they catered to different clientele both played pivotal roles in the formation and dissemination of the French fashionable look, a style that was imitated around the world.⁶⁴ The January 1921 edition of *Paris Vogue* has a stylised illustration of a winter scene on the front cover, two highly fashionable women walk through the snow, leaving birdlike footprints behind them. It is a cold scene, but the women are perhaps the warmer for

⁶⁰ *Daily Mail and Empire*, 10 November 1899, p.5; *The Mail and Empire*, 20 December 1900, p.5; *The Toronto World*, 21 August 1914.

⁶¹ *The Montreal Gazette*, 12 August 1908, p.12.

⁶² *The Pittsburgh Press*, 16 June 1911 p.17; 28 July 1911 p.15; 25 August 1911, p.13.

⁶³ G. T. Ridlon, *Shetland Times*, 28 April 1888.

⁶⁴ Mary Lynn Stewart, *Dressing Modern Frenchwomen: Marketing Haute Couture, 1919–1939*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), p.61.

wearing Shetland wool lace lingerie to keep them warm.⁶⁵ This is not a direct advertisement, no business is mentioned, only the beauty, comfort and warmth of Shetland lace camisoles. Figure 38 illustrates a lace trimmed camisole, possibly similar to the lingerie being discussed in *Paris Vogue*.



Figure 36: Very finely knit women's vest/camisole with lace pattern trim, SMA TEX 7770, image courtesy of Shetland Amenity Trust (Dave Donaldson photographer).

Later, the September 1924 edition notes the popularity of Shetland lace shawls and Fair Isle jumpers, commenting on how little is known about the islands themselves and providing an article about a visit to Shetland, with pictures of Lerwick, women knitting and the Petrie family dressing shawls.⁶⁶ Possibly the article created an added interest in Shetland fine knitted goods as by the April 1925 edition, *Vogue* was recommending Shetland lace jackets, Shetland wool tunics worked like lace and light coloured Shetland lace superimposed over a darker coloured article, all available at the House of Chantal,

⁶⁵ *Vogue* (Paris), 15 January 1921, p.51, <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k65372626.image>> [accessed 12 December 2013].

⁶⁶ *Vogue* (Paris), 01 September 1924, p.41, <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k65382257.image>> [accessed 12 December 2013].

Paris.⁶⁷ Throughout the 1920s *Femina* promoted Shetland lace blouses and ‘sweaters’ (figure 39 shows an example of a fine Shetland blouse).⁶⁸



Figure 37: Shetland lace (gossamer) blouse, TM E0243 (1067 mm x 546 mm), image courtesy of Shetland Amenity Trust (Dave Donaldson photographer).

In 1926 *Femina* commented on Shetland lace gowns (lined with kasha, possibly a satin effect flannel) and white Shetland lace sweaters suitable for golfing.⁶⁹

Both society magazines aimed at a bourgeois market provided commentary on fashion and couture collections available and included articles on the rich and famously fashionable society women. Hugely popular with a readership of 20,000 in the 1920s they epitomised the height of French fashion and lifestyle. However the influence of the magazines was felt far beyond their primary readership as French dressmakers would use the magazines to show customers, and then emulate the style for a less wealthy clientele base.⁷⁰ In 1931 *L'industrie Française du vêtement féminin* (The French women's clothing industry) held a

⁶⁷ *Vogue* (Paris) April 1925, p.3, p.27, p.56 - <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k65398958.image> [accessed 12 December 2013].

⁶⁸ *Femina* April 1920 pp.33-34; *Femina* August 1929, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54941713.image>: May 1926, p.5, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54941498.image> [accessed 12 December 2013].

⁶⁹ *Femina* May 1926, p.5 <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54941498.image>: April 1926, p.33 <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5494148v> [accessed 12 December 2013].

⁷⁰ Stewart, *Dressing Modern Frenchwomen*, p.60.

fashion show exhibiting the latest creations from a range of fashion houses in the Venetian Rooms at the lido des Champs-Élysées in Paris. One of them, the House of Chevalier, included a tweed sporting outfit worn with a Shetland lace pullover.⁷¹

Role of celebrity in marketing and sales

Whether at a local, national or international level, any successful marketing strategy has at its core the intention of creating a desire for the goods in question. When dealing with an article of clothing, this is most readily achieved by making it 'fashionable'. However, creating a niche in the fashion market and establishing a consumer predilection for the fashion can be difficult to achieve, and even more difficult to maintain. One effective way of creating consumer desire is to advertise that a demand for the product already exists. Developing the propensity for the fashion optimises the potential of creating an established fashion brand. Here simple marketing strategies are not sufficient and it is necessary to clearly demonstrate that the product is indeed desired.

One effective way of doing this is through the use of celebrity in the development of a marketing campaign. Such campaigns utilise people who are already well known and considered to be fashionable and if they are seen to want, use, or even just like the product, then by association the product becomes desirable. In modern culture celebrity association with branded products is widespread and commonplace, however, using celebrity to endorse a specific brand or product is not a modern phenomena. In the age of celebrity consumption choices are often heavily influenced by the celebrities who are in fashion at any particular moment in time and consumers are encouraged to use specific products through the recognition and careful manipulation of that celebrity status

Chris Rojek posits that celebrity status is determinable in three forms: ascribed, achieved and attributed.⁷² Ascribed celebrity status is a matter of birthright such as the royal and aristocratic families while achieved celebrity status stems from an individual's recognised specific talents or skills, such as with actors, writers, sports people, etc. In direct contrast to an ascribed or achieved status, attributed celebrity status is expressly conferred upon an individual. This is not to say that attributed celebrities do not have some form of talent or achievement but rather their celebrity status is gained through public discourse creating a focus on the individual in question. This is most commonly done through media outlets

⁷¹ *L'officiel De La Mode* 1931, No.113, pp.104-105 < <http://patrimoine.editionsjalou.com/lofficiel-de-la-mode-recherche-13.html> > [accessed 15 March 2013].

⁷² Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), pp.17-20.

although the concept of attributed celebrity status certainly predates mass media.

Furthermore, Rojek distinguishes between celebrity and renown, noting that renown 'refers to the informal attribution of distinction on an individual within a given social network'. Here certain individuals exhibit a degree of celebrity but which is only recognised within their social group and is realised through a personal contact with that individual, whereas celebrity has no direct contact but instead is recognised at a distance. Indeed Rojek asserts that 'social distance is the precondition' of celebrity.⁷³ From this perspective it is entirely feasible that when an individual of renown is discussed in the pages of newspapers or features in the society columns of popular journals, thereby widening their fame/renown to the general populace, they take on a celebrity status which is simultaneously ascribed, achieved and attributed.

Rojek's three perspectives are applicable to the marketing of Shetland lace. From the earliest days of the industry Shetland utilised the ascribed celebrity status of the British royal family in the promotion of fine knitted goods. This is also the case with the ladies of the aristocratic families who can simultaneously be seen to characterise ascribed and attributed status due to their well publicised involvement in anti-Truck and fair pay campaigns on behalf of the Shetland knitters. Recognising the marketing of Shetland lace with those of achieved celebrity status is somewhat more difficult to ascertain. Personal diaries and letters affirm that actors and authors purchased fine knitted articles. However while conscious celebrity consumption is certainly a form of product endorsement, when it is discreet or private consumption it has no part in any marketing strategy. Nevertheless, this private and personal endorsement of Shetland fine goods occasionally made it into the mainstream, where the endorsement was much more subtle but not necessarily less effective.

Seno and Lukas define the celebrity endorsement process as being done by taking on a specific endorser role and promotion method in one of four ways: as an explicit endorsement where the celebrity actively supports and sanctions the product, often in the capacity of an expert or specialist; as a spokesperson where the celebrity recommends the product but does not necessarily use it; as a testimonial whereby it is clear the celebrity willingly promotes the product as one that they themselves use; or as 'co-presentational' where the celebrity is seen with the product but has no direct connection with it other than

⁷³ Ibid., p.12.

in the promotional sense.⁷⁴ Shetland lace had various celebrity advocates which comply with Rojek's three determinable forms and with the first three of Seno and Lukas's endorsement processes. Although there is no evidence of the fourth 'co-presentational' process, this is not to say that it did not occur. In many cases the endorser roles overlapped and incorporated more than one of the endorsement processes.

In 'Who is the celebrity endorser', McCracken discusses the transfer of cultural meanings through the perceived relationship between the celebrity and the product and the product and the consumer, whereby the celebrity is able to transfer their own 'qualities' onto the actual product.⁷⁵ This is appropriate in the case of Shetland lace where consumers established a perceived bond with the fashionable aristocratic, noble women and the royal family, if only through their combined appreciation of Shetland lace and their subsequent purchase of articles, possibly from the same supplier. However McCracken's widely cited definition of a celebrity endorser as 'any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement' does not wholly fit with the Shetland lace industry.⁷⁶ While there is no known advertisement for Shetland lace in which a celebrity 'appears' there are nevertheless many instances where their names were attached to the industry, whether through choice or otherwise.

The Royal family as celebrity endorser

When Arthur Anderson sent fine knitted stockings to the young Queen Victoria in 1837 he was well aware of the potential impact this would have in creating a market for all Shetland produced knitwear, not only Shetland fine knitted goods. In effect, Anderson made Queen Victoria the first celebrity endorser of Shetland knitting. From this first dispatch of fine knitted goods it became a regular occurrence to mark a royal occasion with the presentation of Shetland hosiery, including Shetland lace, as a gift whether as an elaborately decorated case filled with fine lace goods for Princess Mary on her marriage to the Duke of York in 1893 or an individual shawl presented to Princess Patricia of Connaught on the occasion of her marriage to Commander the Hon. Alexander Ramsay.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Diana Seno, Bryan A. Lukas, 'The equity effect of product endorsement by celebrities: A conceptual framework from a co-branding perspective', *European Journal of Marketing* 41 (2007), p.124.

⁷⁵ Grant McCracken, 'Who is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process', *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 16:3 (1989), pp.310-321.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.310.

⁷⁷ SA, D21/5/p.134, scrapbook newspaper cutting, 1893; *SN*, 03 April 1919.

While there were undoubtedly altruistic intentions behind these royal gifts, there was simultaneously the marketing potential that was firmly attached to them. Certainly with the first stockings Queen Victoria did not consent for her name or status to be used in the advertising of Shetland fine knitted stockings, and there are no known advertisements to suggest that this was ever done. At this early point in the fine lace knitting industry the advertising lay in the royal court's knowledge that Victoria had liked the stockings gifted to her and requested more stockings to be sent. Here the marketing potential lay in the word of mouth communications that followed rather than in printed advertising. Details of the presentation and the subsequent letters from the Palace were printed in the Shetland newspapers but no record of the story has been found to have been taken up elsewhere.⁷⁸ Although King George III was the first royal to be presented with a gift of Shetland fine knitted stockings in 1785, the gift to Queen Victoria is the first to illustrate Shetland's general approach to utilising the royal 'celebrity' status as a marketing tool, with later gifts being reported in various national newspapers.

Column inches in the press concerning the royal household would be considered a news story of general interest rather than an advertising feature, and each official presentation made to royalty was accompanied by an article featured in the Shetland press and would hold the possibility of the story being picked up by other newspapers as was commonly done during the 19th century. This did occur with regular features commenting on gifts or purchases of fine lace knitting by royalty appearing in Scottish newspapers such as the *Inverness Advertiser*, the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* and *The Scotsman*. English and Welsh newspapers also regularly advertised the sale of Shetland lace and commented on exhibition sales organised by the aristocratic class, however, no feature has been found with regard to the presentation to or purchases of Shetland lace by royalty. The prestige attached to a royal connection with Shetland fine knitting is not always as clearly recognised as is the case with the Empress Eugénie. Upon the collapse of the French Second Empire in 1870, Eugénie escaped France with her son and a selection of favourite jewels. The 1871 public auction of her personal effects in one of the Imperial stables at the Louvre, Paris revealed a previously unrecorded Shetland connection. Eugénie's taste and style was widely acknowledged. Charles Frederick Worth, English designer who established the first couture house in Paris, provided all her important gowns, court and evening attire, her day dresses were made by famous Paris *fashion* house Maison

⁷⁸ *Shetland Journal*, 31 October 1837, p.4; *Orkney and Shetland Journal*, 15 February 1838, p.15.

Laferrière, her hats by Madam Virot and Lebel, the most famous milliner in Paris and ‘stockings of gossamer lightness’ by Shetland knitters.⁷⁹

Independent businesses used purchases by royalty as part of their marketing strategy and Currie & Co. advertisements included the line ‘By special appointment. Shetland hosiers and shawl knitters to H.R.H Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne’.⁸⁰ By special appointment makes specific reference to a royal warrant and in granting one to Currie & Co. Princess Louise imparted a seal of approval in the knowledge that this would most likely be used in advertising.

From at least 1877 the business actively promoted their royal connections specifically naming members of the immediate royal family as part of their advertising feature.⁸¹ After the 1886 International Exhibition their advertising appended ‘Personally patronised by Her Majesty the Queen and Princess of Wales’, later amended to note that this was on former occasions.⁸² Around 1917 there was a further amendment to note: ‘Personally patronised by Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria, H.M. King Edward VII., and Queen Alexandra, and the Nobility’ which continued into the 1920s.⁸³ Just to make sure everyone passing their Esplanade shop knew about the royal connection they had ‘Patronised by Royalty’ emblazoned in large white capital letters across the window (see figure 40).⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Oskar Fischel and Max von Boehn, *Modes & Manners of the nineteenth century as represented in the pictures and engravings of the time, 1843-1878*, translated by M. Edwards, with an introduction by Grace Rhys, (London: J. M. Dent & Co, 1909), Vol.III, pp.96-97: *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 October 1871, p.6.

⁸⁰ *Anderson’s Almanac* 1877.

⁸¹ The business continued to be listed in the trade’s directory in *Manson’s Almanac* until 1935 but the last advertisement was placed in 1926.

⁸² *Manson’s Almanac*, and *Peace’s Almanac*, various years from 1888.

⁸³ *Manson’s Almanac*, 1917, p.160.

⁸⁴ SMA, photographic database, photograph number 03448



Figure 38: Detail of Schoor & Muir window, Esplanade, Lerwick showing fine lace shawls in window with ‘Patronised by Royalty’, Image courtesy of SMA, photograph 03448.

According to Thomas Manson, Currie & Co. were not the first to benefit from a royal seal of approval, noting that during a visit to Shetland by the Duke of Edinburgh in June 1863:

The Duke made extensive purchases of Shetland hosiery from Mr Wm Johnson, and conferred on him the privilege of affixing the royal arms to his sign board, with the words, “Hosier by special appointment to H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh.”⁸⁵

William Johnson advertised throughout 1862 in the *Shetland Advertiser* as ‘Draper and General Merchant, Manufacturer of Real Shetland lace veils and shawls’ however the next known advertisement is in the *Shetland Times* in 1872 when he noted that he was ‘Draper and Hosier’ to H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh (see figure 41).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Thomas Manson, *Lerwick during the last half century (1867-1917)*, (Lerwick: Lerwick Community Council, 1991), p.81.

⁸⁶ *ST*, 17 June 1872, p.1.

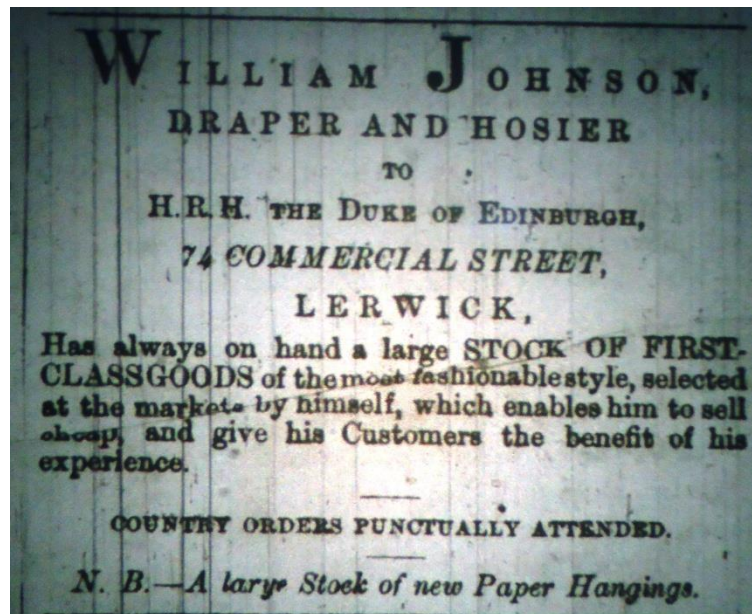


Figure 39: William Johnson, first known Shetland merchant to receive a royal endorsement, advertising in the *Shetland Times*, 17 June 1872.

Johnson and Currie & Co were not the only known business dealing in fine lace knitting to explicitly use royalty as part of their direct advertising. Andrina (Annie) M. Aitken ran a Shetland hosiery business from 4 Queen's Lane, Lerwick from at least 1901 and noted on her business card that she sold 'Shetland Lace Shawls as purchased by Her Majesty Queen Alexandra'.⁸⁷ Glasgow based 'The Shetland House' advertised that 'Her Majesty Queen Alexandra and Her Royal Highness Princess Victoria have personally selected and bought from us a variety of Shetland shawls, gloves, [and] scarves'.⁸⁸ Similarly J. R. White & Co., Shetland Hosiery Depot in Lerwick advertised in 1922 and 1923 that their 'Shetland goods have been purchased and highly recommended by members of the Royal family', without mentioning any specific named royal.⁸⁹ This utilisation of royal celebrity status as an endorsement in their advertising in only two years is possibly due to the strict controls placed on the use of the royal household with regard to merchandise and advertising. The association of the royal household with a specific product has always been considered a standard of excellence and quality; however it is one which was bestowed upon a business.

Royal patronage and endorsement may have played a pivotal role in the continued production of Shetland lace, but it was generally a role instigated and carried through by the Shetlanders themselves. Taking what opportunities were open to them to capitalise on

⁸⁷ SM, TEX 1992.916. See Appendix 5 for illustration of Andrina Aitken's business card and price list.

⁸⁸ SA, D1/135/p.138.

⁸⁹ *Manson's Almanac*, 1922, p.vi; 1923, p.207.

the royal celebrity status they produced fine knitted items and presented them as gifts, often making duplicates which possibly served as a means of accurate future replicas for those who wished a shawl just like the Queen's. Commonly reported in the local press, the sending of a gift was very much a community wide event. This included the producers, merchants, lairds, local officials and politicians who all played a role in creating and maintaining a well publicised connection with the royal family. Open calls were made for knitting to be sent, entries were received which were often displayed by merchants before being judged and the winners' knitting being dispatched.

In a letter to the editor of *The Times*, M.S. identifying herself as a dress-maker from a fashionable street (possibly Mme. States of Hanover Square) complained of the lack of British manufacture in the clothing for Victoria's wedding (1840) stating 'We were all led to believe, at the commencement of the reign of her present Majesty, that we should exclusively receive her patronage'.⁹⁰ That this letter was written three years after the coronation of Queen Victoria illustrates that royal patronage of British manufactures was not as anticipated. Ginsburg's study of the wardrobe of the young Queen (1837 to 1861) acknowledges Victoria's recognition of her duty to patronise British manufactured textiles but notes that in general royal patronage for British produced luxury textiles was 'spasmodic, charitable and generally applied too late'.⁹¹ Certainly in the case of Shetland lace this may indeed be true: Victoria may have occasionally purchased Shetland lace but in her 63 year reign only two known royal warrants were awarded by her daughter, Princess Louise and the Duke of Edinburgh. In a similar vein, Queen Victoria mentions a Shetland shawl in an 1872 entry in her highland diaries, but the Shetland shawl in question was knitted by a young woman living in Golspie, Sutherland, in the Scottish Highlands.⁹² In 1849 Harriet, second Duchess of Sutherland had made Golspie the headquarters of the Sutherland Industrial Society with an exhibition and sale of crafts in 1850.⁹³ It would later be rebranded in 1886 as the Sutherland Home Industries by Millicent, then Marchioness of Stafford.⁹⁴ Certainly this young woman may have been a Shetlander but if not this raises questions over the authenticity of Victoria's connection with Shetland lace. Furthermore, while Victoria was known to both purchase and wear English and Irish lace, there are no

⁹⁰ M.S. 'To the Editor of The Times', *The Times*, 8 February 1840, p.5.

⁹¹ Madeleine Ginsburg, 'The Young Queen and Her Clothes', *Costume* 3:1 (2013), p.45.

⁹² Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, 'Diary of Queen Victoria, September, 1872', in *More Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands from 1862 to 1882*, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1884), p.407.

⁹³ Christine Lodge, *The clearers and the cleared: Women, economy and land in the Scottish Highlands 1800-1900*, (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1998), p.110.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.113.

contemporary records, nor images of Victoria wearing Shetland lace in public. Indeed, there are no known records of any royal wearing Shetland lace in a public setting. The advertising of Shetland knitted goods as warm, cosy and comforting, perfect for infants and invalids, may go some way in understanding this but nevertheless is suggestive that her purchases of Shetland lace were for charitable/philanthropic reasons pertaining to her role as Queen and patron of British textile manufacture or for wearing in private rather than public settings. However, as every aspect of royal clothing is on display, whether in public or private, her wearing of Shetland lace would likely be emulated by those in her entourage. Ginsburg notes that Victoria differentiated between private and public clothing to the extent that some non-public clothing was paid for independently of the royal wardrobe.⁹⁵ If Victoria considered her purchases of Shetland lace as private purchases this may explain why she was not seen wearing it in public, and may go a long way in explaining the scarcity of Shetland fine lace recorded in the ledgers of the royal household.⁹⁶

Perhaps one of the best sources providing royal endorsement was the 1888 article 'Needle Work' in *Murray's Magazine*.⁹⁷ The article gives a brief history of needlework, discusses the formation of the Royal School of Art Needlework, Irish lace, English bobbin and point lace and finishes with a somewhat romanticised section on Shetland lace. Authored by Helena, the article is attributed to Princess Christian (Princess Helena Augusta Victoria, Queen Victoria's third daughter), first president of the Royal School of Art Needlework. The Shetland press seized the opportunity to publicise the royal connection by giving the article the title 'H R H Princess Christian on Shetland Hosiery' and with the exception of the final two sentences reproduced the Shetland section verbatim.⁹⁸ The omission of these two sentences is of special interest. The *Shetland Times* was more than happy to reproduce the positive commentary from the article while omitting the remarks, direct from the royal pen, referring to the problems of the Truck system and attempts being made to give the knitters fuller control of their products:

⁹⁵ Ginsburg, 'The Young Queen and Her Clothes' p.39.

⁹⁶ Letter from The Royal Collection 25 January 1995, to Tommy Watt, curator Shetland Museum states that the archive contains 'just one reference to knitwear in connection with Queen Victoria: four Shetland shawls were among the items of infant's clothes ordered by Princess Frederick William of Prussia (Queen Victoria's eldest daughter) for the birth of the future Kaiser in 1859.

⁹⁷ Helena, 'Needle-Work', *Murray's Magazine, A Home and Colonial Periodical for the General Reader*, Volume III, January-June (London: John Murray, 1888), pp.577-587.

⁹⁸ *ST*, 19 May 1888.

The Shetland work is poorly paid; until the last few months the payments have been on the truck system, which means payment “in kind”; but this is now illegal, and the traders cannot afford to give the price in money, “moderate as it is”, equal to the value of meal and other articles, formerly given in exchange. All efforts to bring the workers into more direct communication with the buyers are useful, and to be encouraged, as by this means they will receive better pay, and the standard of work and wool is less likely to be lowered⁹⁹

This omission is unlikely to have come at the request of the spinners and knitters, nor from the businesses who advertised that they paid their knitters in cash. Most likely the decision was made by the newspaper, not wishing to antagonise local merchants who advertised within their pages, or possibly, considering the economic arguments presented to the Truck Commission, at the request of the merchants themselves. With regard to the royal household the power and extent of the media cannot be overstated, full details of the shawl presented to the Duchess of Kent as a wedding gift in 1935 made it into the news in Victoria, Australia.¹⁰⁰ For those who were unable to gain the prestige of a royal purchase there was always disappointment. Referring to Queen Victoria bypassing his stand at the 1886 Edinburgh Exhibition, John White, of the Shetland Warehouse, Edinburgh wrote:

...We were greatly disappointed on Thursday because the Queen when inspecting the Exhibition passed round behind our case and did not see it at all, of course many more had the same lot, but that does not make it any better...¹⁰¹

Missing out on a royal visit and possible purchase did not dent the optimism of a potential royal endorsement. In 1926 *The Scotsman* reported of ‘A rumour...that the queen had her benevolent eye on the Shetland shawl industry, and intended to do her best to make these shawls fashionable’. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century royal endorsement was desired and sought after and celebrated when it was achieved. Royal women were very much at the social apex, positioned at the centre of the ‘celebrity culture’ of this period. They could influence taste, fashion, social customs and moral values. Where royal endorsement and patronage was elusive, there were those who looked instead to the royal court, and the benefits of the influence exerted by the fashionable and newsworthy aristocratic and noble women.

⁹⁹ Helena, ‘Needle-Work’, pp.586-587

¹⁰⁰ *Camperdown Chronicle*, Victoria, Australia, 27 April 1935, p.2.

¹⁰¹ SandArch, 1886.48A, letter to Alex Sandison, 21 August 1886.

Aristocratic and noble women as celebrity endorser

As noted, in modern terminology a celebrity is usually considered to be an individual who is primarily recognisable through their public profile and its associated media appearances as well as any qualities they are perceived to possess.¹⁰² This concept is also applicable to the society women of the nineteenth century where their glamour and roles as fashion trendsetters positioned them to establish a significant and far reaching public profile which was ideal as a means of capitalising on product endorsement.¹⁰³ Just as aristocratic and noble women emulated the fashions of the royal household they themselves were emulated by the burgeoning middle classes.¹⁰⁴ Their position in society, the desire to imitate them and the discussions of them as part of public discourse would have given them a degree of renown. However it is their manifestation and exposure in widespread print format that magnified this, reaffirming their elevated status to a much larger group of people. From the end of the eighteenth century the rise of the printing press and the ever increasing available media presented increased possibilities for people to become well known and achieve celebrity status. Since these fashionable society women were often the topic of public discourse, they became self-imposed advocates and promotional tools for Shetland lace, granting the articles a much needed exposure that yielded both short and long term benefits and rewards.¹⁰⁵ Top down fashion was very much in place in nineteenth century Britain: aristocratic and noble women imitated the royal family, middle and upper middle class women aspired to be like the aristocratic and noble class, lower middle and working class women were no less desirous of being fashionable, although at a lower monetary value.¹⁰⁶ The role of aristocracy was more than just about creating and maintaining fashion trends; aristocratic women simultaneously played a variety of roles pertinent to the Shetland fine lace knitting industry: as creators of charitable organisations such as the SHI, HHI and SHIA; as instigators of public discourse on the evils of truck and the economic situation of the women of Shetland; as campaigners of a fair payment to the producers; as creators of marketing opportunities; and as consumers themselves. In associating their aristocratic titles with organisations they ensured ongoing press coverage for no matter

¹⁰² Philip Drake and Andy Miah, 'The Cultural Politics of Celebrity', *Cultural Politics* Vol.6, Issue 1 (2010), pp.51-52.

¹⁰³ See Helland, Janice, 'Caprices of Fashion': Handmade Lace in Ireland 1883-1907' *Textile History*, 39:2 (2008), pp.193-222; Helland, 'Authenticity and Identity'.

¹⁰⁴ After Georg Simmel, *Fashion*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 62:6 (1957), pp.541-558; Thorstein Veblen, *The theory of the leisure class*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), chapter IV Conspicuous Consumption.

¹⁰⁵ Janice Helland, 'Philanthropic Fashion: Ireland, 1887-1897', *Costume* 48:2 (2014).

¹⁰⁶ The varying fineness of Shetland lace with regard to different consumer groups is discussed in chapter 6.

how good or how worthy the organisation, without continued publicity it would soon dwindle into extinction.

Upper class women were an integral part of the industry providing access to opportunities which might otherwise have been unavailable to the Shetland knitters. From this perspective an understanding of the development of the Shetland lace industry is incomplete without an acknowledgement of the significance of the people who assisted in the development of external business networks and facilitated access to the various markets, their contribution is at times as important as that of the producers themselves. They lent their names to large public organisations and small merchants' business cards alike, in turn encouraging others to do likewise.¹⁰⁷ As patrons of anti Truck campaigns and philanthropic organisations such as the HHI, SHI and SHIA in addition to advocating for fair treatment of Shetland lace knitters and promoting the cause through advertising high street outlets for the knitted articles in the form of Shetland depots, the advertisements were specifically designed as ways to recruit women/people to the cause. Furthermore, they organised exhibitions and private sales, their social position giving a much needed impetus to sales of Shetland lace. Similarly, they allowed their names to be included in Shetland merchants' business cards, such as Miss Johnson's with 50 named individuals of high social standing. Many more took a back-seat approach, preferring to show their support through direct purchases alone, remaining essentially invisible unless there was an occasional glimpse of them to be found in the society pages.¹⁰⁸

Prior to becoming Lady Lyell in 1894, the wife of Leonard Lyell, Liberal MP for Orkney and Shetland (1885-1900), Mary Lyell would not have ranked amongst the echelons of the noble and aristocratic class and she merits only one mention in the public announcements for Shetland lace.¹⁰⁹ As Lady Lyell there are a further two newspaper articles bearing her name, one with regard to an exhibition and the other in connection with an actress, both which will be discussed below in the relevant sections.¹¹⁰ From her arrival in Shetland she transformed from being an interested consumer to forming a one woman campaign on behalf of the Shetland knitters, with a special focus on the lace knitters. A record of her correspondence provides information not only of what she was purchasing, but of her

¹⁰⁷ SA, D6/263/11/1&2, E.S. Reid Tait Collection, for example Miss Johnston.

¹⁰⁸ See chapter 6 for discussion of role played by aristocratic woman in consumption

¹⁰⁹ *Scottish Highlander*, 31 May 1888, p.3E.

¹¹⁰ Possibly *ST*, October 1896; *The Scotsman*, 9 July 1901, p.5.

developing interest in the industry and the women who produced the fine articles.¹¹¹ Taking her role as a promoter of Shetland knitted goods (hosiery and haps as well as fine lace articles) very seriously, she offered production advice on colour, size and style of articles which she knew were popular and would sell easily. Her early letters show her naivety in the production methods of fine knitted lace articles. When placing an order for 10 shawls she asks for them to be reproduced in exactly the same size, colour (bright Mourat), weight and thickness of wool.¹¹² This was an unmanageable task as was also eventually acknowledged by A. T. Stewart, the New York based department store which demanded, but did not receive, uniformity of design as part of the department store marketing mentality.¹¹³ As Lady Lyell, Mary was listed as a patron of the newly limited company status of the SHIA second exhibition held at Stafford house, on 4 July 1898, the leaflet noting her name along with a long list of other notable patrons.

Some 30 years prior to the creation of the anti truck campaigns and philanthropic organisations associated with Shetland lace, in 1848 the *Athenaeum* claimed that for many philanthropists the underlying impetus to assist the poor was rooted in ‘A love of lucre and respect for rank’, while in 1849 the *Eclectic* declared that a ‘semblance of beneficence’ and the ‘selfish desire to win approval’ was behind the façade of Victorian philanthropy.¹¹⁴ In this they might be seen as simultaneously exploitative and self-interested as well as well-intentioned and philanthropic. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century there may have been instances where this remained the case. Certainly motivations behind benevolence and philanthropic pursuits may be considered suspect and where the philanthropist is positioned in a dominant and domineering role.¹¹⁵ However, to label all the aristocratic women who took up the Shetland cause as such would be a harsh judgement. The second of the three key aims of the SHIA was to improve the quality of the products by instruction, however, rather than patronise the knitters with an insistence in following this aim, the SHIA recognised the expertise of the Shetland knitter and turned the focus to

¹¹¹ SandArch, correspondence between various members of the Sandison family in Unst and Mary Lyell, 1886-1891.

¹¹² SandArch, 1887.10B.

¹¹³ SandArch, correspondence between Alexander Sandison and A.T. Stewart's Manchester Depot, 1869-1881.

¹¹⁴ *Athenaeum*, 19 August 1848, p.828; *Eclectic Review*, November 1849, p.5.48, cited in Roberts, *Social Conscience of the Early Victorians*, p.246.

¹¹⁵ Helen Gilbert and Chris Tiffin, eds., *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and Its Legacy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Sarah Richardson, ‘Women, Philanthropy, and Imperialism in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain’, in *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and Its Legacies*, ed. by Helen Gilbert and Chris Tiffin (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp.90-102, p 99.

marketing the articles and providing a fair payment to the producer. The extent to which aristocratic women influenced the fashion for Shetland lace is unclear, what is evident is the extent of media coverage which followed in their trail, which in turn invariably mentioned Shetland lace.

Other celebrities - actress, novelist, playwright and poet as celebrity endorser

While the queen would certainly have influenced the purchasing and wearing of any fashion article, it is unlikely that nineteenth century aristocratic women would have followed her in a fashion that went against their 'inclinations'.¹¹⁶ This is also applicable to the middle classes emulating the aristocratic ladies. Although written primarily for an American audience Elizabeth Cady Stanton's 1852 essay heralded a change in attitude to the wearing of fashion, notably with regard to trickle down fashion:

'...Why must I wear a *tournour*, a thing so vulgar in fact, and in idea, because my Lady V wear [sic] one to conceal a great wen, growing in the centre of her back? Why should I trail my clothes upon the ground because royal fools, having no true dignity or nobility in themselves, impose upon an ignorant populace by the show of it...'¹¹⁷

This changing perspective would soon prevail in Britain and from the middle of the nineteenth century new fashion leaders would emerge: those fashionable and highly visible individuals of the stage, screen and printed word who would serve as new models for the new looks.¹¹⁸ Identifying non-royal or non-aristocratic celebrities who endorsed Shetland lace is challenging. Personal diaries and letters show a range of celebrities purchased Shetland lace. Novelist and social commentator Susan Edmonstone Ferrier appears to be well aware of the variety of Shetland knitted articles available for purchase. In 1848 she sent her friend Helen Tennent a gift of fine Shetland mitts noting that they were '...said to be the *ne plus ultra* of Shetland knitting'.¹¹⁹ In describing them this way as 'a peak of perfection; the pinnacle of achievement' she places them higher than the lace shawls and stoles which were becoming increasingly popular during the 1840s.¹²⁰ Novelist George

¹¹⁶ Ginsburg, 'The Young Queen and Her Clothes', p.45.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 'The New Dress', *The Lily* 4 (April 1852), reprinted in Radu Stern, *Against Fashion: clothing as art, 1850-1930* (USA: MIT, 2004), p.80.

¹¹⁸ Drake and Miah, 'Cultural Politics', p.53.

¹¹⁹ Susan Edmonstone Ferrier, letter from Susan Edmonstone Ferrier to Helen Tennent, October 13, 1848?, in *Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier 1782-1854*. Compiled by John Ferrier, edited by Johan Andrew Doyle, John Andrew, (London: John Murray, 1898), p.349. British and Irish women's letters and diaries, <<http://solomon.bwl2.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwl2/getdoc.pl?S4646-D200>> [accessed 26 June 2012].

¹²⁰ Oxford English Dictionary, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/126142>> [accessed 27 June 2013].

Elliot wrote in 1873 ‘...I shall often wrap myself in your affection - otherwise called my Shetland shawl’, adding a sentimental attachment to the article.¹²¹ It is not known if the Shetland shawl was fine knitted, however the sentiment of being wrapped in affection conforms to the general sense that many of the articles were considered cosy, comforting, and worn at home¹²² In 1875, actress, poet, novelist and social commentator Frances Anne Kemble wrote from York Farm, Pennsylvania, USA, to her friend Harriet that she was knitting ‘...fine little Shetland wool shirts or socks for baby’, the baby being her granddaughter Alice Dudley Leigh.¹²³ The special qualities of Shetland wool for baby clothes was well known, however it is not known if Frances purchased her fine Shetland wool in the USA or had it sent to her. During the 1870s procuring fine Shetland worsted was problematic, but her celebrity status as a renowned actress no doubt made obtaining it a bit easier. While highlighting the writer’s knowledge of Shetland articles, these extracts form parts of private communications with no known contemporary public record. Therefore, although they cannot be considered part of a marketing campaign, even in the form of indirect advertising, they may perhaps be viewed as a personal testimony or product promotion within a select private group. However there are a few references published in the local and national press which make a direct association with celebrities and Shetland lace.

Sarah Bernhardt, the noted French actress was listed amongst the dignitaries in attendance at the SHIA annual exhibition at Stafford House in 1901. *The Times* noted that very fine Shetland shawls were on display without mentioning any purchases, however *The Scotsman* reported:

among the distinguished visitors was Sarah Bernhardt, who probably attracted more notice than any other person...She made several purchases, but seemed to be most captivated by the display of Shetland shawls.¹²⁴

¹²¹ George Eliot, letter from George Eliot to Elma Stuart, September 17, 1873, in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 5: 1869-1873, Gordon S. Haight, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954), pp.475. British and Irish women’s letters and diaries, <<http://solomon.bwl2.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwl2/getdoc.pl?S7136-D459>> [accessed 26 June 2012].

¹²² Carol Christiansen, pers comm.

¹²³ Frances Anne Kemble, letter from Frances Kemble, February 12, 1875, in *Further Records 1848-1883: A Series of Letters* (London: Henry Holt & Co., 1891), pp.380. British and Irish women’s letters and diaries, <<http://solomon.bwl2.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwl2/getdoc.pl?S4850-D039>> [accessed 26 June 2012].

¹²⁴ *The Times*, 09 July 1901, p.8; *The Scotsman*, 09 July 1901, p.5.

When the *Shetland Times* and *Shetland News* ran the story 11 days later both publications saw the potential of this new type of celebrity endorsement to promote Shetland lace, the *Shetland News* commenting that Bernhardt admired and purchased Shetland shawls while the *Shetland Times* added that Bernhardt purchased three Shetland shawls from Lady Alice Lesley and paid over £9 for them.¹²⁵ The delay in publication was possibly due to the Shetland press attempting to get further information regarding the sale. The story, including details of her fine lace purchases made it as far afield as New Zealand.¹²⁶ Naming a celebrity in connection with Shetland lace was always a bonus, but adding the additional dimension of where it was purchased, how much was paid and who knitted it created an additional bond which could be capitalised upon in further marketing. When a shawl was knitted for eminent British novelist Marie Corelli, Peter Jopp, writing for the *Shetland Times* in 1909 was not only concerned with broadcasting the purchase but placed equal, if not greater importance on the knitter rather than the recipient of an Unst produced shawl:

A very fine shawl for Miss Marie Corelli, one of the greatest of our living English novelists, has just been knitted by Miss Jemima MacKay, who resides adjacent to the ruins of the historic castle of Muness. The shawl knitted by Miss MacKay, won a prize of £1 at the Edinburgh Exhibition.¹²⁷

While this type of celebrity endorsement played a crucial role in the marketing of Shetland lace, unless it reached a wide audience, or became part of an individual marketing strategy, the impact was short lived. Celebrity endorsement of a much longer lived impact is to be found in product placement, whereby the insertion of specific goods or brands within non advertising media promotes the goods in a subtle, less obvious way while maintaining the intention to influence consumer behaviour.¹²⁸ As noted, there had been attempts to encourage consumption using product placement in the society and fashion columns of publications, which were to all intents nothing more than thinly disguised advertisements. The success of such product placement relied on the consumer choosing to follow the ‘advice’ or ‘opinion’ of the fashion or society columnist and as such careful consideration needed to be given as to which newspaper or periodical to use. However, as a one-off inclusion in a column the impact of this type of product placement would be similar to that of an advertisement and would most likely have come at a similar cost. The embedding of

¹²⁵ *ST*, 20 July 1901, p.4; *SN*, 20 July 1901.

¹²⁶ *West Coast Times*, New Zealand, 14 September 1901, p.4.

¹²⁷ Peter Jopp, *ST*, 10 October 1908.

¹²⁸ Jay Newell, Charles T. Salmon & Susan Chang ‘The Hidden History of Product Placement’, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 50:4 (2006), p.577.

advertising in society columns conforms to the modern concept of product placement, nevertheless, product placement does not necessarily indicate an underlying commercial intention but may be embedded within the narrative to add depth to a story line or create a realistic ambience to a scene.¹²⁹ Here there is no commercial transaction in place, no payment received for including the product in the story line; rather the inclusion forms a natural part of the narrative. This may be true of the insertion of product placements within literature where the inclusion of a product already known to the reader creates a recognisable and at times intimate connection between the reader, the characters in the text and the author. Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Cranford* was first serialised anonymously in 1851 in Charles Dickens' 2d weekly journal *Household Words*.¹³⁰ The story follows the lives of a group of single and widowed middle class women, reflecting the traditional and changing attitudes of Victorian society through the social and personal relationships between the women. In one short scene Jessie Brown, while offering assistance to Miss Pole, is oblivious to the efforts to restrain her from discussing family trade connections in front of the Honourable Mrs Jamieson:

...assure Miss Pole she could easily get her the identical Shetland wool required, "through my uncle, who has the best assortment of Shetland goods of any one in Edinbro" ... Miss Pole and Miss Jessie Brown had set up a kind of intimacy, on the strength of the Shetland wool and the new knitting stitches...¹³¹

The reference to new knitting stitches probably refers to the availability of pattern books produced during the early years of the 1840s (see chapter 4) and as such the inclusion of Shetland wool and possibly Shetland stitches in the text is at once both traditional and modern. While the ladies are participating in a gentile and feminine pastime they, or at least Miss Pole, are also illustrating their connection with the wider world. It is not known if novelist Elizabeth Gaskell purchased or wore Shetland lace but it is clear that she was aware of the popularity of Shetland wool, the importance of Edinburgh as a location for purchasing it and the new patterns emerging in the pattern books, something that her readership was also likely to have been aware of. As such, even if, as Newell et al suggest, that increasingly during the 19th century and certainly by its end 'the barrier between prose

¹²⁹ Margaret Craig Lees and Jane Scott, 'What is and isn't product placement?' *Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference 2008*, <http://www.anzmac.org/conference_archive/2008/_Proceedings/PDF/S01_/Craig-Lees%20%26%20Scott_S1%20S1%20P4.pdf> [accessed 12 October 2014].

¹³⁰ Chapter 1 appeared in Vol.IV, 13 December 1851, finishing in May 1853, Dickens Online Journals, <<http://www.djo.org.uk/>> [accessed 26 March 2012].

¹³¹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), p.11 & p.16.

and promotion was porous' it seems unlikely that Gaskell intended this to be an advertising feature.¹³²

Prior to her marriage in 1850 and eventual settlement in the United States in 1854, Amelia E. Barr travelled to Orkney and Shetland as a young woman. A prolific writer she used her experiences while there in numerous publications. Although written in 1918 Barr's heroine in *An Orkney Maid*, Thora Ragnor, is the daughter of the largest and one of the wealthiest traders in Orkney and her every action in the book is one befitting a woman of her class and status in 1853:

Thora was sitting near the window spinning on the little wheel the marvellously fine threads of wool made from the dwarfish breed of Shetland sheep, and used generally for the knitting of those delicate shawls which rivalled the finest linen laces.¹³³

Here we have Shetland wool and Shetland lace shawls with a commentary on the fineness of both. Thora is spinning in Kirkwall, Orkney with Shetland wool, but there is no indication of what she intends to knit with her finely spun wool, only that she, and Barr, knows it is used in producing Shetland lace. The inclusion of short passages such as these illustrates the popularity of Shetland wool and Shetland lace that it made its way into the pages of mainstream novels. But this type of endorsement cannot be taken at face value. While both Gaskell and Barr proffer a positive endorsement this could easily have negative connotations depending upon how the product was portrayed in the text. Written in 1899 Edith Wharton's *Souls Belated* tells the story of two American lovers, the married Lydia and the unmarried Ralph who travel to Europe to be together and free from American society. Staying in a hotel in the Italian lakes where social life is strictly controlled by their fellow upper-class English visitors, Lydia notes:

Queer little microcosms, these hotels! Most of these people live here all summer and then migrate to Italy or the Riviera. The English are the only people who can lead that kind of life with dignity--those soft-voiced old ladies in Shetland shawls somehow carry the British Empire under their caps.¹³⁴

Although certainly not a definitively negative endorsement, the association of Shetland shawls with old ladies is clear as is its association with the upper classes. This impression

¹³² Newell et al, 'Hidden History of Product Placement', p.579.

¹³³ Amelia E. Barr, *An Orkney Maid*, (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1918), p.60.

¹³⁴ Edith Wharton, 'Souls Belated', in *The Collected Short Stories of Edith Wharton*, ed. by R. W. B. Lewis. Vol. 1. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), pp.104-26. First published in *The Greater Inclination*, 1899.

of Shetland lace being old-fashioned is repeated 31 years later in Agatha Christie's 1930 detective Miss Marple who is seen wearing a 'very fine Shetland shawl'.¹³⁵ Although her age is not mentioned, Christie's Marple is generally perceived to be an elderly woman, a spinster with a fondness for tweed suits, knitting and gardening. While this might indeed indicate the old-fashioned, or passing of fashion, Shetland lace was simultaneously a young fashion. Not only in the new styled gossamer blouses and camisoles, but in the re-fashioning of Shetland lace shawls into lace frocks and negligees in the 1930s.

Nevertheless, this can be seen to be a form of product placement within the book and perhaps also a celebrity endorsement from celebrated British authors. The association with the British upper classes is repeated in Oscar Wilde's 1894 *A Woman of No Importance*. Lady Hunstanton, a wealthy and upper class woman tells her footman, Francis, to fetch her shawl 'The Shetland. Get the Shetland'. As editor of *Woman's World*, fashion magazine for women, from 1887-1889 and a regular contributor of articles on fashion Wilde's choice of a Shetland shawl is interesting.¹³⁶ Here Wilde acknowledges not only the fashion for shawls, but the Shetland shawl in particular, as well as the aristocratic association with Shetland shawls in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹³⁷

Although royal and aristocratic women in the United Kingdom were regularly associated with Shetland lace, the reports in newspapers and journals make no mention of them wearing it. Further afield, in Australia, the women's pages of the national press were more inclined to name local celebrities who were seen wearing the lace which may have aided in the sale of Shetland lace in the specific area but not much beyond it.¹³⁸ Undoubtedly, an image of a celebrity wearing the lace would have made an impact on how it was viewed by the celebrity consuming public. Only two images have been sourced which possibly illustrate a celebrity wearing Shetland lace, however the quality of the images means that this may be considered questionable. If they are indeed Shetland lace then both project very different perceived characteristics of the lace in the marketplace. Flora Masson, a nurse (sister) at St Thomas's London, wrote in her memoirs of her friendship with Florence

¹³⁵ Agatha Christie, *The Murder at the Vicarage, A Miss Marple Mystery* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), p.243.

¹³⁶ Stephanie Green, 'Oscar Wilde's "The Woman's World"', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 30:2 (1997), pp.102-120; Oscar Wilde, 'Woman's Dress', *Pall Mall Gazette*, October 14, 1884; 'More Radical Ideas Upon Dress Reform', 11 November 1884; 'The Relation of Dress to Art. A Note in Black and White on Mr. Whistler's Lecture' 28 February 28; 'The Philosophy of Dress' *New York Tribune*, 19 April 1885.

¹³⁷ Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance* [originally published (London: John Lane 1894)] (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1996), p.5..

¹³⁸ *The Register*, Adelaide, Australia, 05 January 1924, p.5; *The Australasian*, Melbourne, 13 September 1924, p.53.

Nightingale ‘She wore a white lace shawl over her smoothly parted hair, and more than one shawl of white lace or fine Shetland wool over her shoulders’ a description which matches a well known photograph of Nightingale.¹³⁹ A close examination of the image shows that one of the shawls may indeed be Shetland lace, although amongst the other shawls it is not clearly visible. Masson knew Nightingale between 1885 and 1898, when she was 65 to 78 years old and in this may be considered to continue the perception that Shetland lace was a fashion for older women. However, a 1923 photograph of acclaimed actress Sybil Thorndike projects a much more modern and fashionable image. The accompanying text for the image notes that she is wearing ‘one of the draped frocks of knitted Shetland wool...often worked in such a fine medium that they are quite lace-like’. The difficulty in finding images of such frocks is made clear in the article, which notes that ‘the owners of the original designs do not wish them to be duplicated’.¹⁴⁰ The quality of the newspaper image does not allow the intricate pattern and detail of the frock to be seen and it is therefore difficult to ascertain if the frock is Shetland produced. Certainly it may be an authentic Shetland creation, but equally it may be one of the Parisian ‘Shetland’ creations.

Celebrity endorsement of Shetland lace cannot be directly compared with the modern concept of celebrity product endorsement. In the majority of cases, the celebrities who endorsed Shetland lace did so through purchase, spokesperson roles and testimonials. Royal and aristocratic families, actresses and authors were known to purchase, wear and write about Shetland lace but the celebrities in question did not receive payment for endorsing Shetland goods, rather for many the returns were in other ways. In many cases, the very fact that the ‘celebrity’ purchased or wore the article would have been sufficient for it to become a desired item. In the case of Shetland knitted goods this is most clearly seen in the example of the image of Edward, Prince of Wales, wearing a Fair Isle jumper in 1921, which launched the article into the public domain of desirability (see figure 42). The advantage for Fair Isle was that the prince was seen wearing it, painted wearing it and talked about wearing it, something that is not available with regard to Shetland lace.

¹³⁹ Flora Masson, *Victorians All*, (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1931), cited in *The Mail*, Adelaide, 12 December 1931, p.7.

¹⁴⁰ *Table Talk*, Melbourne, Thursday 8 March 1923, pp.4-5.

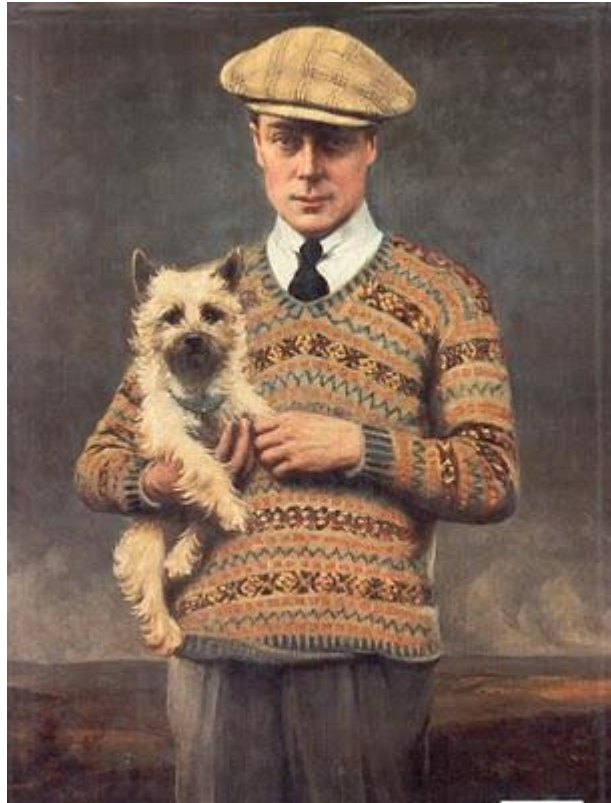


Figure 40: Postcard of Sir Henry Lander's painting of the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) wearing a Fair Isle jumper in 1921. Original painting held by Leeds City Art Galleries, postcard image courtesy of SMA photograph 01352.

Role of Exhibitions

The 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations at the Crystal Palace in London was the first in a series of International Exhibitions that were increasingly popular during the nineteenth century. Henry Cole, one of the Exhibition organisers and leading figure in aesthetic circles, believed that in addition to focussing on how things were made, the style of displaying products was done in such a way that people could imagine owning them. In this he believed the exhibition would teach 'not the manufacturers only how to make, but the public how to buy'.¹⁴¹ With regard to Shetland lace (and other Shetland knitted goods), the primary intention of participation in the exhibition was to display and promote the products, which would, hopefully, lead to increased sales. Later exhibitions would also display the means of production with yet better results.

Exhibitions were more than the mere display of articles; they facilitated marketing to a much larger and more diverse group of potential consumers than would normally be anticipated, affording the general public the opportunity to see, and possibly touch, the

¹⁴¹ Henry Cole, *Miscellanies* (London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1875), p.207.

finest of Shetland fine lace knitted articles. Participation in exhibitions offered many opportunities, to both Shetland businesses and individual knitters alike and there were various options for exhibiting Shetland lace. From the mid 19th century there was a flurry of international exhibitions which although they were one-off events, there were many taking place, sometimes at least one per year, and spread over large geographical distances. They were highly organised events with the purpose of displaying and promoting trade, offering a transparent and interactive platform which contributed to the development and revival of markets by supporting commercial development of nations, regions and cities. Smaller exhibitions, organised by the SHIA, HHI, agricultural organisations and local governments were equally effective although rarely attained the prestige level of the internationals. The eyes of the local, national and international press were firmly focussed on the exhibitions, recording much of what was going on, especially visits by dignitaries or royalty. A royal visit could merit extensive column inches in the papers, as could something special about the display, such as the knitting festooned whalebone arches of the Shetland knitters stand in Edinburgh 1886. Winning a medal/award/diploma for articles gave organisations, businesses and individual knitters a degree of prestige, one which might be comparable to a royal seal of approval and from which many marketing campaigns were generated. Robert Linklater's prize medal from the 1862 International Exhibition immediately featured in his advertising, running from 4 August until 29 December 1862 in the *Shetland Advertiser*, reappearing in his advertising between 1887 and 1893.¹⁴² Schoor & Muir (ex Currie & Co) listed all winning medals and diplomas in their advertising: gold medal Edinburgh International Exhibition 1886; Diploma of Honour, highest award given at the East End Exhibition, Glasgow, 1891; Glasgow Exhibition Diploma, 1901; Glasgow East End Industrial Exhibition Diploma of Honour, gold medal, 1904.¹⁴³ The inclusion of prizes won in advertising acted as a form of endorsement, albeit by the juries who had awarded the medal or diploma. This was especially effective for potential customers who had not attended the exhibition and also acted as a reminder of the standard of product the merchant had available.

Participation in an exhibition did not guarantee immediate or future sales, but they were powerful marketing tools, giving businesses the opportunity to present information as well as being sales platforms. Exhibitions offered the first contact of a merchant with many consumers, giving the opportunity to narrate stories of production and offer a tactile interaction with the product. Seeing an image of Shetland fine knitted lace illustrates its

¹⁴² *Manson's Almanac*, 1893, p.159.

¹⁴³ *Manson's Almanac*, 1926, p.225, in numerous other advertisements.

beauty and aesthetic appeal, knowing the story of how it is produced adds a philanthropic appeal, however it is in touch that the exquisite softness and fineness of thread is truly appreciated, creating an emotional response which could easily instigate an immediate or future sale.¹⁴⁴ With so much to see during the exhibitions, and with many stands exhibiting the same type of products, it became vital that businesses maximised their potential to attract the visitor to their stand and in this the visual impact of the stand was as important as the goods it had on display. John White's Shetland Warehouse began sourcing Shetland lace almost a year before the 1886 Edinburgh Exhibition, liaising with Sandison in Unst to ensure he had the best knitters on the island producing the finest and most aesthetically appealing articles available to be displayed on his stand.¹⁴⁵ There is no known image of his stand, but no doubt it was indeed spectacular. However, it was the Shetland knitters' stand, organised by Sherriff Thoms (Shetland), Currie & Co. (Shetland) and Mr Laurence (Fair Isle) which would attract and maintain the focus of the national and international media, as well as receive the patronage of Queen Victoria. The Shetland knitters' stand was visually eye catching, incorporating women carding, knitting and spinning beneath four huge whale jawbones covered in Shetland knitted articles (see figure 36). Visitors to the stand were able to watch articles being produced from (almost) start to finish, talk to the producers, and make a social as well as aesthetic purchase as they knew they were buying direct from the knitter, who would receive the payment less the 5% commission charged for selling at the exhibition. Additionally, advertising the possible attendance of Betty Mouat, who had recently gained celebrity status due to her solo voyage to Norway, enticed many more visitors to the stand.¹⁴⁶ Her non-attendance invariably disappointed many, including Mrs Gladstone, wife of the Prime Minister, who had to be content with viewing her shawl, neatly positioned in a glass case at the front of the stand, clearly visible in the bottom left corner of the photograph.¹⁴⁷ In the background of the only known image, standing in the centre, is Mrs Muir who eight years later would be the Muir in Schoor & Muir. Albeit on a smaller scale Currie & Co. would repeat the success of the 1886 Shetland Knitters' stand at the 1888 Glasgow and the 1890 Edinburgh International Exhibitions.¹⁴⁸ There are no known photographs of the 1888 and 1890 stands, however figure 42 shows the sketch of the Shetland knitters working at the 1888 Glasgow Exhibition which was included in the *Illustrated Art Journal*.

¹⁴⁴ See chapter 6 for discussion on philanthropic and emotional consumption

¹⁴⁵ SandArch, correspondence between Sandison in Unst and John White, 1886.

¹⁴⁶ *ST*, reported on the exhibition in multiple editions between April and November 1888, as did *The Scotsman*, the *Herald*, and many other national newspapers.

¹⁴⁷ *The Scotsman*, 22 June 1886, p.4.

¹⁴⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, 10 November 1888, p.4; *The Scotsman*, 05 May 1890, p.7.



Figure 41: Shetland Knitters' Stand at the 1888 Glasgow Exhibition as illustrated in the *Art Journal* (London December 1888) p.5.

Commonly the international exhibitions provided a marketing channel for businesses, with the producers forgotten in the active campaign of selling the finished product. Often the media would describe the best of the Shetland fine lace on display, but rarely acknowledge the producer. National exhibitions were the exception, where knitters along with description of the articles producers were named. Commenting on the 1908 Scottish National Exhibition in Edinburgh which displayed Shetland fine lace knitted shawls, *The Scotsman* reported that:

the shawl work peculiar to the Shetlands is well known and truly admired, but some specimens displayed are of peculiar merit. This class of work is seen at its best in one very beautiful shawl. It measures two yards square, and, hand spun and hand knitted the work is so marvellously fine that it weights only one ounce and three-quarters. So delicate is its texture that it can be passed easily through a wedding ring. The price is £14,10s. Miss Hughson, Colvaster, Shetland, is its maker. Another and larger shawl, beautiful, but of different design, has been sent by Mrs Sutherland, Lerwick. It is priced at £24,10s.¹⁴⁹

Generally only the producers of articles of 'peculiar merit' were named, however the Highland Show's smaller annual exhibitions regularly listed prize winners in the national press, including a location (Baltasound, Lerwick, etc). A closer inspection of the prize entries in exhibitions and competitions such as the HHI exhibitions and the annual Highland Show illustrates the number of Shetland fine lace knitters entering and winning

¹⁴⁹ *The Scotsman*, 27 June 1908, p.11.

the prize categories.¹⁵⁰ These prize winning knitters would have ranked amongst the best fine lace knitters in the islands, certainly many of the names of prize winners are well known fine lace knitters (the Sutherlands of Lerwick/Unst; the Jamiesons of Gerriegarth, etc.). On 25 July 1914 the *Dundee Courier and Argus* listed the winners of ‘Knitting – Fine White Shetland Shawls’ as first, James Moar, West Shore, Uya Sound; second Julia Fraser, Crosbister, Uya Sound and honorary certificate to Robina Anderson, Greenside, Baltasound. Of interest here is that all three winners are from Unst, and the first prize is for James Moar, the only known male Shetland lace knitter. This provided the option was there for consumers to contact individual knitters directly in order to request an article. The extent to which the listing of names acted as a form of advertising for the knitters is unclear, however in 1925 the *Shetland Times* remarked on the development of direct trade between knitters and ‘wearers’, concluding that this was primarily due to the publication of prize winning knitters’ names in the media.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

Regardless of the beauty or utility of an object, if no one knows about it then no one buys it. From the earliest days of the industry, Shetland lace relied on a variety of marketing methods to establish and then maintain its place in the market. Using advertisements, news articles, letters to editors, testimonials, gifts to royalty and exhibitions, Shetland lace sellers used every resource available and all means necessary to ensure the continuation of the industry. Capitalising on the burgeoning celebrity culture of nineteenth century Britain, sales or gifts to the royal household were dutifully reported, as were purchases made by the aristocracy and media stars of the stage and screen. Philanthropic organisations, while benefitting individual producers rather than merchants, opened the market for knitters providing outlets for them to sell direct to the consumer. Publicity surrounding prizes and awards won for participation in exhibitions benefitted the whole industry, while many exhibitions allowed the consumer to engage directly with producers. Advertisements, whether in Shetland, the UK mainland or further afield, generally followed the same stylistic format, the early advertisements taking a very simplistic approach of stating the merchant had Shetland lace in stock and occasionally listing the various articles available while later advertisements placed a stronger focus on fashion or attempted to elicit an emotional response to the plight of the producers. In addition to standard business

¹⁵⁰ See Appendix 6 for example of entry form for knitting exhibitions and competitions: Highland & Agricultural Society’s Show, 1892. Instructions on how to enter and category list for prizes.

¹⁵¹ ST, 1926, January 02, Shetland in 1925.

advertisements, the inclusion of Shetland lace in ladies' pages, society columns, news and advertorial content in national published mediums ensured Shetland lace's place in the fashion world.

Some Shetland merchants did not, or rarely, advertised. Sandison in Unst is only known to have directly advertised over two periods, the first in 1862 and then in 1930, preferring to gain business through word of mouth and repeat custom from individuals and businesses on the UK mainland. No doubt his access to the finest knitters in the islands helped. Nevertheless his business would also have benefitted from the ongoing nationwide promotion of the lace. Other Shetland merchants, such as Currie & Co., participated in multiple advertising methods. Although Sheriff Thoms received the gold medal award for the Shetland Knitters' stand at the 1886 Edinburgh International Exhibition, it was Currie & Co. who forged the success of the stand with the attending public, promoting all Shetland knitting and encouraging sales and it was they who used it, and all subsequent awards, in their marketing. The history of Currie & Co is a long one, operating for approximately 60 years during which time it underwent four name changes (Currie & Co., 1877-1887, Schoor, Currie & Co., 1887-1890, Schoor & Co., 1890-1893, and Schoor, Muir & Co., 1894-1935) and three business locations. It was nevertheless the same business run by three sisters, Margaret Currie, Catherine Schoor and Barbara Muir, although the three sisters and the three names of Currie, Schoor and Muir would never appear in the business contemporaneously. From their beginnings as Currie & Co. until the demise of Schoor, Muir & Co., this innovative and resourceful Shetland business employed various sophisticated marketing techniques, which, in addition to royal endorsements, capitalised on aristocratic connections and national and international exhibitions to ensure a continual demand for Shetland knitwear via their Lerwick shop. Of all the known sellers of Shetland lace they perhaps exemplify the power of appropriate marketing techniques. All that was needed were sufficient consumers to sustain, if not increase, production levels.

Chapter 6: Being somewhere else: the reception and consumption of Shetland lace

On 15 January 1887 an innocuous but intriguing short paragraph was included in the lost and found section of *The Dundee Courier and Argus* newspaper:

The Party who took away by mistake a fine lace Shetland Shawl from the Calico Ball at Broughty Ferry on Friday evening, the 7th January, will kindly return it to the Hallkeeper, when they will receive their own in exchange.¹

Who placed the advertisement? How fine was the shawl? Was it received as a gift or purchased by the wearer? Where was it purchased? Who made it? Did the other 'Party' really take it by mistake or was it coveted and removed deliberately? Was it ever returned to the Hallkeeper and exchanged for 'their own'? Was the other shawl also a fine lace Shetland shawl? The advertisement raises unanswerable questions yet simultaneously has much to say about the reception, consumption and value placed on Shetland lace. The placing of the advertisement and polite request for the shawl's return shows it was clearly a treasured item. The use of the word 'fine' in describing the shawl demonstrates a consumer awareness of the varying qualities of Shetland lace. The wearing of it to a formal occasion, the Calico Ball, illustrates the Shetland lace shawl's position in the world of fashion and prestigious accessories.

While the previous chapter discussed the intermediary stage in the life of Shetland lace, between leaving the hand of the producer and arriving in the hand of the consumer, this chapter will focus on the next stage in the life cycle of the lace: the reception and consumption of Shetland lace. As marketing and consumption are inextricably linked this inevitably leads to some overlap in the categories of analysis. Some consumers are easily recognisable such as members of the Royal Household, aristocratic families and various celebrities. However, the ordinary consumer who purchased fine knitted lace from a local merchant, a Shetland depot, an exhibition, or even directly from the producer, is often invisible in the historical record and indistinguishable from the mass of other individual consumers. There are multiple reasons behind consumption choices of non-essential goods: the creation or sustainment of a personal or social identity or social emulation, or alternatively as a personal marker or individualism or status expressed through taste or

¹ *The Dundee Courier & Argus*, 15 January 1887, p.1, Lost and Found.

uniqueness of objects consumed. Analysis of business records and provenance notes in museum accession records provides a glimpse of individual private consumers, both within and outwith Shetland, often revealing their motivations for purchasing Shetland lace. This chapter will examine these consumer motivations, then, in conjunction with newspaper articles and advertisements, it will demonstrate that while many consumers remain invisible, it is possible to identify potential consumer groups. A discussion of the identified consumer groups will contend that just as the Shetland lace is produced, so are its consumers produced, created through advertising and cultural organisations. Finally, it will discuss the reception and consumption of non-Shetland produced 'Shetland' lace. In doing this it will highlight the position held and the role Shetland lace played in the burgeoning consumer markets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Why buy Shetland lace? – Motivations for consumption

When choosing to buy a Shetland lace article consumers had three purchasing options: direct from the producer; direct from a Shetland merchant; or from a UK or international business holding Shetland lace in stock. Buying direct from the islands ensured the purchase of a genuine article and possibly the best price. In the mid-nineteenth century purchasing directly from the producer would have been confined to local consumers or visitors to the Islands. The introduction of the parcel post in 1883 afforded a better opportunity to buy direct from the producer, but only if the producer was known.² From at least 1892 the publication of producers' names and locales in exhibition prize lists published in newspapers led to increasing direct contact between producer and consumer.³ As such for most of the nineteenth century consumers buying direct from Shetland did so through a Shetland merchant. Letters to Shetland merchants requesting specific orders or samples to be dispatched illustrate that while many were one-off purchases, many others were repeat customers, either buying additional items for themselves or purchasing on behalf of friends and family. In some instances it is evident that the letter writer is more than an individual consumer; although the orders are not large, the volume of goods requested suggests that the order is from a small business. It is clear from the correspondence that these small businesses held a few samples of the goods available and

² The Great Britain Philatelic Society, '*Parcel Rates 1883-1966*'.

³ *The Scotsman*, 20 September 1892, p.6, Highland Industries Exhibition at Inverness; *Shetland Times*, 02 January 1926.

only requested the exact articles that they knew their customers would want to buy or that their customer had specifically requested.⁴

The analysis identified five consumer motivation factors: specific qualities attached to Shetland wool; fashion/aesthetic; gift-giving; emotional consumption; and conscious consumption. While purchasing a Shetland lace shawl as a fashion article can be seen to be a singular reason for consumption, motivations to consume often overlap and incorporate two or more motivation factors simultaneously. If the shawl is subsequently presented as a gift it then incorporates two motivation factors. If the gift is also purchased in a manner that supports a social cause, whether this is done because the purchaser supports the cause or whether the recipient supports the cause and will appreciate the additional gesture, then the purchase can be seen to stem from three simultaneous motivations. Only one set of letters makes reference to conscious consumption, whereby the consumer makes an active decision to consume in a socially responsible way, those from Mary Lyell, wife of the local M. P.⁵ It was through exhibitions, newspaper articles and advertisements that Mrs Lyell and her contemporaries at the SHI and SHIA would make the greatest impact by encouraging the purchase of Shetland lace as a socially responsible product. Educating consumers about the production of the articles and the hardships faced by the Shetland knitters was an essential stage in the process of encouraging consumers to buy from sources which actively ensured the fair treatment of producers. Organisations such as the HHI, SHI and SHIA were not the first, nor the last, to employ such methods, but theirs was perhaps most successful in incorporating all the recognised consumer motivations into one prominent and comprehensive marketing strategy.

Specific qualities attached to Shetland wool

Whatever the reason for buying Shetland lace, or indeed any Shetland wool article, the quality of the wool itself was paramount. Various referred to as silky soft, velvety soft, and amazingly soft amongst numerous other adjectives, it is clear that the sensory aspect of Shetland wool was a prime motivator for purchase through the decades:

⁴ For example, between 1873 and 1883, the Misses Shepherd of Dundee regularly ordered various articles, one of their customers contacted Sandison to say very satisfied with the shawl supplied by Miss Shepherd; Leslie Watt, Stewarton regularly ordered between 1879-1883, but occasionally had to return items because could not 'dispose' of them.

⁵ SandArch, correspondence between Mary Lyell and Sandison, 1886-1891.

1862 – ... made from the softest and finest wool, and specially adapted for cold weather.⁶

1889 – The knitted woollens of the Shetland Islands have a warmth and comfort found in no other material. They are made from the pure wool of the island sheep, which has a peculiar softness and silkiness combining the utmost warmth and utmost lightness.⁷

1903 – But real Shetland lace and hosiery are still much prized, on account of their exquisite texture and softness, and will continue to be sought after so long as the native breed of sheep is kept pure.⁸

1924 – The incredibly fine wool of the tiny Shetland sheep and knit by hand, these goods have a lightness, an elasticity and comforting warmth unmatched by any other woollen garment.⁹

When ordering a fine knitted baby's jacket and veil in 1880, Hugh Draper stated in his letter that they were for his son 'just born, who must be protected against the cold, lost first one 14 months ago'.¹⁰ There is an unexpected intimacy here, the sharing of the news of the death of his son and an inference of his belief that the Shetland wool can ensure this does not happen again. Four months later he orders a further baby's jacket and two veils.¹¹ Mr Draper was not alone in believing in the redemptive qualities of Shetland wool and advertising was often aimed at a particular consumer:

The warmth and softness of the Shetland wool claim the particular attention of invalids, for whose use it is most desirable.¹²

Neither was Mr Draper alone in believing fine spun Shetland wool was the most appropriate yarn for babies' garments. Ruby Sinclair won numerous knitting competitions in New Zealand and Australia, notably for her Fair Isle knitting, but was never successful in the baby garment section of the competitions, the first prize always going to one of her competitors. Upon enquiry as to the success of the regular winner, Ruby was amazed, if she was a Shetland immigrant probably astounded, to learn that the superfine and supersoft

⁶ *Shetland Advertiser*, 06 January 1862, p.1.

⁷ *Boston Evening Transcript*, USA, 08 October 1889, p.4, Hewins & Hollis, Boston, Shetland Island Woollens.

⁸ W. F. C., *The Scotsman*, 22 August 1903, p.7, Bygone industries in Shetland.

⁹ *The Scotsman*, 11 August 1924, p.1, Robert Maule & Son, West End, Edinburgh.

¹⁰ SandArch, 1880.08B, Hugh W. Draper, 13 February 1880.

¹¹ SandArch, 1880.08B, Hugh W. Draper, 15 June 1880.

¹² *Examiner*, 17 October 1846, p.670 - Standen and Company's Shetland and Scotch Warehouse, 112 Jermyn Street, St James's, London.

first prize had been knitted with wool carefully unpicked from lace shawls sent from Shetland and then knitted into the baby garments.¹³

Fashion and aesthetic motivations

The desire to be fashionable was a prime motivational factor in the consumption of Shetland lace. The consumption of fashion is not merely a passive activity but a creative one which can be used as a means of self-expression and social identity creation. Simmel's theory of fashion places emulation as its core principle, with fashion and clothing acting as indicators of social standing. The premise is relatively simple: members of the highest social standing adopt a fashion; those of the social class directly below them emulate the fashion as a means of social improvement. In an ongoing cycle of differentiation between the social classes, the upper class then abandon the fashion and adopt a new one. The cycle continues with the middle class, having adopted the fashion of the upper class, being emulated by those of a lower social status to them, and their subsequent abandonment of the fashion in favour of emulating the new fashion from above.¹⁴ Ultimately, he notes, 'As fashion spreads, it gradually goes to its doom'.¹⁵ Articles, advertisements and promotional publicity of Shetland lace support the theoretical application of top down fashion as evidenced by the royal court emulating Queen Victoria's purchase of Shetland fine knitted stockings, which then became hugely popular with upper and middle class consumers.¹⁶ But it does not quite fit. From the 1870s royal and aristocratic women allowed their names and personas to be used to promote Shetland lace to a wider market. If they were to abandon Shetland lace the moment it was adopted as a mainstream fashion item by the middle class consumers, then their philanthropic intentions of supporting and improving the lives of the Shetland producers would have been a short lived affair. Certainly they are named as patrons and purchasers but there are no known reported public occasions when these women were seen wearing Shetland lace, unlike the aristocratic women in Helland's study 'Caprices of Fashion': Handmade Lace in Ireland 1883–1907' who were known to wear Irish lace in an effort to promote its consumption through the auspices of being fashionable.¹⁷ Shetland lace was produced in varying qualities and ranged from a few shillings up to £40 or more, although articles of £2-10 were more commonly seen as the upper end of the market, with those valued higher

¹³ Nicholson, *The loving Stitch*, p.249.

¹⁴ Simmel, *Fashion*, pp.541-558.

¹⁵ Simmel, *Fashion*, p.547.

¹⁶ See chapter 5.

¹⁷ Helland, 'Caprices of Fashion', pp.193–222.

than £10 considered exceptional.¹⁸ It is in this price disparity that it is possible for upper class and aristocratic women who possessed both the cultural and financial capital to maintain a degree of differentiation in their fashion purchases.¹⁹ Few people look on Shetland lace without commenting on the aesthetic qualities of it, the fineness, lightness, cobweb effect. Some are infinitely more aesthetically pleasing and were often publicly admired and publicly discussed.²⁰ The lower priced, and lower quality Shetland lace knitting was affordable to the middle and lower classes and allowed them to own a fashionable Shetland lace article while simultaneously preserving the distinction of owning an elite article which was beyond the financial reach of most people.²¹

Emulation of fashion appears equally applicable peer to peer, rather than only from above. Unst merchant Sandison regularly received requests for shawls the same as, or similar to ones previously purchased by other consumers from his shop. In 1874 Henry Francis ordered a shawl 'like the ones his friends Mr Lewis and Mr Kitching bought' the previous month whilst in Unst and in 1879 Henry Turner requested a shawl similar 'to one bought by Mr Flockhart of Leith and Portobello when he was in Shetland'.²² While this might be seen as a reasonable request when only a short time had elapsed between original purchase and later request, it would have proven difficult to despatch a 'similar' shawl when a longer period had passed. When Radcliffe Walters purchased a fine lace shawl as a gift for his wife on their marriage in 1881, paying £4/10/- for it, he commented on how much it had been admired by all who saw it.²³ Five years later when ordering a Christmas gift Edgar Giberne requested a Shetland lace shawl, 'a very good one, if possible like the one

¹⁸ 'A Shetland Cottage-Industry', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 14 (1897), p.488. Claims that fine lace knitted shawls of two to three yards weighing not more than two and a quarter ounces usually reach £30 - £40 each; see Chapter 3 for discussion on differing qualities of Shetland lace knitting.

¹⁹ SandArch, 1883.42A, James Batley Rae, 01 August 1883, 'The ladies who send for these shawls are both able and willing to pay'; Veblen, *The theory of the leisure class*, chapter 4: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*; translated by Richard Nice, (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1984).

²⁰ There are many instances of this, for example SandArch, 1867.18, 1868.09, 1873.17, correspondence from Mr John Airth.

²¹ See Brian Spooner's discussion on the Oriental Carpet's continued elitist appeal, 'Weavers and Dealers: The Authenticity of an Oriental Carpet', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp.195-235, p.195. - '[oriental] carpets first became a luxury textile for the elite and have now gone the way of so many luxurious items in recent time and become available throughout the middle class. But they have not lost their elitist appeal'.

²² SandArch, 1874.23, Henry James Francis, 03 October 1874; 1879.38, Henry Turner, 16 April 1879.

²³ SandArch, 1881.54, Radcliffe Walters, 27 June 1881; 13 August 1881.

Mr Radcliffe Walters bought'.²⁴ Here it is not clear if it was Mr Giberne who wanted a similar shawl or the recipient of Mr Giberne's gift, who perhaps had been one of the people who, on seeing and admiring Mrs Walters' shawl, desired one equally good.

Throughout the nineteenth century the most commonly requested articles of Shetland lace were shawls (including half shawls, neckerchiefs and handkerchiefs), veils, clouds (scarf like) and stockings, with occasional requests for baby clothes and mitts. Fashion played a pivotal role in consumer motivations to purchase Shetland lace and in that respect was subject to the whim of the consumer. In 1875 John Mair wrote to Sandison requesting a white veil 54 inches long by 27 inches deep, noting that 'it seems an enormous size but ladies have strange fancies sometimes' and aptly illustrating the desire for immediate fashion gratification wrote three weeks later to request a speedy delivery as the lady waiting for it was 'getting desperate'.²⁵ At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century shawls were still popular with requests for crepe centres with lace borders and edges increasing. Figure 44 shows an example of a shawl with a crepe centre.

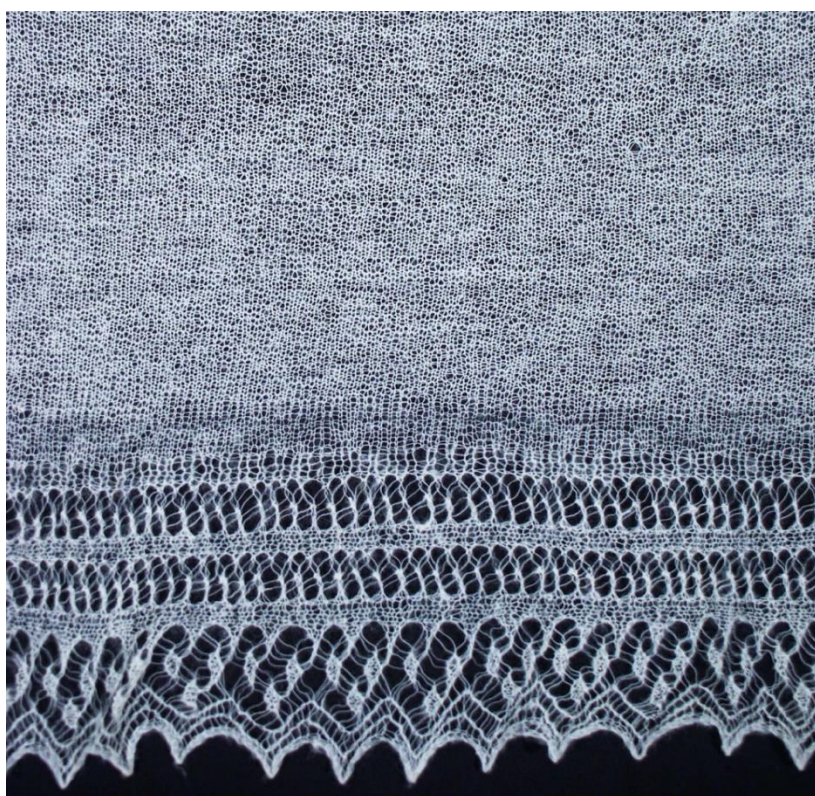


Figure 42: Shetland lace crepe shawl, as demanding as lace shawls as every error would be clearly visible, SM TEX 7783 (1050 mm x 1100 mm), image courtesy of SMA, photograph 01400.

²⁴ SandArch, 1886.35A, Edgar Giberne, 03 December 1886.

²⁵ SandArch, 1875.21, John Mair, 23 November & 10 December 1875.

Veils had become so popular that the fine knitters experienced difficulties in keeping up with the demand. One Edinburgh business, Munro & Co., complained in 1899:

As you apparently cannot supply us with anything like the quantity of Shetland veils, that we could do with, could you possibly sell us 100lbs of the wool that these goods are made of. We want to try if we can spin a suitable yarn for knitting Shetland veils. We think if the yarn could be got suitable, there would be less difficulty in getting veils made²⁶

Unsuccessful but persistent, they wrote less than three weeks later reducing their request to 50 lbs of wool although it is not known if they received the reduced amount.²⁷

Nevertheless, that their plans involved an attempt to spin a yarn equal to that of the Shetland fine spun indicates that a significant part of the popularity of the veils was the quality of the finely spun worsted.

The fashionable uses of veils, lace scarves, clouds, and mitts appear to have been interchangeable as recommended to the fashion conscious readers in the women's pages of many newspapers. A 1914 women's page recommendation headlined the 'Shetland Veil Scarf. One of the Most Practical Trifles for the Woman Fond of Sports. To a multitude of practical uses may this admirable veil be put' suggesting it could be worn as a motor veil, as motor boat and yachting wear, as a scarf thrown over the shoulders at the theatre or between dances, or as a sash knotted about the hips over golf or tennis skirt.²⁸ The description of the veil scarf as being a 'trifle' encouraged consumers to consider it a somewhat frivolous luxury item and the promotion of its versatility only further justified consumer motivations to purchase what was, in essence, a bargain of five fashion statements in one article, and ensured its continuing place in the fashion world.

The period after World War One saw a dramatic change in fashion and new styles appeared in department stores and fashion magazines. In imitation of these new fashions, new fine lace knitted garments were produced, adapting the original design aesthetics to conform to ever changing consumer demands and expectations. Veils remained as popular as ever and although the fashion for shawls faltered it did not completely disappear. Though older women were generally slower to renounce their well-established styles, in 1922 Australian fashion columnist Eve Grey, who predicted in 1921 the upcoming new

²⁶ SandArch, 1899.26, Munro & Co., Edinburgh, 04 December 1899.

²⁷ SandArch, 1899.26, Munro & Co., Edinburgh, 20 December 1899.

²⁸ *The Evening Argus*, Michigan, 13 May 1914, p.7.

fashion for frocks of light Shetland wool knitted in the old lace or 'shell' pattern, to be equally suitable for the more mature woman:

...Among the most satisfying garments of the day are the Shetland lace frocks, which have a happy knack of suiting the matron as well as the flapper. Even more new and attractive than those carried out entirely in one tone are the "rainbow" effect models, which are 'the last word, in smartness when worn with the appropriate coat and hat'.²⁹

Fashion which suited both older and younger women may not have had the fashion appeal for the young fashion forward woman. Enamoured with their new found freedoms and unwilling to relinquish the degree of independence afforded to them during the war, younger women expressed this liberty by embracing the new fashions and 'deliberately flouted the style preferences of their mothers' generation for flounces, frills and lace'.³⁰ This may explain the appearance at Henley Royal Regatta of:

Some of the most successful frocks were made from filmy Shetland scarves. One pretty girl wore such a frock of pale mauve with a black lace hat which did not look more fragile than the gown...Lady Deborough's daughter wore a white Shetland frock.³¹

These Henley creations may be the first recorded articles of a new fashion craze which also saw Shetland shawls transformed into negligées.³² As the fashions changed the lace knitters introduced new articles, to the delight of the discerning fashionable consumer. Delicate gossamer blouses (also referred to as jumpers and sweaters, see figures 45 and 46 for examples, figure 46 is a postcard of a lace 'jumper' knitted by one of the Sutherland women) produced in the 1920s and 1930s became a huge success with large quantities being ordered, often as bespoke designs.³³

...little jumpers of Shetland wool knitted in wonderful lacing designs. They are light and warm and so fine that they would pack into no space at all.³⁴

²⁹ Eve, *The Queenslander*, Brisbane, Australia, 17 December 1921, p.4. - Fashion's Ways and Whims; Eve Grey, *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW, Australia, 27 June 1922, p.1.

³⁰ V&A, *Fashion Drawing and Illustration in the 20th Century*, available at <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/f/fashion-drawing-in-the-20th-century/> [accessed 08 February 2014].

³¹ E. L., *Manchester Guardian*, 04 July 1921, p.5, Frocks at Henley.

³² *Manchester Guardian*, 21 January 1927, p.8, The Shetland Shawl: Making A Negligee.

³³ SandArch, Ledger 164-Knitwear Orders 1929-1938.

³⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 01 October 1927, p.10, What we are to Wear: A Dress Show in London.

...some sweaters have lacy necks which turn over like frilling. Some are all white and look like fine lace though the whole effect is carried out in thin Shetland wool.³⁵



Figure 43: Shetland lace jumper, hand-spun and knitted by Mrs Margaret Sutherland, Burrafirth, c.1930, UHC U132, image courtesy of The Unst Heritage Centre.

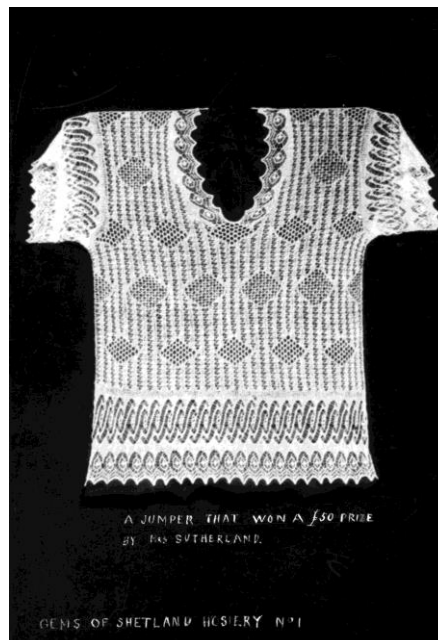


Figure 44: Postcard illustrating a lace jumper knitted by Mrs Sutherland (either Ann or Joan), of Chromate Lane, Lerwick, image courtesy of SMA, photograph 00374.

³⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 01 December 1931, p.6, The Knitted Sweater.

Satin lined bed jackets (see figure 47) produced in the 1920s-1940s, often with the added luxury of swans' down trim, emulated fashion trends and corresponded with consumer demands.³⁶ Not everyone, though, concurred with the fashion for Shetland lace bed jackets.



Figure 45: Dressing/bed jacket, SMA TEX 7779 (approximate measurements: length 600 mm, width (bust line) 450 mm, c.1930s), image courtesy of Shetland Amenity Trust (Dave Donaldson photographer).

In 1934 *The Manchester Guardian* noted that ‘a light Shetland wrap...with kimono sleeves, may look attractive, but for an English bedroom, where heat is rarely all that it should be, it lets in draughts at every crack’, an opinion which perhaps best explains the Shetland lace bed jacket’s popularity in Australia.³⁷

Very few sources specified the pattern and motifs requested or used in the Shetland lace articles. Those which do, regardless of the time period, illustrate the consumer preference for small neat patterns, fine and pretty, especially the delicate complexity and neatness of the spider’s web, presumably for its aesthetic appearance over dark coloured clothing.

³⁶ *The Argus*, Melbourne, Australia, 05 April 1935, p.5.

³⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1934; p.6.

Gift-giving

In his seminal work on the gift-giving process, French anthropologist and sociologist Marcel Mauss concluded that the obligation of reciprocal gift-giving was based upon three types of obligation: to give; to receive; and to repay.³⁸ In this, reciprocal gift-giving acts as a means of creating and/or maintaining social bonding and relationships. The presentation of an article of Shetland lace as a gift was not uncommon. From the first known gift of fine stockings presented to King George III in 1789 Shetland's fine lace knitters regularly included articles in the presentation of gifts to members of the Royal Household to mark births, marriages, coronations etc. Therefore, as per Mauss's theory, the gift was given, and received, and needed to be repaid. This repayment would obviously not be a physical object but perhaps reciprocated in the form of a royal endorsement or the potential of further orders. After Anderson arranged fine stockings and gloves to be gifted to Queen Victoria in 1839 she did place a further order for fine stockings, as did ladies of the royal court. Although Queen Victoria made further regular purchases of Shetland lace there is no indication or evidence of an anticipated or expected reciprocity, rather the gift was an act of kindness to mark an occasion.³⁹

Knitters also presented gifts of their work to the local social elite: the Jamiesons of Gerrigarth and Jeannie Laurenson of Quoys (both Unst, Shetland) gave a fine lace knitted gossamer blouse (see figure 48) and a fine lace knitted scarf respectively to Ida Saxby, daughter of Jessie M. E. Saxby, noted author and social commentator, upon her marriage to Ian Sandison in 1921.⁴⁰ Jessie Saxby was a proactive supporter of Shetland knitters, often writing about their endeavours in the local and national press. As with the gifts to royalty, there is nothing to suggest that the gift of Shetland lace to Ida was anything other than an altruistic gift of good wishes.

³⁸ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift. Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Cohen and West, 1954).

³⁹ For example, *John O'Groat Journal*, 30 September 1853; *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 16 September 1892; *Shetland Times*, 05 August 1899.

⁴⁰ NMS, Joy Sandison Collection, L.1985.70.419.



Figure 46: Gossamer blouse knitted by the Jamiesons of Gerrigarth and gifted to Ida Saxby in 1921, NMS, Joy Sandison Collection, NMS L.1985.70.419 (approximately length 700 mm, width (at bust line) 550 mm), image courtesy of Miss Sandison.

The fine lace knitting producers also gave gifts to each other: although it is not known which of the Sutherland women of Chromate Lane (previously of Colvidale, Unst) knitted the fine lace shawl as a wedding gift for Doris E. B. Hunter of Lerwick on her marriage to Ralph S. W. Paterson in 1921 (see figure 49).⁴¹ Where there is a personal connection between the giver, receiver and object, such gifts often take on subsequent roles as illustrated by Doris's wedding shawl which also became the christening shawl for her children and no doubt acted as a tangible memory of her life in Shetland during her time living in Hong Kong.

⁴¹ SM, TEX 2004.303.



Figure 47: Very fine Shetland lace shawl, gifted to Doris E. B. Hunter in 1921, SMA TEX 2004.303 (1560 mm x 1686 mm). The detail on the left shows the centre and part of the border, the detail on the right shows part of the centre, the border and lace edge. Images courtesy of SM, photograph 01396.

Jessie M. E. Saxby was also a fine lace producer and knitted eight fine lace bed-spreads as gifts for her three daughters-in-law and five granddaughters, possibly around World War I or shortly thereafter.⁴² Knitted in cotton rather than Shetland wool, the bedspreads are all different but equally beautiful and a remarkable achievement if the family stories are true and she did indeed knit all eight in one year (see figure 13 for illustration of two of the bedspreads).⁴³

The presentation of a Shetland lace shawl as a gift was actively encouraged in many advertising and promotion strategies. Anderson & Co., The Real Shetland Warehouse, Lerwick noted on the first page of the price list booklet that they sold ‘fine white lace shawls perfect for marriage presents’ and reminded the reader four pages later that ‘Extra fine white lace shawls suitable for marriage presents, from £2 to £20 each, always in stock’.⁴⁴ Maule’s department store on Edinburgh’s Princes Street promoted the buying of Shetland lace as gifts. Their 1922 and 1924 advertisements were very straightforward in

⁴² NMS, Joy Sandison Collection, L.1985.70.2275, Q.L.1985.70.70, Q.L.1985.70.71, Q.L.1985.70.72, Q.L.1985.70.4880.

⁴³ From notes held by Joy Sandison at her home.

⁴⁴ SA, D6/263/22 E.S. Reid Tait Collection, Anderson & Co., The Real Shetland Warehouse, Lerwick.

their reasoning for buying Shetland lace noting that as gifts they met ‘rapturous welcome’ and were ‘rapturously received’ respectively.⁴⁵ An earlier Maule advertisement promoted the buying of Shetland lace, noting ‘As a souvenir gift from Scotland – what could be better appreciated than a piece of real Shetland Hand knitting’ although it did not specify if the souvenir was being recommended as an act of self-gifting or gift-giving for someone else.⁴⁶ Promoting Shetland lace as a souvenir had been ongoing from at least 1869, when Drummond & Dickson’s advertisement ‘intimate[d] to tourists and others visiting Edinburgh’ their collection of real Shetland lace held in stock.⁴⁷ Shetlanders were also aware of the potential consumption by tourists. En route to Iceland in 1930, the tour ship the Viceroy of India called at Lerwick for a few hours. On board were 600 passengers, including Prince and Princess Arthur of Connaught, however due to the brief nature of the sojourn the passengers did not disembark and so:

A large boat, which had been specially rigged out as a Norse galley, sailed out to the vessel, and the crew, clad in Viking costume, clambered on board to the interest and amusement of the passengers.⁴⁸

While knitters demonstrated their work the passengers were told of the failure of the herring fishing and that Shetland depended more than ever on its women knitters. This visual and emotional marketing ploy, so beneficial on other occasions, was hugely successful and a large quantity of Shetland knitting was reported to have been purchased.⁴⁹ Even when visitors were considered to have under-purchased there were additional benefits to be had such as when the *Shetland Times* noted that ‘every visitor is a potential advertiser of Shetland hosiery’.⁵⁰

The consumption of souvenirs as a tangible memory, evidence of a place visited or experience undertaken is most readily, but not solely, applicable to tourism.⁵¹ Possibly the very fine Shetland lace stole and lace shawl purchased by the Rev. Jas. M. Crawford as gifts for his wife Martha were intended as souvenirs of their time in Shetland (see figure 50). Crawford was Minister of the Church of Scotland in Lerwick from 1893 until 1901

⁴⁵ *The Scotsman*, 26 August 1922, p.1; 11 August 1924, p.1.

⁴⁶ *The Scotsman*, 12 August 1907, p.1.

⁴⁷ *The Scotsman*, 09 September 1869, p.4.

⁴⁸ *The Scotsman*, 12 August 1930; p.5, Shetland Hustle: Pushes Its Wares Among Viceroy Tourists.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ST*, 1936, 04 January, Shetland in 1935.

⁵¹ Hugh Wilkins, ‘Souvenirs: what and why we buy’, *Journal of Travel Research*, 50:3 (2010), pp.239–247.

when they moved to Scotstoun, Dunbartonshire.⁵² Here there is the possibility that what Crawford actually purchased his wife was a tangible memory of her eight years in Lerwick, which, when worn, would elicit remembrances of events, people and places and their lives before moving to Glasgow.



Figure 48: Very fine lace stole and shawl, gifted to Martha Crawford (wife of the Rev. Jas. M. Crawford, Minister of the Church of Scotland in Lerwick 1893 -1901). SM TEX 7777 (1770 mm x 950 mm) and TEX 7778 (1680 mm x 1630 mm), both c.1893-1901. Images courtesy of SMA, photographs 01395 and 01396.

Routinely purchased for self-gifting or for friends and family, souvenirs are generally representations of a specific time and place. From this perspective the Maule advertisement displays a degree of ‘geographically displaced authenticity’ as, although not a great geographic distance, the souvenir represents a different geographical location from the one being visited.⁵³ Maule acknowledged Shetland production while promoting Shetland hand-knitting as a souvenir from Scotland and the advertisement is therefore perhaps directed at tourists to Scotland unable to visit Shetland who may have considered an article of Shetland lace as a souvenir of Scottish industry, making the degree of geographical displacement less.

⁵² SM, TEX 7777 Shetland Lace Stole and TEX 7778 Shetland Lace Shawl.

⁵³ Atsuko Hashimoto & David J. Telfer, ‘Geographical Representations Embedded within Souvenirs in Niagara: The Case of Geographically Displaced Authenticity’, *Tourism Geographies: An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment*, 9:2 (2007), p.199, pp.210-211.

Gift-giving was a common motivation for purchase and while a gift could be given for any reason, the most common motivation behind the purchase of Shetland lace was as marriage or christening gifts of which there are numerous examples in the correspondence placing orders. Nevertheless, requests for the finest white lace Shetland shawls were at times indicated for 'a particular friend' or even for 'an intimate friend'.⁵⁴ It is not unusual for an individual to purchase extravagant gifts for their significant other and in so doing, gifts often act as a sign of the giver's commitment to cultivating or maintaining a relationship.⁵⁵ Certainly individuals in relationships are both seeking to impress each other, but as in the case of Radcliffe Walters, his gift not only impressed his new wife, but also his peers, one of whom arranged a similar gift from himself. As a gift, the giving of Shetland lace fulfilled multiple functions: it was fashionable, something that was known to be considered appropriate for a bride, however because it was received from her fiancé it also had a sentimental value.

Emotional motivations

Although emotions play a central role in the consumption of any object, the emotional motivation to consume differs from one person to another. Recognising the emotional motivations behind consumer decisions to purchase Shetland lace between 1837 and 1939 is not a straightforward process. However there are three general emotional motivation factors apparent in the consumer correspondence and advertising which are applicable to the consumption of Shetland lace: emotional impact of the aesthetic appeal; philanthropic purchases based on social responsibility and the desire to aid others; and the aspiration to be associated with a specific cultural group.

Solely being fashionable is not sufficient an explanation for the continued consumption of Shetland lace shawls, other shawls were equally, if not more, fashionable, as were other blouses, scarves etc. There was a great deal of competition in the fashion world so for Shetland lace to remain popular the desire to be fashionable had to combine with other motivations for consumption. From around 1872 Shetland born Margaret Currie (founder of Currie & Co, see chapter 5) purchased Shetland lace direct from the knitters to sell to women of high social standing in Edinburgh and London. In these early drawing room sales, Currie encouraged the purchase of authentic and exquisite articles not only through

⁵⁴ SandArch, 1883.46, A. L. Watt, 29 November 1883, fine lace shawl...for an intimate friend; 1875.27, C.D. Stewart, 21 October 1875, wanted 'one of the very best for a particular friend'.

⁵⁵ R. W. Belk & G. S. Coon, 'Gift giving as agapic love: an alternative to the exchange paradigm based on dating experiences', *Journal of Consumer Research* 20:3 (1993), pp.393-417.

the display of the work but also by explaining the economic situation of the knitters with regard to the truck system prevalent on the islands.⁵⁶ In simultaneously narrating the hardships faced by the knitters while allowing prospective buyers to experience the sensory appeal of the articles she was able to draw on all three of the emotional motivation factors. They saw and touched the articles creating a positive emotional response while listening to Currie relate the knitter's stories created a negative emotional response. Thus they purchased the shawls with the dual aspect of fashion and philanthropic purchase to aid the knitters. In selling this way Currie was assured to sell them all as none of the ladies in attendance would wish to be disassociated from the group as the non-purchaser. This approach to selling Shetland lace was particularly effective and the success of these early drawing room sales was reproduced in small exhibition sales such as the 1888 Willis Rooms Sale in St James's, London.⁵⁷ Present in the same room as the aristocratic and upper class organisers of the event, potential consumers were able to visually and tactilely experience the aesthetic appeal of the articles while hearing about the hardships faced by the knitters of Shetland. They were then afforded the opportunity to assist them through a philanthropic cash rather than truck purchase and on buying an article they simultaneously bought an association with the group of women who were actively promoting the sale. The 'fun, fantasy, and social or emotional gratification' provided by these kinds of events raised positive emotions and hedonistic desires amongst the attendees and heightened the possibility of sales through the emotional state of consumers to buy on impulse.⁵⁸

Positive emotions leading to impulse buying were also commonplace at the Great Exhibitions. The 1886 and 1890 Edinburgh and the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibitions included stands with Shetland spinners and knitters demonstrating production methods. The inclusion of young Shetland women performing a handcrafted industry created a striking contrast with the technological advancements of British manufacture displayed in other areas of the exhibitions and the women became as much the focus of the exhibitions as the knitted goods they were producing, receiving extensive media coverage. The display of people as 'human showcases' at the international Exhibitions was hugely popular and regularly drew large crowds bearing witness to the 'otherness' of different

⁵⁶ SA, D11/75/4/2, Helen C Black, 'Womanhood, A Shetland Industry', *Womanhood*, 1:4 (1899) p.287.

⁵⁷ Widely advertised, for example: *The Morning Post*, London, 10 May 1888, p.1.

⁵⁸ Eun Joo Park, Eun Young Kim, Judith Cardona Forney, 'A structural model of fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior', *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 10:4 (2006), pp.433-446, p.437.

cultures.⁵⁹ The introduction and public display of producers at exhibitions displaying Shetland lace, often situated in front of mocked-up Shetland crofts, created a highly romanticised image of the craft and life in Shetland rather than illustrate Shetland values and the dynamism of the craft. While they perhaps did little in the way of educating the consuming public, they nevertheless facilitated an opportunity for personal interaction between producer and consumer.

The introduction and public display of producers at exhibitions displaying Shetland lace further heightened the multi-sensory emotional motivations of consumers. On these occasions potential consumers could see and touch the articles, however now, rather than hearing stories about the producers through third parties, they could engage directly with the producers, ask questions while they watched the articles being made and purchase direct from the knitting needle. An article on Industrial Art at the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibition included a sketch of the Shetland knitters at work, noting that ‘one girl was paid eight pounds for a beautiful shawl, almost as fine as gossamer, in the knitting of which she spent nearly eight months. A princess might wear it...’.⁶⁰ Another commentator declared that it was at the Glasgow Exhibition that she first ‘fell in love’ with Shetland lace shawls.⁶¹ Beyond the Great Exhibitions a Philadelphia department store created an exhibition of Shetland knitting alone, containing a reconstructed croft around which knitters, spinners, sheep and ponies exhibited their uniqueness:

It is as if you could take a square look at the inside of a crofter’s humble home; and the outside too – even the stubby, little ponies. More to interest you in this one-roomed, straw-roofed, turf-banked cot, with windows like port-holes, than you may think at first blush. Much more the quaintness of the fittings and the wise industry of the rosy Norse girls who occupy it...How many of you ever saw a Shetland shawl? Imitations plenty; but the simon pure? Not one in ten...You shall see them here; see them growing under the swift fingers of two of the most skilful spinners and knitters who ever heard the Roar of the North Sea. You shall see the Norse girls at home, and for nothing...⁶²

⁵⁹ Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Exposition Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.82-111.

⁶⁰ ‘Industrial Art’, *Art Journal*, (1888), pp.6-7.

⁶¹ This article was widely distributed amongst various national newspapers including for example: *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 03 January 1891.

⁶² SN, 14 April 1888, p.5, A Shetland crofter’s cottage in America, The following is taken from the Philadelphia press of 29th March. This may be A. T. Stewart, the advertisement says Chestnut Street, the same street as Stewart’s store. ‘the Simon pure’ refers to the name of a Quaker in Mrs. Centlivre’s comedy *A bold stroke for a wife* (1717), who is impersonated by another character during part of the play. The expression means a genuine or authentic person or thing.

It is not clear why this small independent exhibition was set up, although it is likely to have formed part of a larger marketing campaign enticing visitors to the store, possibly to stock up on a recently received consignment of Shetland goods. However, news of the display would have reminded people of the Shetland Knitters' stand at the Edinburgh International Exhibition, notably due to the international media attention bestowed upon it 18 months earlier. Advertising strategies which gave reasons to buy the Shetland lace often played on emotional appeals petitioning the viewer or reader and potential consumer by using highly emotive words, descriptive narratives and images to provoke emotional or instinctive responses.⁶³ Notably, when they focussed on the condition of the women in Shetland, they provoked an emotional response which included the instinct to aid. In these types of advertisement there is an explicit and deliberate attempt to create emotional connections between the consumers and producers and between consumers and social causes. To create an emotional connection between consumers and producers Robert Maule & Son regularly used the social and economic conditions of the Shetland women in their advertising, simultaneously reminding potential consumers of the producers' need for cash and Maule's unwavering support by purchasing directly from the knitter. A 1907 advertisement noted:

...because a transaction of this kind means so much to the Patient Toilers of Shetland, whose island homes are largely maintained by the industry and skill of the women folk supplementing as they do in no small degree the precarious earning of "the men who go down to the sea in ships". We purchase direct from the knitters, no middleman's profit to heighten the cost; no agents fees to lessen the remuneration of the workers.⁶⁴

Other Maule advertisements were much less subtle. In 1915 Maule capitalised on the economic situation of the producers as well as the war to encourage consumers to buy:

A buying with a note of human interest this week at Maule's. Hand-knit haps and wraps and shawls by the women of the Shetlands. Traded by them for tea and such necessities...These big bundles of Shetland shawls represent the long winter's toil in the crofts, the work of lonely women, most of whose valiant men are with the fleet, keeping ceaseless watch and ward against the enemy, or no less perilously engaged in mine-sweeping operations somewhere in the North Sea. They have therefore much more than mere beauty of knitting – marvellous as that is – to commend them to the community, and we have no

⁶³ Abrams, 'Knitting, Autonomy and Identity', pp.152-154.

⁶⁴ *The Scotsman*, 12 August 1907, p.1.

hesitation whatever in urging sentiment, as well as most uncommon value-for-price, as reasons for our friends and customers to buy unsparingly.⁶⁵

Certainly during 1915 there was increased consumption of all Shetland knitted goods, including fine lace knitting, and an increase in remuneration to the knitters however the extent to which advertisements such as Maule's played a role in this is speculative at best.⁶⁶ The demand for Shetland goods remained brisk from 1915 until 1919 and is mainly attributable to the Government commandeering of both the British mainland wool supply (Shetland wool and woollen goods were exempt from this) and the centres of English lace-manufacturing thereby creating a scarcity of machine-manufactured articles, which formerly competed with Shetland hand-knitted goods. Furthermore, wool and garment supplies from abroad were cut off from British markets. Although it was anticipated that after the war the demand would reduce, the shortage of wool and the blocking of the supply of woollen goods from Germany and Austria ensured another prosperous year for Shetland knitting.⁶⁷

Maule may have been overt in his use of emotive imagery in his advertisements, but he was not alone in using the social and economic conditions of the women producers as emotional motivations for purchase. Both prior to and after the Maule campaigns other businesses and organisations placed advertisements actively promoting all Shetland knitted goods, including fine lace, as a philanthropic purchase. The philanthropic market created for Shetland lace was characterised by explicit attempts to create emotional connections between potential consumers and a social cause.

Status, social and cultural motivations

Organisations such as the HHI, SHI and SHIA were spearheaded by the British elite: members of the royal family, aristocrats, upper class women and wives of politicians, to promote the social cause of domestically produced crafts, one of which was Shetland lace.⁶⁸ As discussed above, style and culture were disseminated downward in the social structure, with the lower social classes emulating those above; now, as well as offering consumers the opportunity to purchase a fashionable garment at one of their depots or exhibition sales, they invited the consumer to emulate their support of the cause.

⁶⁵ *The Scotsman*, 26 May 1915, p.1.

⁶⁶ *ST*, 01 January 1916. Shetland in 1915.

⁶⁷ *ST*, 30 December 1916; 08 January 1918; 28 December 1918; 03 January 1920.

⁶⁸ See chapter 5 for discussion on organisations such as the HHI, SHI and SHIA and their promotion of philanthropic purchasing.

The Right Hon. the Countess of Aberdeen. It is the rule among the merchants in Shetland who deal in hosiery not to give the knitters cash for their work, but only cotton goods, tea and shoes. As many evils result from this barter system, a number of ladies and gentlemen have raised a fund for the purchase of goods from the knitters direct. In order to facilitate the disposal of these articles, the above warehouse has been opened, and is now stocked with the best hosiery the women can produce...[extensive list of goods available]...This is the only repository of Shetland goods in Edinburgh purchased exclusively from the knitters, and a fair value given them in cash.⁶⁹

Organised and carried on by a committee under the patronage of the Countess of Aberdeen, for helping Shetland knitters. Shetland goods of all kinds direct from the knitters.⁷⁰

The first advertisement above uses emotional motivation factors in an attempt to promote the consumption of these goods: ladies and gentlemen are fighting the ‘evils’ of the barter system and the reader/potential consumer is invited to assist them through the participatory act of consumption. In return the consumer gets to help economically disadvantaged women as well as the exclusivity of purchasing from the only shop in Edinburgh which ensures cash payment to the knitters. The second advertisement is much simpler in nature but nevertheless manages to convey the elevated position of those associated with the shop and the philanthropic nature of buying the goods from them. In addition to the benefits afforded to the producers, the advertisements also suggest benefits to the consumer; authenticity; social connections; marketplace empowerment, and a direct route to become the kind of socially aware and concerned individual he or she aspires to be. The acquired benefit of authenticity is two-fold: firstly that the consumer is guaranteed to be purchasing Shetland-produced fine lace knitting while simultaneously affording the consumer the opportunity be their authentic self, that is ‘to enact and affirm their identities as compassionate, caring, and concerned individuals’.⁷¹

With regard to the second benefit, social connections, the advertisements insinuate the possibility that the consumer will form an affiliation with like-minded individuals. This presents the possibility of developing into ‘a sense of group solidarity and morality’ which is represented by the symbolic nature of the Shetland lace (or indeed with any product).

⁶⁹ SA, D6/292/24/p197 Scrapbook of Gilbert Goudie, Edinburgh, 1874-94. Printed prospectus for new Shetland Warehouse, original source unknown, hand-written October 1884, Edinburgh, to oppose barter in hosiery, and 22nd annual report of Glasgow Orkney and Shetland Literary and Scientific Association, 1884.

⁷⁰ *The Scotsman*, 14 May 1894, p.1. New Shetland Warehouse, 144 George Street, Edinburgh.

⁷¹ Lucy Atkinson, ‘Concern for the Collective Buying In to Social Change: How Private Consumption Choices Engender Concern for the Collective’, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 644:1 (2012), p.197.

The use of material objects to mediate or cement social relations allows the development of 'a sense of enthusiasm and a desire to take initiative', which can be seen to manifest itself as private individual consumers spread the word of Shetland lace, setting up small exhibitions and bazaar sales, becoming small entrepreneurs, taking orders, collecting and redistributing the articles.⁷² When the benefits are combined consumers reach a stage of empowerment, as informed and informing consumers. It is at this point they may be considered a consumer group who made socially aware purchases and elected to participate in consumption practices which actively sought to alleviate problems of poverty, inequality and exploitation. From a twenty-first century perspective these consumers might invariably be labelled conscious, conscientious, ethical and green, and the current understanding of these consumer groups highlights the potential similarities with the purchasers of Shetland lace. Two of these, conscious and conscientious consumers, offer appropriate descriptions of Shetland lace consumers. However identifying other consumer groups is less clear cut.

Recognising consumers and consumer groups

Consumption with the intention of presenting a gift is most commonly associated with marriage and christenings and the fine lace knitted article may have been chosen for one or all of the consumer motivations: its place in the fashion world, its aesthetic appearance, its textile qualities, or a social or impulse purchase. Similarly, emotional motivations are evident in all consumer groups whether from the delight at purchasing a new shawl to wear at a social occasion or sympathy towards an economically deprived social group. Acknowledging that the five motivations to consume Shetland lace overlap consumers can be broadly categorised into two main groups: fashion consumers and conscious/conscientious consumers. There is a further, as yet unmentioned consumer group which comprises consumers of 'Shetland lace' that is produced places other than Shetland. Although there is no evidence to illustrate any individual consumers within this group the volume of imitation 'Shetland lace' available in the market demonstrates that this consumer group played a significant role.

Fashion consumption as a consumer group

Consumers purchasing Shetland lace for fashion purposes are the most common consumer group. Beyond the individual preferences and tastes illustrated in correspondence and the

⁷² Ibid., p.122.

ever changing consumer demands for new and different articles to be produced there is little that is known about them as a consumer group. Fashion is used as a means of self-expression and social and self-identity creation, often being a readily recognisable marker of status, social class or cultural affiliations. As Shetland lace knitting was produced in varying qualities, selling from a few shillings to £40, it was possible for it to cross status, class and cultural boundaries and become a fashion article available to queen and commoner alike.⁷³ The ability to cross fashion boundaries became commonplace with the introduction and popularity of the department store as a social institution which brought consumers into contact with new and exotic goods while providing an enhanced shopping experience, creating environments conducive to consumer demands to see, touch and buy the latest fashions. Leach argues that while motivating consumption, department stores also "democratized desire", however their role was also instrumental in the mass production and selling of ready to wear clothes and as such they also contributed to the democratisation of consumption and fashion.⁷⁴ This allowed less wealthy people to keep up with the latest trends, but in doing so it provided standardised and homogenised styles. Between 1874 and 1879 the Manchester store and depot for A. T. Stewart, New York and Philadelphia department store repeatedly attempted to purchase large quantities of Shetland lace shawls which were expected to conform to exact specifications including size and design. Order requests often reiterated the importance of sending exactly the same patterns as ordered with no substitutes.⁷⁵ While this may have been seen as a great opportunity for increased production and sales, as hand-knitted articles being produced by any number of different spinners and knitters this was an impossible task for the suppliers. However not all consumers wanted standardised fashion and in this the producers of Shetland lace excelled, each article produced was different from any which came before, offering an exclusivity of product and design. In this the Shetland lace not only satisfied fashion needs

⁷³ See N. McKendrick, 'Josiah Wedgwood: An Eighteenth-Century Entrepreneur in Salesmanship and Marketing Techniques', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 12:3 (1960), pp. 408-433, for an example of cross status, class and cultural boundaries with regard to ceramics.

⁷⁴ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p.34; Tim Coles, 'Department stores as retail innovations in Germany: a historical-geographical perspective on the period 1870 to 1914', in *Cathedrals of consumption: the European department store, 1850-1939*, ed. by Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p.79.

⁷⁵ SandArch, correspondence from A. T Stewart, Incoming Letters 1874.29, 1875.39, 1877.24, 1879.37.

but also served as a marker and communicator for personal distinctions and self-expression where consumers could simultaneously be the same but essentially different.⁷⁶

The continuing adaptability of the fine lace knitters to produce different and up-to-date articles of clothing illustrates their awareness of the necessity to remain fashion forward with regards to production. This was not confined to younger lace knitters with an active interest in modern fashions, 83 year old Joan Sutherland presented a Shetland lace jumper as a personal wedding gift for the Duchess of Kent in 1935.⁷⁷ Neither was it confined to fashions for the younger woman as noted by Eve Grey's declaration that Shetland lace frocks were suitable for matron and flapper alike.⁷⁸ The desire to be 'a bit different' is demonstrated in Sandison's Unst-Aberdeen-Edinburgh venture which sent Unst produced garments to their newly opened Aberdeen and Edinburgh depots.⁷⁹ Between 1929 and 1938, Sandison shipped substantial quantities of Shetland lace articles: fine lace shawls, scarves, veils, jumpers, cardigans, blouses, opera tops, camisoles, vests and spencers. Meanwhile, advertisements for Shetland fine lace blouses, camisoles, bed jackets etc. appeared in national and international newspapers as well as in French fashion magazines and on Parisian catwalks.⁸⁰ This advertising, as part of the broader system of production, distribution and consumption, played a role in the success of Sandison's venture which hinged on three notable features: consumers could see, and touch, examples of the articles held in the Aberdeen or Edinburgh shops; they could buy ready-made articles held by the shop or request articles to be made to their own specific requirements (size, shape, pattern, colour, with or without ties, tassels, fringes, frills, etc.); and they were guaranteed to be Shetland produced. While hand-spun fine Shetland worsted remained the preferred medium for these new creations, interestingly there were occasions when requests were made for machine-spun Shetland wool and non-Shetland Munro-spun lace yarn.⁸¹ While this may indicate changing consumer attitudes and demands, the requests for non-Shetland wool to be used most likely come from the depot rather than directly from the consumer to

⁷⁶ Marilyn B. Brewer, 'The social self: On being the same and different at the same time', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17:5 (1991), p.477. Brewer argues that social identity stems from an individual's need for a degree of both 'similarity to and differentiation from others'.

⁷⁷ *The Scotsman*, 07 January 1935, p.9.

⁷⁸ Eve, *The Queenslander*, Brisbane, Australia, 17 December 1921, p.4; *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, NSW, Australia, 27 June 1922, p.1.

⁷⁹ SandArch, 164-Knitwear Orders 1929-1938.

⁸⁰ *L'officiel De La Mode* 113 (1931), pp.66-67.

⁸¹ SandArch, 164-Knitwear orders 1929-1938, for example, orders B.4537, 29 May 1933; 5814, 16 May 1934; 5852, 07 June 1934.

combat issues with the unevenness of colour in the dyeing process.⁸² Many of these articles were truly bespoke designs which came without the usual couture costs. Additionally, dyeing and dressing was done in the Aberdeen depot which facilitated a quick turnaround should articles be brought back for treatment. The successful reception of these goods is recognised by the commencement of giving names and numbers to styles and patterns to facilitate ease of repetition for future orders. Nevertheless, although this was a step towards standardised production, the continued production by hand meant that no two articles were ever exactly alike.

Socially conscious consumer group - conscious/conscientious consumption

The characteristics of modern conscious and conscientious consumers are recognisable in the consumption practices involving philanthropic or charitable purchases. Although they might be classified as independent consumer groups there is an overlap with both consumer types. When conscious consumers make purchases, the decision to buy is made with deliberation and intentionality in line with their values, ethical or otherwise. They anticipate that while fulfilling a personal satisfaction a purchase will also fulfil specific criteria; does the item support the local economy, are the producers treated and compensated fairly, does the item have a substantial lifespan? This is not to say that conscious consumers do not purchase on impulse or emotional whimsy, but that the goods acquired will nevertheless match their personal criteria. The application of these criteria is clearly seen in many of the nineteenth century advertisements for Shetland lace, which explicitly state that the company concerned purchases directly from Shetland, paying the knitter in cash.

Conscientious consumers often display the same consumption criteria as conscious consumers; however they also make purchases that they do not necessarily want or need. Such consumption does not consider if the price is fair, but rather purchasing decisions are based on a desired participation in a concept brand. W. R. Scott reporting to the Board of Agriculture noted that consumers who demand ‘True Shetland goods...give more weight to the properties they look for than the price which they pay’.⁸³ In doing this the consumer is buying an association with the cause as much as they are buying a tangible product. This is done by rationalising the purchase on the basis that it is contributing to a ‘good cause’, and with regard to Shetland lace, purchases were made by those ‘who desire to do the poor

⁸² SandArch, 164-Knitwear orders 1929-1938, for example order 5761 ref 0/5729, 18 April 1934.

⁸³ PP 1914 [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture*, p.137.

Shetlanders a kindness'.⁸⁴ Here the consumer often makes the purchase purely for the purpose of being associated with such a cause and feels an affiliation with similar consumers. The role of celebrity endorsement often plays a vital role in persuading conscientious consumers to purchase a specific item, and in the case of Shetland lace, consumption may have been based on a desired emulation or association with the upper class female patrons of the trading organisations.⁸⁵

In both groups the formation of a brand community exists beyond geographical boundaries, where like-minded consumers feel part of a 'large unmet, but easily imagined community' of like-minded participants.⁸⁶ These brand communities create a connection, not only between the consumer and the brand, but also between consumers and the marketer and between individual consumers, in a form of network or relationship where members feel a connection to each other, even if there has been no direct contact between them. Atkinson's 2012 study looks at the relationship between socially conscious consumption and civic and political engagement, noting that:

Among socially conscious consumers, marketplace behaviors [sic] offer a viable and meaningful way to connect their private concerns with concerns for their community, both near and distant... the merging of politics and consumption has the potential to inspire solidarity and common purpose, empower individuals in the market.⁸⁷

This solidarity often results in brand or social cause communities. While any brand may develop a community presence, there are those which are more likely to do so. Brands with 'a strong image, a rich and lengthy history, and threatening competition' and which are 'publicly consumed... [rather than]...consumed in private are more likely to form communities and flourish'.⁸⁸ Although it did not receive a trademark until 1925, Shetland knitting can be considered a recognisable brand throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸⁹ The knitted goods were branded Shetland in the advertising, possibly as a means to enhance sales but more likely in an effort to sustain a cultural craft under threat from externally produced articles. Nevertheless, if Shetland goods were not known, trusted and desired then they could easily have just advertised them as woollen shawls, or

⁸⁴ 'A Lady Resident', *The Poor Knitters of Shetland* (Paisley 1861) p.7.

⁸⁵ Helland, 'Caprices of Fashion', p.197.

⁸⁶ Albert M. Muniz, and Thomas C. O'Guinn, 'Brand Community', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27:4 (2001), p.412, p.419.

⁸⁷ Atkinson, 'Concern for the Collective', p.192.

⁸⁸ Muniz & O'Guinn, 'Brand Community', p.415.

⁸⁹ See below for further discussion of trademark and branding.

even just shawls. Organisations such as the HHI, SHI and SHIA fostered the development of brand communities, made public announcements about the brand and shared information via media outlets. They arranged public events for the sale of authentic items where conscious and conscientious consumers could purchase the Shetland fine lace knitting secure in the knowledge that they were fulfilling their obligation to the brand.⁹⁰ Although the patrons of the Home Industries organisations were most commonly members of the British elite, Webster's 1975 study concluded that personality and attitude measures rather than demographics most readily identified the consumer group decisions to purchase in a particular fashion noting that 'the socially conscious consumer is not the "pillar of the community"'.⁹¹ As such his definition of a socially conscious consumer as one 'who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change' is perfectly fitting with the unknown majority of Shetland lace consumers whose purchases ensured the fair treatment of the Shetland producers.⁹² In purchasing directly from the knitter or through sources known to pay the knitters in cash they made a concerted effort to support the Shetland producers and in this they may be seen to be using their consumption practices as a political tool.

Conscious and conscientious consumers would have actively sourced genuine Shetland lace articles and from the mid 1880s this was facilitated by exhibition and private drawing room sales and the introduction of truck-free shops. Although organisations such as the SHI, HHI and SHIA purposefully encouraged conscious and conscientious consumption of Shetland lace, this consumer group was maintained and augmented but not created by these organisations. As early as 1841 W. B. Mackenzie's advertisement for Shetland wool knitted shawls suggests that the shawls were more expensive than other shawls but that this was justified by the labour involved in producing them with a further comment on the living conditions of the Shetland knitters:

... Considering their utility and the labour bestowed in making them, they are moderate in price. The knitting of them is now giving employment to a class

⁹⁰ Muniz & O'Guinn, 'Brand Community', p.427. This may be more applicable to modern Shetland lace, where online communities celebrate the history of the brand, meet to discuss the merits of Shetland lace in opposition to other forms of lace knitting, share brand stories, offer assistance, guidance in repairing or producing their own lace knitting. Web sites help to integrate new members as well as retain existing members, sharing information on brand related resources.

⁹¹ Frederick E. Webster, 'Determining the Characteristics of the Socially Conscious Consumer', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2:3 (1975), p.195.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.188.

of females at their own homes, who are thus enable to improve their condition in that most remote and insulated part of the British dominions.⁹³

The wording of Mackenzie's advertisement is persuasive without being forceful, proffering a subtle means of encouraging a philanthropic purchase, albeit unlikely to have elicited a monetary payment for the knitter. Pertinent to conscious and conscientious consumers this early example also implies authenticity of purchase in that the articles were made in Shetland homes by Shetland women. For both conscious and conscientious consumers of Shetland lace it is a prerequisite that the product is indeed Shetland-produced.

Support of the product and assurance of a cash payment to the producers was done with the purpose of benefitting all Shetland knitters not just the producers of Shetland lace.

Authenticity was key to this form of consumption. However, not all Shetland lace was made in Shetland, or by Shetland producers. The problems surrounding real and imitation Shetland lace are discussed in depth in chapter four, however this issue is also of relevance here with regard to consumers and their consumption choices. As Shetland lace grew in popularity and increasing quantities and qualities reached the marketplace, many consumers would have had difficulty in distinguishing the authentic article from the imitations produced outwith the islands. In order to assure consumers that they were purchasing genuine Shetland lace articles it became necessary to create a means of differentiating between them, most readily done through advertising narratives by appending the words real, authentic and genuine to the Shetland lace articles.

(Not) Shetland lace consumption

The first known use of the appendage 'real' with Shetland shawls is found in an 1845 Australian advertisement offering 'Real Shetland Shawls'.⁹⁴ In describing the articles as real Shetland there is the implicit understanding that other Shetland shawls were not 'real'. In 1863 The Scotch Worsted and Shetland Warehouse in London advertised lace Shetland Shawls but real Shetland veils.⁹⁵ That Shetland veils were also produced in Ireland in the 1850s makes it clear why they required authentication.⁹⁶ Five years later in 1868, Malcolm Tulloch's Shetland Warehouse in Glasgow advertised Real Shetland lace shawls, half

⁹³ *The Scotsman*, 11 September 1841, p.1.

⁹⁴ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, NSW, Australia, 1845, October 14, p.1.

⁹⁵ *The Morning Post*, 05 February 1863, p.1; *The Daily News*, 05 February 1863.

⁹⁶ M. B., *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 01 July 1853, p.95.

shawls and handkerchiefs.⁹⁷ From this point on the inclusion of ‘real’ became increasingly commonplace to differentiate Shetland hand-knitted lace with non-Shetland produced lace and from at least 1896 the inclusion of the appendage ‘imitation’.⁹⁸ The need to authenticate Shetland lace from other productions continued into the twentieth century, often focussing on the ‘genuine’ hand-knitted article. In their 1907 advertisement Maule & Son incorporated ‘real’ three times as well as ‘guaranteed’ and ‘genuine’ with reference to the articles being hand-knitted.⁹⁹ Their 1924 advertising guaranteed every Shetland article as ‘authentic’, continuing with the emphasis on ‘real’ hand-knit articles.¹⁰⁰ Shetland merchants were not immune to the need to specify the authenticity of the goods they were selling, other than perhaps that Shetland wool was used.¹⁰¹ In 1862 William Johnson advertised that he was a manufacturer of Real Shetland lace.¹⁰² Coutts & Fairweather advertised the 1881 opening of the Edinburgh branch of their New Shetland Repository noting that it was for the sale of genuine Shetland articles, hand-knitted using Shetland wool.¹⁰³ They were indeed genuine, as confirmed by Sandison when he complained that Mr Coutts had visited some of the best knitters in the Uyeasound area of Unst and engaged them to work directly with him and his Edinburgh shop.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, from the first known Shetland business advertisement in 1862 and the end of research period in 1939 fifteen individual Shetland businesses described the articles for sale as being ‘real’, including Miss Johnson and Schoor & Muir (see chapter 5 for further discussion of both businesses).¹⁰⁵ The 1914 *Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on home industries in the Highlands and Islands* claimed that imitation Shetland lace was in fact a ‘tribute’ to the genuine article, which did little to assist the Shetland producers. Nor did their assertion that that problems only arose in ‘exceptional cases where the cheap substitute may destroy the demand for the original commodity, as in the case of articles of fashion or of personal adornment’.¹⁰⁶ As ‘articles of fashion and personal adornment’ real

⁹⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 11 February 1868; 09 April 1868.

⁹⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, 17 November 1896.

⁹⁹ *The Scotsman*, 12 August 1907, p.1.

¹⁰⁰ *The Scotsman*, 23 May 1924, p.1.

¹⁰¹ Other yarns are known to have been used, including mohair and merino, as well as silk and cotton.

¹⁰² Weekly in the *Shetland Advertiser* from 17 March 1862 until 05 January 1963.

¹⁰³ *Peace's Orkney and Shetland Almanac*, 1881, p.160.

¹⁰⁴ SandArch, Letter Book 07-1877-1881 (Uyeasound), p.800. Letter from Sandison to John White, Shetland Warehouse, 01 June 1880.

¹⁰⁵ Advertisements placed in *Peace's Orkney and Shetland Almanac* and *Manson's Almanac*, or known through price list brochures. There are likely to be more examples but fifteen have been found to date.

¹⁰⁶ PP 1914 [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture*, pp.137-138.

Shetland lace faced competition from 'Shetland lace' in the marketplace. However, although it is impossible to know how often and how many non-Shetland produced lace articles were sold as genuine Shetland, the continual appendage of 'Real Shetland' in front of Shetland produced fine lace allows it to sit comfortably within recognisable brand parameters.

Current research on consumption of counterfeit/fake/imitation goods is divided on many points with regard to the validity of demographic characteristics (age, class, education, etc.) in relation to consumer motivations for purchasing non-authentic goods. Nevertheless there is a convergence on a few determinants which offer some insight into consumer motivations for purchasing non-Shetland produced Shetland lace. There are two types of counterfeiting: deceptive and non-deceptive.¹⁰⁷ Deceptive is when the consumer is unaware that they are purchasing imitation products while non-deceptive refers to consumers who know they are buying imitations. Many Shetland lace consumers may have purchased Nottingham produced Shetland lace shawls without being aware that they were purchasing imitation goods and were therefore victims of misrepresentation or misdescription. As they were unaware that the product was not authentic, their consumer motivations, with the exception of socially responsible purchasing, are as above. From the 1880s when SHI and SHIA shops opened in Edinburgh and London, and exhibition sales of the goods were held in other places, consumers could again be assured of the genuineness of the article. The main problem arose when the plethora of small business throughout the British mainland where the consumer had only the word of the business that the articles were indeed genuine Shetland. It would be very easy for a merchant with Shetland goods on display to have most of, if not his entire stock from non Shetland producers. The 1914 *Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on home industries in the Highlands and Islands* noted the use of *suggestio falsi*, whereby a high priced genuine Shetland shawl was displayed besides others of a similar appearance but at a much lower cost, giving the impression that they too were genuine Shetland.¹⁰⁸ In these cases the consumer would be unaware that they were buying imitation goods and in some instances might quite easily have believed they were purchasing a socially responsible article. Just as many consumers may have purchased the imitation goods in full knowledge that they were not in fact 'Shetland' and in this regard their consumption motivations may be seen to be different.

¹⁰⁷ Counterfeiting is a legal term which is not applicable to the Shetland lace within this research, as such, all non-Shetland and machine-produced Shetland lace is referred to as imitation.

¹⁰⁸ PP 1914 [Cd. 7564] *Report to the Board of Agriculture*, p.91.

With regard to non-deceptive purchasing there are three primary factors which are relevant to Shetland lace consumption: price/value relationship; status; embarrassment potential/'face' consciousness.¹⁰⁹ The lower cost of imitation Shetland lace, compared with the original article, is most likely the prime motivation factor for consumption of the non-authentic article. In 1864 Vogel in Philadelphia, offered real and ordinary Shetland shawls, noting that the ordinary were machine-knit and sold for eighteen to twenty two dollars less than the hand-knitted originals.¹¹⁰ Similarly a 1913 advertisement for Catto and Son in Toronto offered real Shetland hand-knit lace shawls from three to eleven dollars and imitation Shetland shawls from 52c to five dollars each, up to six dollars less expensive.¹¹¹ In this it might be anticipated that the quality of the imitation Shetland lace shawl was inferior to the original. However as there are no known extant machine-knit lace shawls this cannot be confirmed. Furthermore, the sizes of the shawls are not known, if the real Shetland shawl is two or three times the size of the imitation, then it would be expected that the imitation would be considerably cheaper. Of note here is that the examples are the United States of America and Canada, there are no comparable examples for the United Kingdom. Certainly many of the imitation Shetland lace shawls were produced for export, but not all. British advertisements commonly have 'real Shetland' or just 'Shetland', but there is no way of knowing if the 'Shetland' is indeed imitation, although it is unlikely that any of the 300 lace Shetland shawls marked down from 35-42/- to 1/6 are original Shetland lace productions, or fine lace.¹¹² Although not always a reliable indicator due to the varying qualities of genuine Shetland lace, at such a low cost the Shetland lace shawls might be recognised as imitations by the consumer, but if the consumer is on a low income they may consider the imitation shawls a viable and affordable option to be fashionable.¹¹³ This may be directly related to status consumption,

¹⁰⁹ For a good overview see Piyush Sharma & Ricky Y. K. Chan, 'Counterfeit proneness: Conceptualisation and scale development', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27:5/6 (2011), pp.602–626. Also E. Penz, B. B. Schlegelmilch, and B. Stöttinger, 'Voluntary purchase of counterfeit products: Empirical evidence from four countries', *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 21:1 (2009), pp.67–84; for a UK perspective Xuemei Bian & Luiz Moutinho, 'An investigation of determinants of counterfeit purchase consideration', *Journal of Business Research* 62 (2009), pp.368–378; for a USA perspective Jason M. Carpenter and Karen E. Edwards, 'U.S. Consumer Attitudes toward Counterfeit Fashion Products', *Journal of Textile and Apparel, Technology and Management*, 8:1 (2013), pp.1-16; for a Canadian perspective Arghavan Nia & Judith Lynne Zaichowsky, 'Do counterfeits devalue the ownership of luxury brands?', *Journal Of Product & Brand Management*, 9:7 (2000), pp.485-497.

¹¹⁰ *Godey's Lady's Book*, June 1864, p.390. The accompanying description of the shawls would suggest that they were knitted lace.

¹¹¹ *The Toronto World*, Canada, 24 December 1913, p.7. John Catto & Son, Toronto.

¹¹² *Daily News*, 05 February 1863. The Scotch Worsted and Shetland Warehouse, 45 Warwick Street, Regent Street West.

¹¹³ Sharma and Chan, 'Counterfeit proneness', pp.603-604.

which illustrates consumer awareness with the luxury brand image and social status associated with Shetland lace which can be used to enhance social relationships.¹¹⁴

Consumers wishing to emulate the fashion styles of the elite, or be considered a conscious/conscientious consumer without having the means, or the desire, to pay the costs involved is one of the major motivations for the purchase of imitation goods. By purchasing good quality imitation Shetland lace at a greatly reduced price they were able to construct a self-identity and external social image that they wanted other people to see and react to. Again this may be for fashion purposes but might equally be to project the image of sympathy to the cause of the Shetland producers.¹¹⁵ Like status consumption, embarrassment potential/face consciousness refers to the projected self-image of the consumer. Consumption motivations are emotional, based on the fear of not being socially accepted within a group and as such where the original article is too costly to consume then an imitation will take its place. The embarrassment potential is two-fold: primarily the embarrassment of not being socially accepted into the group but also embarrassment should the imitation be discovered.¹¹⁶

Although there are three motivational factors affecting the decision to deliberately purchase imitation Shetland lace knitting, the price/value relationship is the primary motivation and is evident in the other two. Furthermore, the consumption of imitation Shetland lace may be a matter of proximity: if the imitation is more easily available than the original then the consumer may not consider the additional effort of sourcing an original product worthwhile. However, whichever motivation the consumer experienced, that the imitation Shetland lace was described as ‘close in resemblance to Shetland manufacture’ then they are likely to have received any prestige benefits that were associated with genuine Shetland lace without experiencing a reduction in quality, and at greatly reduce costs.

Conclusion

From the mid nineteenth century the appearance of advertisements and articles in British newspapers and journals promoting and discussing Shetland lace goods became

¹¹⁴ A. O’Cass & H. Frost, ‘Status brands: Examining the effects of non-product related brand associations on status and conspicuous consumption’, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 11:2 (2002), pp.67–88.

¹¹⁵ Sharma and Chan, ‘Counterfeit proneness’, p.608.

¹¹⁶ Sharma and Chan, ‘Counterfeit proneness’, p.609.

increasingly commonplace. Although many early advertisements merely presented dry descriptions of articles that were immediately available at the particular merchant's premises, later advertisements, whether direct or indirect, were produced with the explicit intention to persuade consumers to buy. They attempted to convince the discerning consumer that their products were the best available and that they would make life just that little bit easier or better or more fashionable. Possibly the products would be life-enhancing or character-improving and having succumbed to inevitable consumption the consumer would become a better person for it. Some offered prospective consumers the purchase of an idea or ideal, an association with a cause as well as a tangible product. Others promoted the concept of community with a central role for the consumer in a populace of like-minded individuals that may have been created purely for consumer participation. The geographical spread of advertisements for the sale of Shetland lace suggests an expansive consumer market, and a wide global appeal. In most cases the international destinations of Shetland lace are regions of known emigration for many Scots and in this the popularity of Shetland lace may be more than its aesthetic qualities, but also a connection with the past, with the imagery of a shared identity.

While advertisements alone do not offer any proof of purchase, any absence of evidence of consumption does not necessarily indicate that it was not consumed. The wording of the majority of the advertisements illustrate that they were 'goods on hand' when they say exactly what they have available. In these cases it is unlikely that the business would have such goods on hand if there was not at least the anticipation of consumption. Surviving business records illustrate consumer motivations for purchasing the lace articles and from these it is possible to identify specific consumer groups, allowing a better understanding of continued presence of Shetland lace articles in the marketplace. Newspapers, magazine editorials, articles and advertising were not only a means of selling Shetland lace, they also provided information about the political, social and cultural lives of the women producers. Both Shetland businesses and philanthropic organisations used these resources to convince consumers to purchase authentic Shetland lace rather than produce their own using pattern books, or purchase imitations. The printed word advised, encouraged and beseeched consumers to purchase Shetland lace, and in doing so created consumer groups who purchased according to their own motivations and desires. Visual culture was equally important for the ongoing popularity of Shetland lace: the images used in print acted as a means of informing the consumer what articles were available and where they could be purchased. However it is in the visual culture of displays and exhibitions, seeing the material object close at hand, the delicateness and beauty of the stitches and patterns, the

fineness of the worsted, then feeling the softness of the wool between the fingers that could instigate an emotional response and a heightened desire to own.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

That there should be little or no demand for this fine knitting at the present time is not entirely due to post-war conditions, although it is sad to see the fatalistic way in which the knitters accept this dictum while bemoaning their lack of employment during the long winter evenings... Is the industry really dying, and will the beauty that is Shetland lace pass away from the world forever? If it is to be spared, it must be by some tremendous effort outside the island. The knitters themselves are helpless.¹

...there is a very real danger that the industry will disappear altogether...²

In June and October 1928 Mrs Leila Dawson Henry wrote to the press making emotional pleas for the survival of the Shetland fine lace knitting industry, urging potential consumers to purchase and ‘wear a shawl’ as a mark of sympathy and solidarity with the women of Shetland ‘in the decay of their industry’. She was not alone in believing this could happen; there are numerous references to its decline, and even demise.

This thesis follows the biography of Shetland lace illustrating the various stages in the life-cycle of the lace from inception through production, distribution and consumption. In taking this approach the intention was to illustrate the dynamic social, cultural and political relationships that could be understood through the connected histories of Shetland lace and its producers, sellers and consumers. Also, in taking this approach, it might be expected that the final stage in the lace’s life-cycle is death, or decline. However the Shetland lace industry did not die and early twentieth century reports of its imminent demise failed to look at the whole industry but relied on production and sales of traditional articles such as shawls and scarves as an indicator of the state of the industry. Then as now, when people think of Shetland lace the first image to appear in the mind is the cobweb shawl. Those who foretold the doom of what was in fact not a dying industry also focussed on the fine lace shawl as a means of resuscitating and reinvigorating it. But to say the knitters were ‘helpless’ is to overlook the determination, diligence, skill and entrepreneurial spirit displayed by generations of Shetland lace knitters. It was their innovation that facilitated the creation of new and desirable articles which increased consumer motivation to continue purchasing. This provided an environment in which the Shetland lace industry could continuously evolve until the end of the research period (1939) and beyond. Rather than

¹ Mrs Leila Dawson Henry, *The Scotsman*, 29 June 1928, p.13. A dying Industry: Shetland Lacemakers.

² *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, October 1928, quoted in Fryer, *Knitting by the fireside and on the hillside*, p.89. Fryer says this is written by Mrs Leila Dawson Henry.

being ‘helpless’ to prevent what was happening, the knitters were in fact more than able to meet and overcome any challenges they encountered.

In the 1920s many Shetland knitters turned their attention to the production of Fair Isle and the ‘jumper craze’ popularised by Prince Edward.³ It is not clear how many lace knitters changed to Fair Isle production, but if they chose to do so their decision was reasonable and in all likelihood economically motivated. The choice between knitting a fine lace article, which could take many months to produce and just as many months to sell, or knitting a Fair Isle jumper which was guaranteed a quick sale due to it being a ‘great rage’ and ‘the vogue’ may not have been a difficult decision for knitters in tenuous economic conditions.⁴ Not all fine lace knitters abandoned the lace in favour of Fair Isle, or at least did not completely abandon it. One of the earliest fine lace blouses dates to 1921 and may be an indication of the lace knitter’s conscious decision not to knit Fair Isle but to adapt the fine lace to fit in with the jumper craze. Although it would never surpass the Fair Isle jumper in popularity or sales, this reinvention of the Shetland jumper, to suit the skill set of the fine lace knitters, soon developed a reputation in the fashion world. Recognising the changing face of fashion, the lace knitters included other articles in their repertoire: camisoles, opera tops, lace frocks and bed jackets. Gifted to royalty, worn by celebrities, talked about in fashion columns, appearing on the Parisian catwalk and advertised throughout the UK, as well as the USA, Canada and Australia, these garments became international fashion statements. As before with the Nottinghamshire machine-knit Shetland lace shawls, they were soon copied and produced outwith the islands. This epitomises the life-cycle of Shetland lace: a garment idea was conceived; it was produced, marketed, and sold; then imitated by non-Shetland producers and sold for less than the Shetland lace knitters could produce it by hand; then as Shetland knitters lost out to the external market, a new garment idea was conceived. From the earliest days of fine knitting on Shetland to twenty-first century production, Shetland lace has experienced multiple and continual evolutionary processes – rebirths if you will.

Although by 1931 Shetland lace shawls were no longer the height of fashion, there was still a market for them as attested by the orders received by Sandison through the Aberdeen depot. From the earliest days of production many consumers purchased Shetland lace shawls as fashion accessories but they were also chosen for babies, especially christenings,

³ *Shetland Times*, 1921, December 31, Shetland in 1921.

⁴ *Shetland Times*, 30 December 1922, December 30, Shetland in 1922; 29 December 1923, Shetland in 1923.

and it is perhaps for christenings that the ongoing request for Shetland lace shawls continued. Nevertheless, while there was a notable reduction in the request for shawls, fine lace knitting had already taken a divergent fashion route, one that would appeal to both previous and new consumers alike. Even at the peak of production the finest Shetland lace would have been affordable to only a select minority, but the differing fineness and quality of the lace knitting meant that it was also available to a much wider consumer base. By producing Shetland lace blouses and jumpers at prices well below the cost of a fine lace shawl, the knitters were able to maintain this consumer base and sustain production. Although any personal exchange between the producer and consumer may have been unusual there nevertheless existed a dynamic relationship between them. Producers acknowledged, and at times foresaw, the desires and demands of consumers while consumer demands led to an infusion of new ideas, styles, materials and techniques in production. This ensured the continued production of specific articles and affected the discontinuation of others, notably in response to their ever changing needs and lifestyles. Sufficient producer innovation and consumer motivation to continue purchasing affirms that rather than spiralling into decline, Shetland lace remained a vibrant and cultivated industry.

From before Shetland lace was even considered a means of economic activity, Shetland spinners and knitters were widely known for the fineness of the yarn they spun and the stockings they produced. When they began to produce lace they did so with a set of established skills that were already part of the knitting culture in the islands and were the foundations of what would essentially be the next step in the evolutionary process of knitting in Shetland. While some early Shetland lace articles were produced for personal use or as gifts, from the earliest productions they were primarily intended for sale. In this it can be seen that Shetland lace did not come into the market and then become commodified, it entered the market fully commodified. It was therefore expedient to transfer it as quickly as possible from the hands of the producer to the hands of the consumer. Unlike previous generations of fine knitters, where fishermen came to the islands and bought their stockings, consumers had to be actively sourced and then informed about the special qualities of Shetland lace, whether for health, comfort, fashion or ethical reasons.

With the 1837 gift to Queen Victoria and her subsequent order for 12 pairs of finely knitted stockings, Shetland merchants actively created royal connections, developing promotional material in the form of articles and advertising campaigns around the royal purchases and

all subsequent gifts made to them. Aristocratic women were courted as consumers and patrons of Shetland lace long before the formation of the philanthropic organisations which endeavoured to encourage other consumers to buy Shetland lace. Victorian philanthropic pursuits, notably the anti-truck campaigns, and the popularity of the great exhibitions played a pivotal role in endorsing and sustaining public interest in the Shetland-produced articles. During the nineteenth century, when economic conditions were discussed in relation to Shetland knitting, it was almost always with regard to the barter-truck situation in Shetland and the campaigns to encourage, if not enforce, a fair payment to the producers. While many lace knitters were also bonded to the barter-truck system, the skills required to produce such fine work often bestowed a monetary income to the lace knitter, increasingly so from the 1880s. National and international exhibitions were recognised as being more than the mere display of articles and were acknowledged facilitators of marketing to a much larger and more diverse group of potential customers. With the eyes of the local, national and international press firmly focussed on the exhibitions, visits by royalty or dignitaries to an exhibition stand regularly merited extensive column inches in the newspapers. Shetland lace was incorporated into the public consciousness and popular culture through poems, plays, novels, actors and images. As the twentieth century approached, in addition to using the celebrity status of royal and aristocratic women, Shetland lace capitalised on the stars of the stage and screen. 1893 theatre-goers heard Lady Hunstanton in Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance* cry out for her Shetland shawl; indeed Josephine Hogan's 2014 production had Lady Hunstanton (Kelli Bocock Natale) wearing a knitted lace shawl, albeit not Shetland fine lace.⁵ Similarly Sarah Bernhardt with a Shetland lace shawl in 1901 and Sybil Thorndike in a Shetland lace frock in 1923 did much to keep Shetland lace in the minds of the fashion consuming public.⁶

Individual motivational factors behind the purchase of Shetland fine lace knitting were multifaceted, including social and cultural motivations, fashion and aesthetic purchases, and gift giving, while for others consumption might be considered a political act with the intention to channel profits back to the knitters themselves. Regardless of the motivations for consumption, in identifying potential consumer groups it is clear that just as the Shetland lace was produced, so were consumers produced, created through clever marketing, advertising and cultural organisations. Furthermore it is through the identification of consumers and potential consumers that the full extent of the industry is

⁵ Anthony Chase, *A Woman of No Importance*, *Artvoice* <<http://artvoice.com/issues/v13n4/theaterweek>> [accessed 24 April 2015].

⁶ See celebrity endorsement in chapter 5.

fully realised. Advertisements illustrate the geographical and temporal spread of Shetland lace and demonstrate not only an expansive consumer market but a wide global appeal. Similarly newspapers, magazine editorials, articles and advertising were not only a means of selling Shetland fine lace knitting, they also provided information about the political, social and cultural lives of the women producers. In this it becomes clear that the ‘power’ of Shetland lace rested not only in its aesthetic features but also in its embedded political and cultural values.

While lace knitters played a limited role in the marketing and advertising of Shetland lace, they did play a pivotal role in creating consumers by continually adapting to the changing needs of the market and to consumer preferences and demands. In this Shetland lace also impacted not only on Victorian fashion, culture and society but also the wider trade and fashion networks of nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, Europe and beyond. This is evident by the number of imitation ‘Shetland’ lace articles which were readily available in the marketplace, both in the UK and abroad. From the earliest days of the industry Shetland lace was copied and sold as ‘Shetland’ which gave rise to the issues of authenticity and the genuine article. Shetland businesses, philanthropic organisations and private individuals used the printed word to advise, encourage and beseech consumers to purchase authentic Shetland lace rather than imitations. This may have been successful with regard to home knitted (on the British mainland) Shetland lace; the timing certainly coincides with the reduction in the number of Shetland articles appearing in knitting books aimed at the home knitter. However it was the introduction of mass-produced machine-knit ‘Shetland lace shawls’ which made the most significant impact on the Shetland lace industry. Shetland lace was an integral part of Shetland culture. Few Shetlanders were not involved in the knitting culture, whether as a producer, a merchant seller, or a family member hearing the clicking of knitting needles by the fire on a winter’s night. As such, the considerably cheaper mass-produced Shetland shawls undermined not only the livelihood but the cultural identity of the producers.

The concept of authenticity with regard to what is generally acknowledged to be ‘Shetland’ lace is a recurrent theme throughout this thesis, which has highlighted the difficulty in defining what is authentically Shetland and acknowledging that authenticity in a pure sense was necessarily open to compromise. This is clearly seen in the distribution and marketing of Shetland lace when examined from local, national and international perspectives. Acknowledging these issues of authenticity creates new understandings of social landscapes and the complex interactions between people, places and objects, while

highlighting the integral relationship between the processes of production and its eventual consumption. When the article passes from the hands of the producer its potential social life comes into force, and it is while in the hands of the subsequent seller and eventual consumer that the material form truly becomes what it is intended to. It is also at this point when the consumer makes the decision to purchase authentic or imitation Shetland lace. The outcome of this decision illustrates the role Shetland lace played in the construction of personal and community identities and demonstrates the cultural and social position of Shetland lace, both within and outwith Shetland. Self-expression and social identity creation is often expressed in the objects that people choose to produce and own. Shetland knitters produced general hosiery, Fair Isle knitting and Shetland lace, many may have knitted all three simultaneously. In choosing to be lace producers they were part of a distinct group within a community of knitters, but one which engaged in and co-operated with the community as a whole. Likewise, consumers can be recognised to have group identities, notably those who made the conscious decision to purchase Shetland lace direct from the producer or became involved in organisations that ensured a fair payment was channelled back to the producer. In acknowledging this and by following not only the knitted lace but also its producers over time and across, often wide, geographical spaces, Shetland lace can be seen to epitomize and signify social relations. Recognising this as an integral part in the formation of historical and cultural narratives it is possible to see the role Shetland lace played in defining self and community not only within Shetland but also communities of consumers in an expanding national and international market.

A key aim of this thesis is to acknowledge the community of unknown Shetland women who participated in the Shetland lace industry and where possible give a voice to previously unknown individual producers. I found less than I wanted but more than I hoped for. Where possible their names and stories are included within the chapters. By identifying individual spinners, knitters, dressers and sellers it is possible to see the development of female enterprise and entrepreneurship in the Shetland lace industry, which illustrated local networks operating in an exchange of labour and goods, both as a barter and monetary economy.⁷ This 'community of women' worked in cooperation with one another: rooing, sorting, carding, spinning, knitting and washing/dressing and could engage with many individuals in the various stages of production at any one time. In this it is possible to see the social, cultural, political and economic influences on both producer

⁷ Lynn Abrams discusses female social networks in *'Myth and Materiality'*, chapter 4. The findings of this research concur with her conclusions, that while knitting hosiery (in this case lace) was primarily a domestic activity it was necessary for women to form working relationships with others for the successful completion of their working activities.

and process. Although it was possible for one producer to work independently from rooing to selling Shetland lace, the majority of producers worked within a recognisable network, one that was essential for the successful production of Shetland lace.

At various intervals from the 1890s, reports of declining sales and Miss Henry's fear of imminent doom of the Shetland lace industry featured in the pages of the local and national press. Such concerns further illustrate the place of Shetland lace in local, national and international consciousness. These concerns are about more than protecting the livelihood of the producers, lace knitters could knit in other styles for a monetary return. Rather, the appeals for consumers to buy authentic Shetland lace illustrate an awareness of what would be lost if production ceased. In many cases the supposed blame of the decline was placed firmly in the hands of the fine spinners and knitters: the spinners for not spinning fine enough and the knitters for not producing 'genuine' articles in fine spun worsted.⁸ Other, more valid reasons were given: between 1925 and 1928 there were claims that fashions were changing, 'wearers' had already purchased all they needed and markets were flooded with an overabundance of machine-made imitation goods, and the popularity of artificial silk.⁹ In this the knitters were partially culpable: by designing and producing fashion articles which were so popular with the consuming public, they were imitated, externally mass-produced and sold cheaply. In making a beautiful lace article the lace knitters effectively created their own competition, such is the nature and business of fashion.

Shetland lace is now collected, stored carefully and exhibited in museums. Many of the most recent articles in the collections have been donated by members of the public, testament to the value placed in Shetland lace as an integral part of Shetland culture and identity. The visiting public stand in awe in front of some of the finest pieces, pondering the delicate and intricate patterns and wondering how they were produced in crofts with no running water or electricity by women who had families to care for amongst their other daily chores. These visitors are amongst the modern Shetland lace consumers, their consumption often visual rather than physical. Some will be inspired to try their own hand at lace knitting using modern day pattern books or they will go home with a Shetland lace souvenir: fine lace mitts or a small scarf produced by a Shetland lace knitter and sold in the museum shop. In this Shetland lace as material culture is still produced both in and

⁸ ST, 28 December 1907, Shetland in 1907; similar sentiments are expressed in 31 December 1904, Shetland in 1904; and December 29 1906, Shetland in 1906.

⁹ ST, January 02 1926, Shetland in 1925; 31 December 1927, Shetland in 1927; 29 December 1928, Shetland in 1928.

outwith Shetland and, as such, continues to participate in the construction of the Shetland identity and a distinctive craft skill that is an essential part of it.

Shetland's museums strive to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of the industry as it was in its original form and also its more recent developments. However, twenty-first century lace knitters, rather than remaining static, frozen in time, take inspiration not only from the traditional and original garments but also from the original ethos of the knitters following their example and maintaining production in whatever style and by whatever method which keeps the essence of the original craft alive, vibrant and relevant. Just as the knitters of the nineteenth and early twentieth century evolved, adapting to the changing market place, adopting new styles and incorporating new techniques, so the fine lace knitters of today continue the tradition, knitting lace in metals, lace on ceramics, and jewellery.¹⁰ Lace spinners and knitters offer workshops and lessons, passing on their skills to an increasingly interested public ever optimistic of producing something equal to that of a Sutherland or Jamieson article. Many of the people they are teaching are not Shetlanders; they have travelled far and wide to learn at the side of a Shetland expert. When they complete their Shetland lace shawl will it be considered a 'Shetland lace shawl' as defined in the introduction to this thesis? The short answer to that would have to be no, it will not. However in the initial definition, authenticity is seen to be inherent in the material object. While this was necessary to differentiate between different 'Shetland lace' articles, authenticity is more complex than this and may be considered a cultural construction whereby the authenticity is not inherent in the object, but in the observer/reproducer. In this they might be seen to be producing authentic Shetland lace, or at least an authentic reproduction.¹¹ Indeed, in both the viewing of the 'original' and any reproduction is necessarily conditioned by audience expectations and preconceptions.¹²

In researching Shetland lace I have sought to illustrate how one object is the sum of many relationships. Each hand that touches the lace leaves a trace of a different narrative. The history of Shetland fine lace knitting cannot be read as a single finely spun thread, rather it is at least three-ply fine yarn wherein each thread illustrates an actor in the narrative:

¹⁰ For example, 'Anne Eunson's artistry', Kate Davies Designs, <<http://katedaviesdesigns.com/2012/09/05/anne-eunsons-artistry/>> [accessed 26 April 2015]; Frances Wilson, *The Shetland Gallery* <http://www.shetlandgallery.com/frances-wilson> [accessed 26 April 2015]; Helen Robertson Jewellery http://helenrobertson.com/Shetland_Lace.html [accessed 26 April 2015].

¹¹ Siân Jones, 'Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves: Beyond the Deconstruction of Authenticity', *Journal of Material Culture* 15 (2010), pp.181-203, p.182.

¹² Cornelius Holtorf, 'On Pastness: A Reconsideration of Materiality in Archaeological Object Authenticity', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 86:2 (2013), pp.427-443, p.443.

producer, seller, consumer, all waiting in the sweerie box to be twisted together onto one pirm then laid on the niddy-noddy to be made into the hank that is the history of Shetland lace. Where possible I have attempted to give voice to the innumerable and often nameless women who conceived and created delicately knitted works on art under the guise of domestic craft. However, their story and the study of Shetland fine knitted lace is far from over. Indeed this thesis, as the first to take a holistic perspective on the production and consumption of lace in Shetland and beyond, may be seen as the starting point for further research. Each new garment, producer, seller and consumer found adds a new dimension to the historical narrative of the industry, and may indeed change the narrative as it stands in this thesis. This is welcomed. The arguments forwarded on authenticity with regard to Shetland lace have been challenging and while they have provided an initial methodological approach, there is a need to expand upon this in an effort to create a more succinct, yet simultaneously all-inclusive approach which can allow for a standardisation of assessment as new garments and research material is uncovered. To that end a Shetland based (Lerwick) workshop on authenticity involving both academics and practitioners is planned for March 2016 to discuss, and refine, the issues raised in the thesis. These issues are not confined to Shetland lace, but are applicable to all Shetland (and indeed many non-Shetland) produced hand-knitted textiles, therefore, in addition to Shetland lace this workshop will also include Fair Isle knitting (patterned).

There are additional areas which require further research and attention. While the great majority of known Shetland lace articles are held in Shetland museums, it is clear that many UK mainland museums are unaware of Shetland lace articles in their collections. The creation of an online catalogue of Shetland lace articles, with images, would facilitate museum collections less familiar with the lace to ascertain if articles in their collections are indeed Shetland (or possible Shetland) productions. This would not only afford them a better understanding of the knitted articles in their collections but would provide a geographical location of previously unknown Shetland lace allowing a fuller understanding of the industry to be achieved. Furthermore, this may assist in augmenting the scant available information with regard to consumers of Shetland lace.

In researching this thesis I have endeavoured to illustrate the place of highly skilled domestic craft in the past and sought to contribute to our understanding of the importance of domestic craft production in the past and the present. While my focus has been on Shetland production much of the thesis may also be applied to the research of other geographical regions and domestic crafts.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Sample entries from 'All Known Shetland Lace' database illustrating database compilation.

Location	REGISTRATION	SHORT DESC.	OBJECT DATE	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	DIMENSIONS	MAKER	CONDITION	PHOTO
SMA	TEX 1990.306	SHETLAND LACE MOURN	-	Lace mourning scarf in (-	2,040 X 270 m	-	Excellent	yes
SMA	TEX 1991.476	KNITTING AND CROCHET	-	Four short wooden knitt	Whale bone and	lengths of wd	-	Good, showi	yes
SMA	TEX 1992.119	SHETLAND LACE SHAWL	-	Shetland lace shawl; squ	Especially knitte	-	Katie Bair	Good	yes
SMA	TEX 1992.32	SHETLAND LACE SCARF	1990	White lace new shell sca	-	850 x 660 mm	Anna E Gr	Very good	yes
SMA	TEX 1992.663	SHETLAND LACE SHAWL	-	Hand knitted and spun,	All from T. M. Ad	1m 16cm X 35	-	Excellent	yes
SMA	TEX 1992.903	SPINNING WHEEL	19th cent.	Upright spinning wheel,	From Sunnyside	Height 765 m	-	Very good; s	yes
SMA	TEX 1993.75	SHETLAND LACE STOLE	1920's - 1930's	One very fine lace stole	Shawl and stole	890 x 920; 13	Mrs Leebi	Good	yes
SMA	TEX 1994.313	SHETLAND FINE LACE YA	pre 1930	Two bundles of white fi	Spun by the late	Miss Anne Geor	geson, K	Excellent	yes
SMA	TEX 1994.370	FINE LACE TRIANGLE - BA	late 1880's	Small triangular panel o	This was the don	540 mm long	-	Very good	yes
SMA	TEX 1994.650	SHETLAND LACE SCARF	early 20th centu	Hand spun white Shetla	Belonged to Mar	2000 mm lon	-	Good	yes
SMA	TEX 1996.25	ELEVEN SHETLAND LACE	late 19th centur	A group of Shetland lace	Once formed par	'long ones' c	-	Good to fair;	yes
SMA	TEX 1996.267	KNITTING SHEATH	c.1900	Knitting / makkin sheath	This belonged to	310 mm long	-	Good, slight	yes
SMA	TEX 1997.84	SMALL SHETLAND FINE L	-	Very fine lace shawl, tw	The donor's gran	1200 x 1150 c	-	Very good	yes
SMA	TEX 1997.86	SHETLAND FINE LACE SH	1934	Fine Shetland lace shawl	Bought in 1934 f	1330 x 1330 m	-	Excellent	yes
SMA	TEX 1997.91	SHETLAND FINE LACE SH	c. 1907	White fine lace shawl, v	Donated by the	1680 x 1660 m	Ann Hay, f	Very good	yes
TM	E0240	FINE LACE SHAWL	1890s	fine lace shawl, white 5-	-	54" square x	Miss Julia	few stains ar	yes
TM	E0241	FINE LACE SHAWL	1890	fine lace shawl, white, 4-	-	47" square	-	slight damag	yes
TM	E0242	DRESSING JACKET	-	dressing jacket (bed jac	claims knitted by	-	Miss Julia	sign of moul	yes
TM	E0252	FINE LACE VEIL	-	veil - knitted in 2 ply (?)	-	36" x 15"	-	one area mo	yes
TM	E0253	FINE LACE VEIL	-	veil. Knitted in 2 ply har	-	45" x 15"	-	good	yes
TM	E0270	BED JACKET	1935-39	bed jacket - worn - hand	-	36", 22" long	Annie San	-	yes
UHC	U471	LACES FOR SHAWL	-	2 laces for shawl, hand s	-	-	Miss Isabe	-	yes
UHC	U473	FINE LACE KNIT SQUARE	-	knitted in 1 ply Shetland	Found in west si	18" X 18"	-	-	yes
UHC	U474	FINE LACE KNIT SCARF	-	scarf knitted in Shetland	Found in west si	40" long	-	-	yes
UHC	unknown	FINE LACE STOLE	c1930	crown and tree on bord	Eliza Sutherland	1570mm by 5	Eliza Suth	Very good	yes
GSA	EWTC11	SHETLAND LACE SHAWL	c1870s	Cream coloured lace sha	Shetland Shawl,	2360 mm x 11	-	very good	yes
V&A	T.137-1966	CAPE (HAND KNITTED SI	ca. 1866 (made)	-	At the time of ad	Height: 126.5	-	excellent	yes
V&A	T.335-1980	SHAWL	19th century (m	-	The knitters prod	width 54.6cm	Mrs Amy Johnston	-	yes
GM	E1984.49	SHAWL	Prov 1793 (?)	Unusual, has intial appea	Possibly two kni	-	-	reasonable	yes
GM	E1957.19	STOLE	c.1897	Really fine yarn, handsp	Very even and w	22" x 65"	Mrs John	very good	yes

Example of full database entry:

SMA TEX 2013.39 - fine lace 'wedding ring' shawl, image courtesy of SMA.



Location	SMA
REGISTRATION NO	TEX 2013.39
SHORT DESC.	FINE LACE 'WEDDING RING' SHAWL
OBJECT DATE	c.1904
DESCRIPTION	Very fine lace shawl with an unusual patterned centre and scalloped edges and paperwork and photographs relating to Jeannie.
NOTES	<p>The shawl belonged to and was knitted Jane Mann (nee Halcrow), she was known as Jeannie. Jeannie was born on the 5th September 1886 at Hoswick. She was the first child of three for Laurance Halcrow, a fisherman, and his wife Catherine (nee Johnston). At the age of 14 Jeannie is listed as a knitter working from home in the 1901 census. She would knit Fair Isle garments and some lace, shawls for family Christenings and also this 'wedding ring' shawl. As a young woman Jeannie was a gutter following the herring fleets as far as Lowestoft and Yarmouth. In the 1911 census Jeannie, aged 24, is listed as a 'fishworker' at the 'herring curing'. Jeannie was married in Edinburgh on the 7th October 1931 to Robert Watts Mann, a widower and they settled at his home at 10 Freefield, Lerwick. After her husband's death and the death of her father in 1951 she moved in to her parents' home at 24 Church Lane, Lerwick. Years later, due to the compulsory purchase of this house for a new road, she moved to 3 St Olaf Street and then in 1978 to Kanterstead Home in Lerwick. She died there on the 28th of June 1980 aged 93. Jeannie knitted the 'wedding ring' shawl c. 1904 when she was 18 and it was the only one she knitted. Her mother spun the fine single ply wool and an old woman from Hoswick showed her the pattern which she called 'The Queen's Lace'. She kept the shawl wrapped in a white napkin in her kist and gave it to the donor c.1960 who continued to keep it wrapped in the same napkin. The napkin is included in the donation. In 1978 the donor visited her grandmother in Lerwick and had the shawl dressed by a man known as 'Worsety Willie' who had a premises in one of the lanes. Once the shawl had been stretched on the frame he said that he had never seen the pattern before and thought that the shawl itself was in very good condition. The donor has a photograph of the shawl being pulled through her mother's wedding ring.</p>
DIMENSIONS	1250 x 1300mm
MAKER	Jane (Jeannie) Mann (nee Halcrow), Lerwick. (b. 05/09/1886, d. 28/06/1980)
CONDITION	very good
PHOTO	SMA catalogue

Appendix 2

Sample entries from Newspaper Database illustrating database compilation.

Year	Publication	Place	Date	issue/page	Company	Address	text
1828	The Scotsman	Edinburgh,	1829, Nove	p766	R & W Clark	35 George Street,	Robert Clark, now R & W Clark
1836	Shetland Journal	Lerwick	1836, June 1	-	Copland, William	-	Cheap linen-drapery &c. Willi
1840	The Sydney Herald	NSW, Aust	1840, June 1	p3	Samuel Lyons	corner of George S	Mr Samuel Lyons is instructed
1841	Aberdeen Journal	Aberdeen,	1841, Januar	-	unclear	26, 27, 28, & 29 To	...large knitted Shetland shawl
1841	The Sydney Herald	NSW, Aust	1841, August	p3	Messrs Foss and Llc	-	Sale by auction - To drapers, T
1841	The Scotsman	Edinburgh,	1841, August	p1	W. B. Mackenzie, S	111 Princes Street	SHETLAND WOOL KNITTED SH/
1844	Examiner	London, En	1844, Decem	no 1924, p	Standen's Shetland	112 Jermyn Street	The collection of knitted good
1845	The Sydney Mornin	NSW, Aust	1845, Octob	p1	Robert Bourne and	293 Pitt Street	Real Shetland Shawls. A few c
1845	The Perth Gazette	WA Austral	1845, Nover	p1	Lionel & Wm Sams	-	(Ex "Unicorn". - On sale, at the
1846	Examiner	London, En	1846, Octob	no 2019 p	Standen and Comp	112 Jermyn Street	Shetland knitted woollen hosi
1846	Launceston Examir	Tasmania,	1846, Nover	p5	Messrs Bennet & S	-	REAL SHETLAND SHAWLS AND
1847	The Courier	Hobart, Tas	1847, Decem	p3	Messrs Lowes and M	-	Slops, Horrocks' Long Cloth, Gi
1848	South Australian R	Adelaide, S	1848, Nover	p2	M. & S. Marks	Hindley Street	NOTICE. TO THE LADIES. M. &
1851	The Scotsman	Edinburgh,	1851, June	p1	W. B. Mackenzie, S	126 Princes Street	FINE SHETLAND SHAWLS, SCAF
1853	Examiner	London, En	1853, Octob	no 2383, p	Standen and Comp	112 Jermyn Street	Shetland and Scotch Warehou
1853	The Lancaster Gaze	Lancaster,	1853, Nover	Issue 3477	Sayers & Cunningha	112 Market Street	Shetland Knit Veils
1856	Dundee Courier	Dundee, Sc	1856, Octob	Issue 2092	Nell, W. H.	14 Reform Street	Lace, Shetland and Gossamer I
1856	Caledonian Mercu	Edinburgh,	1856, Octob	Issue 2092	Scott, Low, & Co	Nos. 4, 5, & 6 Sout	French and Nottingham Lace a
1857	The Belfast News-I	Belfast, Ire	1857, Nover	Issue 1292	Lindsay Brothers	-	Black lace and Shetland Falls
1862	Caledonian Mercu	Edinburgh,	1862, June 1	Issue 2268	New Shetland Ware	Linklater & Coy's,	Shetland white lace shawls, S
1862	The Scotsman	Edinburgh,	1862, August	p1	John White	12 Frederick Stree	The Shetland Warehouse, Joh
1862	Shetland Advertise	-	1862, Decem	No 49	Gilbert Wood	198 Rundle Street	Gilbert Wood, late of Delting,
1865	Liverpool Mercury	Liverpool,	1865, June 1	Issue 5421	Henderson, Wm. &	13 and 15 Church S	...from 2 to 5 guineas white Sh
1865	The Scotsman	Edinburgh,	1865, Octob	p4	White, John - succe	The Shetland War	...has just got to hand his new
1868	Glasgow Herald	Glasgow, S	1868, Febru	Issue 8769	Tulloch, Malcolm	The Shetland War	Real Shetland lace shawls
1868	Glasgow Herald	Glasgow, S	1868, April	Issue 8819	The Shetland Ware	85 Buchanan Stree	Real Shetland lace shawls, Wh
1869	The Belfast News-I	Belfast, Ire	1869, April 2	Issue 4443	M'Creadie, A. D.	33 Donegal Place	...Shetland bernouses...
1870	The Scotsman	Edinburgh,	1870, Septe	p4	Linklater & Co	The Shetland War	have always a select stock of h
1870	The Scotsman	Edinburgh,	1870, Septe	p4	White, John - succe	The Shetland War	has always a very large stock o

Example of full entry – Advertisement

Year	1846
Category	Advertisement
Publication	Examiner
Place	London, England
Date	31 October 1846
Date 2	1846-10-31
issue/page	no 2022, p.702
Company	Standen and Company's Shetland and Scotch Warehouse,
Address	112 Jermyn Street, St James's
text	Shetland knitted woollen hosiery, underclothing, shawls, gloves &c. &c. These articles so universally esteemed and acknowledged for their many agreeable qualities, superior to any other kind of woollen clothing, may be procured in all their varieties at the establishment, Jermyn Street, where constant supplies are received throughout the season. The warmth and softness of the Shetland wool claim the particular attention of invalids, for whose use it is most desirable – warm stocking at low prices for charitable purposes. Standen and Company's Shetland and Scotch Warehouse, 112 Jermyn Street, St James's
notes	Shortened version of 1846, October 17. In no 2022 appears as two advertisements, one for Shetland and other for Scotch plaids and Saxony wool etc.

Example of full entry - Article

Year	1920
Country	Australia
Category	Article
Publication	The Mercury
Place	Hobart, Tasmania, Australia
Date	24 December 1920
Date 2	1920-12-24
Issue	p.15
Article Title	A new dress departure
author	-
text	The fashion writer in a recent "Times" says: "Another friend for the coming winter which will remain in favour is the gown apparently made of a Shetland shawl. Eighteen years ago we should have laughed at such an innovation, to-day we realise not only its value but its charm. The Shetland wool is mounted over a supple silk foundation, the corsage being crossed softly in front and caught with a big bunch of silk or velvet fruit in rather bright tones. A seal brown Shetland wool frock has a bunch of bright scarlet cherries; a smoke grey was caught with a cluster of purple plums. It is this touch of contrasting colour which makes the scheme distinctive, and under a fur coat or cloak a gown of this description is pretty and becoming. It is beside warm enough on the coldest day indoors.
notes	Early mention of frocks being made in Shetland lace. Embellishments described are likely of a personal nature, no similar description in contemporary UK newspapers.
personal names	-

Appendix 3

Sample entries from Victorian Knitting Book Database illustrating criteria used in database compilation.

year	author	Publication	notes	have I v	price	article	labelle	image	repro	wool	needle	washing	shop
1840	Gaugain, Jane	<i>The Lady's Assis</i>	no mention of Shetland	yes - co	5/6	none b	no	no	no	-	no	-	I. J. Gaug
1842	Gaugain, Jane	<i>The Lady's Assis</i>	pp.105 – XXIV – Hands	yes - co	10/6	shawl	no	yes	no	Shetla	No.4 a	p.118 -	I. J. Gaug
1842	Lambert, Frances	<i>The Hand-Book</i>	p.198 – Shetland shawl	yes - co	n/a	shawl	yes	no	no	fine c	No.14	-	-
1843	Gaugain, Jane	<i>Mrs Gaugain's M</i>	pp.15-17 – Very beautif	yes - co	1/-	shawl	(yes	yes	no	Dutch	bone p	-	I. J. Gaug
1843	Lambert, Frances	<i>My Knitting Bod</i>	p.62 - herringbone, or	yes - co	1/6	stitch	yes	no	no	-	No.20	-	-
1843	Lambert, Frances	<i>My Knitting Bod</i>	p.82 - Shetland pattern	yes - co	1/6	pattern	yes	no	no	Lady B	No.6 o	-	-
1844	Jackson, Elizabeth	<i>The Practical Co</i>	p.70 – Border for a Shet	yes - co	n/a	shawl	(yes	no	no	no	no	p.78 – D	Jackson'
1844	Lambert, Frances	<i>My Knitting Bod</i>	p.62 - herringbone, or	yes - co	1/6	stitch	yes	no	scarf,	second	No.20	-	-
1844	Owen, Henry, Mr	<i>The Illuminated</i>	pp.96-99 – Shetland sq	yes - co	n/a	shawl	(yes	no	no	2-thre	No.2 o	-	H. Owen
1844	Owen, Henry, Mr	<i>The Illuminated</i>	pp.100-102 – Shetland	yes - co	n/a	scarf	yes	no	no	Two-t	No.2	-	H. Owen
1844	Gaugain, Jane	<i>The Accompani</i>	illustration 11 - illustra	yes - co	2/6	shawl	yes	yes (il	no	-	no	-	I. J. Gaug
1845	Jackson, Elizabeth	<i>The Practical Co</i>	pp.126-127 – A beautif	yes - co	n/a	Pattern	no	yes	patte	no	No.4	p.90 dir	Jackson'
1845	Lambert, Frances	<i>My Knitting Bod</i>	p.62 - herringbone, or	yes - co	1/6	stitch	yes	no	no	no	No.20	-	-
1845	Lambert, Frances	<i>My Knitting Bod</i>	pp.80-81, A Shetland kn	yes - co	1/6	scarf	yes	no	no	four-t	No.7	-	-
1845	Lambert, Frances	<i>My Knitting Bod</i>	p.82 - Shetland pattern	-	1/6	pattern	yes	no	no	Lady B	No.6 o	-	-
1845	Watts, Miss	<i>The Illustrated K</i>	p.19 – Shetland wool ru	selecte	n/a	ruffle	no	yes	no	yes	No.17	-	-
1846	Gaugain, Jane	<i>The knitters' frie</i>	no mention of Shetland	yes - co	2/6	no	no	no	no	extra	No.21	-	I. J. Gaug
1846	Riego de la Brand	<i>Knitting, Croche</i>	pp.21-25 – Shetland sh	yes - co	2/6	shawl	yes	no	no	no	No.6	-	-
1846	Riego de la Brand	<i>Knitting, Croche</i>	pp.25-26 - Vandyke frin	yes - co	2/6	fringe f	-	no	no	no	No.9	-	-
1847	Cooper, Marie Jal	<i>The New</i>	pp.16-17, Shetland Sha	no	-	shawl	yes	no	no	-	-	-	-
1847	Hope, Mrs	<i>The Knitter's Ca</i>	pp.9-10 – Shetland shaw	yes - co	1/-	handke	yes	yes	no	Shetla	No.8	-	-
1847	Ronaldson, Miss	<i>Lady's Book of L</i>	p.169 – CII – Shetland h	yes - co	n/a	handke	yes	no	no	Berlin	No.9	p176 –	-
1847	Savage, Mrs	<i>The Winchester</i>	pp.43-44 - Shetland sh	yes - co	1/6	shawl;	yes	no	no	no	No.7	-	-
1848	Dufour (Mlle)	<i>The Work Table</i>	knitted Shetland peliss	paper c	n/a	pelisse	yes	yes	no	no	No.6	-	-
1848	Riego de la Brand	<i>The Knitting Bod</i>	pp.32-35 – Centre for Sh	yes - co	1/-	shawl	(yes	yes	no	Shetla	No.11	-	106 New
1849	Copley, Esther	<i>The Comprehen</i>	p.116 – pattern no.11.	yes - co	2/6	shawl	yes	no	no	Shetla	No.7 p	-	-
1859	Pullan, Matilda M	<i>The Lady's Man</i>	p.135 – Patterns – knitt	yes - co	n/a	shawl	no - bu	no	no	no	no	-	-
1867	Riego de la Brand	<i>The Abergeldie</i>	p.24 – Round Shetland	yes - co	1/-	veil (ro	yes	yes	http:	Shetla	No.14	-	2, Old Qu
1884	Corbould, Elvira	<i>The Lady's Knitt</i>	pp. 43-44 - basic 'Shetla	maybe	n	shawl	yes	-	-	-	-	-	-
1905	Riego de la Brand	<i>Selected works</i>	pp.47-49. Round Shetla	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1905	Riego de la Brand	<i>Selected works</i>	pp.92-98. - CC note of p	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
n.d.	Riego de la Brand	<i>Selected works</i>	pp.47-49 - round Shetla	selecte	n/a	veil	yes	yes	no	Shetla	No.12	-	-
n.d.	Riego de la Brand	<i>Selected works</i>	pp.92-95 - Knitted Shet	selecte	n/a	shawl	maybe	yes - c	no	Shetla	No.11	-	-
n.d.	Riego de la Brand	<i>Selected works</i>	pp.95-98 - Border for Sh	selecte	n/a	border	yes	yes	no	-	No.7	-	-
n.d.	unnamed	<i>Netting, Croche</i>	pp.69-71 - Shetland sca	selecte	n/a	scarf	yes	no	no	Two-t	No.2	-	-

Example of full database entry:

Cornelia Mee and Mary Austin's *New Work on Knitting* (London: Mee & Austin, 1867).

Image shows first page, front cover missing.



year	1867
author	Mee, Cornelia & Austin, Mary
Publication	<i>New Work on Knitting</i> , ninth edition. First series of the Knitter's Companion (London: Mee & Austin, 1867)
notes	p.16 - Very pretty Shetland neckerchief. Which also makes a light and elegant opera hood caught up with ends of ribbon at the back. 1 oz. of Scarlet or Victoria Rose Shetland Wool, 1½ oz. of White, and 5 skeins Single Black Berlin Wool are required, and Pins No. 6. Cast on 160 stitches...[pattern]... Take up the stitches on the other side and knit the border to correspond; then sew the corners neatly up, and with the black Berlin wool doubled make a stitch over six rows of the knitting at distances shown in the engraving, about an inch apart. To make the fringe, about ½ oz. each scarlet and white Berlin wool will be required. Take a long length 8 times double of scarlet and the same with white; with scarlet wool tie the scarlet firmly round at distances of about an inch apart 5 times, and then the white 5 times, the scarlet 10 times, and so on alternately 5 times white and 10 times scarlet; it is cut in half between where it is tied, and makes a very pretty ball fringe; it is then fastened in loops to the neckerchief in distances of about 2 inches apart in the centre of the 10 scarlet balls
viewed?	yes - copy in pdf
price	1/-
article	neckerchief (opera hood)
labelled segment pattern/motif	yes
image	no
reproduced	no
wool	Shetland and Berlin
needle size	No. 6
washing/dressing	-
shop	8 Brook Street, Grosvenor Square, London (Late of Bath)
additional information	New stitches and good practical working directions...in accordance with the latest fashion...; no date on book, but advertisement showing Walter Evans & Co gold medal at 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition, so 1867 or later

Appendix 4

Information about available wools in 1849, Esther Copley, *The Comprehensive Knitting Book* (London: William Tegg and Co., 1849), pp.2-5.

sizes and lengths; and are made either of steel wire, tough wood, ivory, bone, or whalebone. For fine knitting the wire pins are usually employed, because it would be scarcely possible to produce pins of wood or ivory sufficiently small; but the latter articles are lighter and more agreeable to handle. The best wire pins are brought from Holland. The metal seems to be tempered in the same way as that used for watch springs. It is of a dark purple hue, glossy, and not liable to rust.

Whalebone, on account of its liability to split and fray at the part that is tapered to a point, is not so generally eligible as wood or ivory; though it is sometimes preferred by persons whose sight is defective, as white stitches are more easily discerned on black pins. For the same reason ebony and rosewood are sometimes adopted.

For a flat piece of knitting, (as a garter), in which the work goes backwards and forwards, only two pins are required. For an article in which the work goes round and round, (as in a stocking), four or more pins are wanted. For this, or any similar purpose, the pins must not be headed, because the stitches will have to be taken off from the other end of the pin, than that by which they were taken on. When a wide and flat piece of knitting is to be done, headed pins are preferable, especially if the material be heavy—as they obviate the danger of the stitches slipping off.

In order to secure correctness in stating the size of the pin to be employed in any particular pattern described, a useful little article has been invented, called a *knitting gauge*. This is a tablet of steel, ivory, tortoise-shell, or card-board, pierced with holes of different sizes and numbered; the several pins being called each by the number of the hole which it exactly fits. Every knitter should be furnished with one of

these gauges. The price of those in card-board is 2d. or 3d.; those of other materials, from 1s. upwards.

The Sheath.—A quill or other tube fixed on the right side of the dress, for the purpose of holding steady the pin while employed in taking off the stitches, is now pretty generally exploded, and deserves to be entirely so. It spoils both the pins and the work. If the sheath be never resorted to, it soon becomes easy to secure perfect regularity in working, without sacrificing that elasticity of texture on which beauty, pleasantness, and durability, so much depend.

A tall round *basket* is very convenient for containing work in progress. It serves for the ball to roll in while the work is actually going on, and preserves the loops from being displaced when it is laid aside. The following are good dimensions:—Diameter, five inches in the clear; height, fourteen inches. The texture should be light: thin wicker-work answers very well. A lining of silk or glazed cambric preserves the work from being caught by the twigs and frayed; and a small loop handle, on one side, serves for hanging the basket near the floor while the work is going on, and in any convenient place when the work is put aside.

3. MATERIALS.

Knitting may be performed with any sort of line or string that is slender and flexible; whether it be formed of hemp, flax, cotton, wool, or silk. It has, however, been found by experience, that whatever be the basis of the material, some particular mode of twisting is better adapted to one purpose, and other modes to other purposes. Hence we have, in distinction from pack-thread, “knitting twine;” and “knitting”

wool, thread, cotton, or silk, in distinction from such as is adapted for sewing or darning. Each has also subdivisions comprehending several varieties in texture, size, and quality. It would be difficult to enumerate all the minute varieties brought into notice during the last few years, in consequence of the prevailing taste for knitting, and the application of the art to numerous purposes before unthought of.

For the guidance of the inexperienced knitter, the principal articles in use, as material, shall be briefly described. She who is familiar with these, will be fully competent to judge of any other article that may invite her attention, and to select that best adapted to her immediate purpose.

Twine.—*Fine and closely twisted. Chiefly used as the basis of rugs and mats, wool or shreds of broadcloth being inserted by way of nap or shag. Suitable also for the covering of fruit trees.

Thread.—Lisle thread and Maidstone thread are the most esteemed. Suitable for knitting aprons, handkerchiefs, nightcaps, collars, and lace in general, and by many knitters preferred to cotton on the score of durability, and also as retaining its whiteness to the last.

Cotton.—There are many varieties in this article. The coarser sorts are used for blinds, window curtains, sofa and chair covers, and furniture fringe. The middle sorts are adapted for table covers, pincushions, doyleys, and similar articles; and the finest for collars, caps, frock bodies, and lace in general.

A distinct sort is used for stockings, socks, and gentlemen's nightcaps.

The coarser cottons are sold in hanks, each containing a quarter of a

* *Fine* and *coarse* are commonly, though perhaps improperly, used to denote, not the quality of the article as better or worse, but its size as thinner or thicker.

pound; but the finer sorts are usually wound on reels, and numbered according to their fineness.

Coloured cottons have been recently introduced for knitting purposes. The colours are exceedingly good, and they are said to wash well. They are useful for many purposes, affording a pleasing variety in bags, pincushions, doyleys, &c.

Wools and Worsted.—For ordinary socks, stockings, and garters, several kinds of wool are employed, under the names of stocking worsted, Angola, Thibet, Vigonia, &c., varying a little in price and quality. A soft, even twisted wool, strong and smooth, is worth paying a little more for, than one that is harsh and gouty. A smaller weight suffices; besides, it works so much more pleasantly, and looks so much more smooth and regular, as well as lasts longer, as fully proves that it is the best economy to purchase a good article at first, though the price be somewhat higher.

The best worsted is that used for upholstery fringe: it answers well for the nap of rugs or mats, and also for covering cushions or hassocks.

Of *Fleecy Lamb's Wool* there are at least three varieties; the ordinary, the superfine, and the extra superfine.

The common fleecy is of three sizes, No. I., the thickest, No. II. and No. III. This wool is often used for common articles, such as shawls, petticoats, and blankets; but it is generally coarse and harsh, and thickens in washing. For every purpose the better sorts are greatly preferable; and from their being lighter in proportion to their thickness, the difference in price is not so considerable as would appear at first sight.

That called superfine is most frequently used, and is good enough for almost every purpose. The extra superfine is nearly equal to double

Berlin wool, and is often mistaken for it. These superfine fleecy wools are distinguished in their sizes as "2-thread," "3-thread," up to ten threads, or perhaps still higher. The sizes most generally useful are from three threads to six threads.

The 2-thread, or ZEPHYR FLEECY, is exceedingly thin and light. It is used chiefly for under-stockings and sleeves, or other purposes where lightness and warmth are required, rather than strength.

LADY BETTY WOOL does not vary much from the article just described. It is soft and light, but not very durable; and being apt to wear sleazy, is not eligible for superior work. There are, at least, three sizes of this wool:—3-thread, 4-thread, and 6-thread. The thickest is considerably thinner than the 3-thread super fleecy.

EMBROIDERY WOOL is about the size of the thinnest Lady Betty, but rather more closely twined. It is pleasant working wool, washes well, and is durable. For some purposes it answers extremely well knitted double, especially for the shoes of infants, as it does not thicken in washing so much as either Berlin or fleecy. One recommendation of this wool, for continuous work, is its being made up in larger skeins than the Berlin, by which frequent joins are avoided. The skeins are usually half an ounce, the hanks two ounces each. It is very little cheaper than Berlin wool, and rather thinner. If used double, it is about the same thickness as No. III. or thinnest fleecy, or 3-thread superfine fleecy.

BERLIN WOOL, or GERMAN WOOL.—This is the sort of wool principally used in fancy knitting, and may be had in every possible variety of colour and shade. It is of two sizes, called single and double: the former is made up in small skeins, about twenty to an ounce; the latter in skeins of half an ounce, or sometimes a quarter of an ounce. In

knitting directions, when simply Berlin or German wool is mentioned, the single is always to be understood: if the other is intended, it will be described as "double," or "3-thread" Berlin.

When it is intended that two threads of the single wool should be knitted as one, it will be expressed as "Berlin wool, double."

The short lengths into which Berlin wool is divided, are found a disadvantage in the continuous knitting of large articles; but where a great number of shades is required, and only a small quantity of each, the small skeins are advantageous, as no more need be purchased than is really used. Our German neighbours, understanding the objection, in some cases, to short lengths, have wisely begun to accommodate themselves to the wishes of their customers, by supplying some in larger, some in smaller skeins.

SHETLAND WOOL.—This elegant wool is closely twined: and though extremely fine and light, is remarkably firm and wiry. The texture formed from it, though thin as lace, is strong and durable. It is in use for shawls, handkerchiefs, and scarfs. Shetland wool is about half the thickness of the single Berlin. It is generally done up in two-ounce hanks, tied, but not separated, in quarter ounce skeins. This division is most likely made for the convenience of small purchasers; but when a large quantity is to be used, it is better to wind the entire hank in one ball. Joins in knitting should be as much as possible avoided.

There is not a great variety of colours in Shetland wool—probably because the demand is not extensive enough to encourage much speculation in dyeing. The Shetland wool is principally white; and when it is desired to introduce shaded colours for the ends of a scarf, or the border of a shawl, Berlin wool is commonly employed. In such a case, to bring

the wools to a correspondent size, either the Shetland middle must be knitted double, or the Berlin for the ends must be split.

CREWEL.—This is a closely-twisted wool, very much resembling Shetland. Some five-and-twenty years ago it was much in use for shaded scarfs, but since the introduction of German wool has gone out of notice. It is mentioned here for the sake of pointing it out as eligible for use in combination with Shetland wool. Possibly, some reader, who has by her a stock of the old-fashioned crewels, may be glad of the suggestion. Crewels are done up in small skeins about three times the length of a common skein of Berlin wool.

SILK.—The silks principally employed in knitting are: *Twist Silks*, of different sizes (used also in netting), suitable for purses, bags, chains, &c. *Shaded narrow* ribbon*, and *braid*, are suitable for the same purposes. *Floss silk*, of different sizes, and sometimes *chenille*, is introduced to edge or finish off shading in wools of similar thickness. In ornamental works this is a great improvement to the appearance; but does not answer for articles that require washing.

4. WINDING.

Whatever is intended for knitting should be wound, if at all, very loosely. All stretching, tightening, or even pressure in passing through the hands, should be avoided. With the better sorts of wool tight winding (or tight knitting either) deprives the wool of its elasticity and of the chenille-like appearance, on which the richness and beauty of the work

* Technically called "Half-penny" ribbon; not in reference to its price, but from its being the width of a new halfpenny.

so much depend. The same effect is produced if wool be kept long after winding. As the ball is unwound, the wool seems to become thinner and thinner, from the increased pressure of the outer rounds; hence arise these remarks:

1. It is better if winding can be altogether avoided. With the short Berlin skeins this may generally be done, especially by a quick knitter. A skein is soon used up. It may hang to the work, and be loosened off, a round or two at a time, or the whole may be unwound at once and lightly laid on a sheet of paper or a flat basket. If the knitter be not called from her work, there will be little danger of its becoming tangled.

2. If it must be wound, only a small quantity should be wound at once, and only when it is wanted to be used immediately.

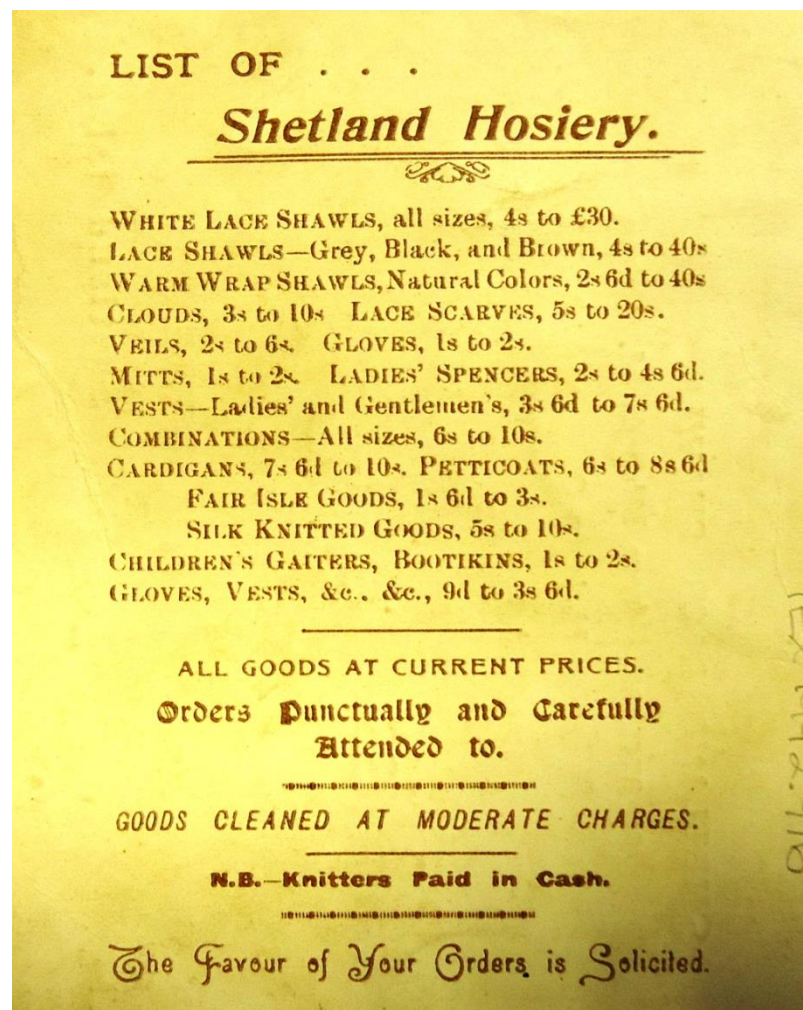
3. If a reel be employed, it should be set just so as to hold on the skein without stretching it; the same, if placed on the back of a chair or chairs, or held on the hands of a second person. It is better if the whole skein can be taken off the stretcher (of whatever kind it may be) and lightly dropped on a tray or basket before the winding is commenced.

4. In winding, the wool should be allowed to pass between the finger and thumb almost without touching, and be laid on the ball as lightly as possible.

These remarks may appear too minute, but they will no longer be deemed so by any person who will take the trouble tightly to wind a few yards of wool, and knit it up, (tightly she will be sure to do it, for almost every one knits as she winds), then knit up an equal length of wool, carefully avoiding all stretching and tightening. On comparing the two together, it will seem scarcely credible that the wool, the pins, and the

Appendix 5

Business card and price list of Andrina Aitken, SMA TEX 1992.9116, image author's own.



Appendix 6

Highland & Agricultural Society's Show, 1892. Instructions on how to enter and category list for prizes.

HIGHLAND & AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY'S SHOW AT INVERNESS IN 1892.

HIGHLAND INDUSTRIES & FISHERIES.

Entries to be made with F. N. MENZIES, Esq., 3 George IV Bridge,
Edinburgh, not later than Monday, 23rd May.

Section	Premiums—1st. 2nd.	
	£.	£.
1. Two Plaids, Native Wool, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Handloom woven	2	1
2. Web, not less than 25 yards Tweed, Cheviot Wool, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Handloom woven	3	1
3. Web, not less than 25 yards Tweed, Black-faced Wool, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Handloom woven	3	1
4. Web, 25 yards Tweed, Light Texture, for Ladies' Dresses, Native Wool, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Handloom woven	3	1
5. Web Harris Tweed, 25 yards, Home Wool and Manufacture	3	1
6. Web, not less than 16 yards, of Shetland Tweed, of Shetland Wool, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Handloom woven	3	1
7. Six pair Stocking Hose, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Knitted by Exhibitor—two pair plain Ribbed, two pair Diced Tartan, two pair Fancy	3	1
8. Twelve pair Socks of Blackfaced Wool, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Knitted by Exhibitor	2	1
9. Twelve pair Socks of Cheviot Wool, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Knitted by Exhibitor	2	1
10. Fine White Shetland Shawl	3	2
11. Thick Coloured Shetland Shawl	3	2
12. Collection of not less than five Articles, of Native Wool, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and Knitted by Exhibitor	2	1
13. Varieties of Yarn, not less than eight cuts, Hand-spun, Home-dyed, and of Native Wool ; 4 cuts of each colour	2	1
14. Six pair Stockings, Shop Wool, but Knitted by Exhibitor	2	1
	<hr/> £52	

All Exhibits to be sent to F. N. MENZIES, Esq., Showyard, Inverness, not later than *Thursday, 21st July*.

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