National College of Art and Design

"A Study of Fishermens' Sweaters from England, Scotland and The Netherlands".

By

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National College of Art and Design

Faculty of Design
Department of Fashion and Textiles

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INTRODUCTION

Fishermens' sweaters are practical, durable, symbolic and decorative. These four words define the reason these sweaters were worn in the fishing community. Fishermens' sweaters have always interested me. The contrast in textures and the different patterns used have always intrigued me. The Aran sweaters from the Irish Aran Islands which lie across the mouth of Galway Bay on the Atlantic Coast have recently been written about in detail in Sorcha McKee's "Study of the Origin and Myths of the Aran Sweater", B. Des. Thesis, NCAD 1995. The Irish Aran sweater was creamy white in colour. All shoulders were unshaped. The back and front of the sweaters were worked separately and side adjustments were made by using gussets of stockinet knitted up along the body of the sweater with a central seam. This structure was quite unlike English and Scottish fishermens' sweaters, which were knitted in the round without seams.

The sweaters from England and Scotland are older than the Irish Aran sweaters. It is well established by now that these Aran sweaters are a twentieth-century development of the Guernsey.[1] *The history of the sweaters from England and Scotland begins around the middle of the*

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1 Rutt Richard, Bishop of Leicester, The History of Handknitting, Batsford Books, London, 1987.

nineteenth century. I wanted to research how they came to be knitted in fishing villages. In the first chapter, I have written about the history of knitting and also the history of fishermens' sweaters. From my research, I discovered an article in Fiber Arts magazine (July-August, 1985) in which I noticed how sweaters from the Netherlands were very similar to those from England and Scotland. After researching the travel routes of the fishermen, I found that the Dutch people have had contact with England, Scotland and the Shetland Islands from about the fourteenth century.

It was from travel that fishermen made contact with foreign countries. In 1312 a procedure for curing fish meant fishermen could travel further, as they could preserve their catch for longer. This meant patterns could be adapted by different regions and also by different countries such as the Netherlands.

Women created these wonderful sweaters to protect their menfolk from the elements. In Chapter 2, I have written about the women in the fishing communities, including fishermens' wives and the herring girls, who travelled around the east coast of Scotland and England with the fishermen. These girls helped in the movement of the patterns to

different fishing villages in both Scotland and England. As they were worn by the fishermen, when they travelled to different countries, they were used to show where a person was from. Language was a barrier, so the sweaters were used for identification purposes, although the movement of patterns to different regions meant it became harder to distinguish where a pattern originated. This is discussed in the third chapter.

Fishermens' lives and work depended on the elements, making them highly superstitious, so the motifs worked into the clothes had a deep symbolic meaning for each fishing village. The patterns and their names in Scotland, England and the Netherlands had different names and symbolic meanings, but were generally similar in appearance. In researching these sweaters, I have used photographs to show how the patterns used are similar. I have discussed the sweaters from different regions such as Whitby in Yorkshire, England, Scotland and Velsen in the Netherlands, all of which use similar patterns and show how their structure and design compare.

I have found through my research that it is hard to rely on certain authors writing about particular patterns. I have tried to trust my own

knowledge of knitwear and of the patterns to give an accurate account of the sweaters. I hope in my thesis to have shown an understanding of these patterns and the sweaters from each selected country and their similarities.

Chapter One
The History of Fishermens' Sweaters from Scotland, England and The Netherlands

Knitting is not usually put away for safe keeping. Since it is a working garment, it has less of a chance of survival than rich embroideries and tapestries. It is often used until discarded when worn out and it is, therefore, difficult to find where it can be placed in history.

There are many stories and legends surrounding knitting and it's origins. The art of knitting is very old and very difficult to trace. Richard Rutt, who has given a clear historical account of knitting, concludes that "to say that knitting developed from nalbinding in Egypt would be reasonable." [2]

Nalbinding, also known as knotless knitting, is made with a darning needle and looks like 'true hand knitting', which is made with two needles. Nalbinding can produce a true knitted structure, but it is a different method of production; figs 1 & 2 show examples of nalbinding.

Sandal socks were found in Romano - Egypt around the fifth century. The socks were made in tubular structure, worked in the round from the toe upwards as seen in fig 3. They are not knitted; the fabric resembles knitting though it is in fact nalbinding.

In other civilisations such as Peru, a method called 'sprang' was used. Sprang fabrics are much older than knitting, dating from 1100 B.C. in Peru. It created a stretch fabric, but it always had to be made on a frame. Rutt stated that "tubular sprang

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[2] Rutt, 1987, P.23.

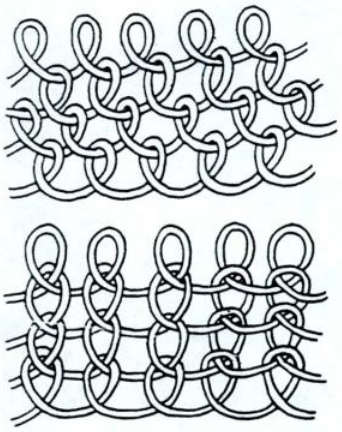

Fig. 1 & 2: Nalbinding Structures that resemble knitting

(a) Structure Identical with Knitted Fabric.
(b) A Non-Knitted Nalbinding Fabric.

Fig. 3: Romano - Egyptian Socks in Red Wool made by Nalbinding, Fifth Century.

Fig. 4: Sock Knitted in Blue and White Cotton, possibly Thirteenth Century.

fabrics may, at first sight, appear to be knitting done in the round." He goes on to write that the structures of sprang and nalbinding are quite different; knitting with two needles may have been introduced and discovered for turning the heels of stockings.[3]

The earliest stockings are known to have come from Egypt. They are knitted in cotton and are blue and white in colour. Rutt gives the date for these as being knitted around 1200-1500 A.D.; Fig. 4 shows an example of knitted Egyptian stockings. They are thought to have been knitted as flat pieces, as there is no surviving evidence to suggest they were not.

Socks, stockings, gloves and hats were all more practical and comfortable if knitted in the round than cut from a woven cloth. Knitwear was stretchable while woven material was not, and also, knitwear could be shaped when it was being knitted.

During the Elizabethan period (1558-16O3) knitting of stockings in both wool and silk became a thriving industry in England. Before the Elizabethan era, the growth of knitting was slow; surviving artefacts suggest that caps were the first thing to be knitted in England, but only because there is no other evidence of any other form of knitting.

Rutt states that "Cap-knitters such as the Coventry cappers can be traced back to the thirteenth century and were established by 1425".[4] The cap knitters were important in the history of knitting because they seem to be the earliest evidence of knitting in

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3 Rutt, 1987, P.24 and P.35.

4 Rutt, 1987, P.58.

England. Linda G. Fryer writes that David Bremner described, around the middle of the fifteenth century "peasants beginning to wear knitted instead of woven caps in Scotland."[5] Although in 1496 the bonnetmakers of Dundee formed a trade guild, Fryer goes on to say that there is insufficient evidence to prove when knitting originated in Scotland.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, knitting had spread throughout most of Europe and, gradually, guilds were set up in England. This was to help to organise and control the growing industry of knitting, which had become a craft for men to earn a living from. Rae Compton stated that "English guilds were set up in the late sixteenth century."[6] In England, knitting was well enough established by 1488 to require the passing of an act of parliament controlling the price of knitted caps.

The Welsh border town of Monmouth was a centre for cap-making. Rutt mentions in his book about foreign trade: "Daniel Defoe's tour throughout Great Britain in 1712 still referred to Monmouth caps, sold chiefly to Dutch seamen, and made only at Bewdley."[7] Bewdley was situated in Worcestershire, South of Coventry. The account written by Daniel Defoe indicates that, as long ago as the fourteenth century, the English had contact with foreign traders.

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5 Fryer, Linda G., Knitting by the Fireside and on the Hillside, Shetland Times Ltd., Lerwick 1985, P.4.

6 Compton, Rae, The Complete Book of Knitting, Batsford Books, London, 1983, P.18.

7 Rutt, 1987, P.58.

Fryer states that, in a seventeenth century manuscript, Richard James, an Anglican priest, wrote about how he had visited the Shetland Islands and described the "Women given to knitting mittens and stockings, which the Hollanders and English do buy for rarity."[8]

There seems to be no evidence to suggest by which sea route knitting was introduced into Scotland and England. From research, one can see that there is evidence to indicate that, from the fourteenth century onwards, England and Scotland had trade with foreigners. In England and Scotland the slow growth in knitting was because knitting needles were not readily available. The cap-knitters knitted in the round with four needles, although there is no evidence as to the shape of the needles used.[9]

Steel rods were produced after the method of drawing steel through perforated plates was perfected. When this happened during the Elizabethan period, caps were the first knitted products to be produced.[10]

There is very little evidence to suggest when the first stockings were knitted in England, although Rutt writes about how contents from the "Mary Rose", Henry VIII's flagship, on the 19th July, 1545, sank.[11] Fragments of knitted pieces shown in Fig. 5 are thought to be from a knitted stocking, but Rutt also writes that it "could just as likely be a detached sleeve worn on the forearm during work for protection."[12]

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8 Fryer, 1995, P.5.
9 Rutt, 1987, P.6O.
10 Rutt, 1987, P.62.
11 Rutt, 1987, P.63.
12 Ibid.

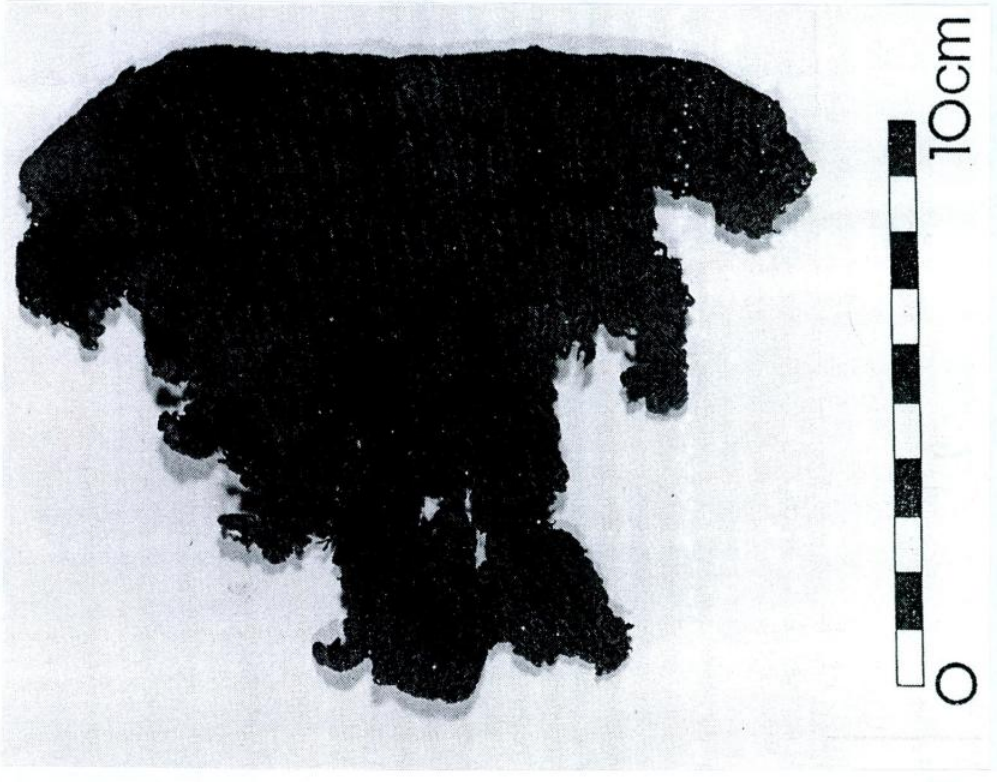

Fig. 5: Shaped Fragment from the Mary Rose 1546.

Fig. 6: A Jacket of Brocaded Knitting.

During Elizabethan times, knitting became established in England because knitting needles were obtainable. The rapid growth in knitting during this period meant that knitting created employment for many people.

The origin of the English fishermens" sweaters dates back to the seventeenth century.[13] During this time, two types of garments may have introduced fishermens" sweaters to England. One was a finely knitted silk shirt or vest. These were knitted in two colours and sometimes had purl stitches on a stocking stitch background. They were said to be from Italy, but there seems to be little evidence to prove this.[14] Fig. 6.

Debby Robinson writes about these Florentine jackets: "This is an incredibly ornate type of knitting, which originated in Florence in the sixteenth century."[15] Rutt suggests that the "so-called 'Florentine jackets' were produced in London."[16] The jackets were knitted in purl stitch relief intarsia [17] colour work and embroidered outlines which created floral or zoological motifs; they were like the brocade fabrics and were also referred to as brocade knitting.[18]

The second garment was a vest or under-garment knitted in cotton, usually a child's garment. Both garments were knitted in the round. This is the same method knitters

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13 Compton, Rae, The Complete Book of Traditional Guernseys and Jerseys, Batsford Books, London, 1985, P.7.

14 Rutt, 1987, P.81.

15 Robinson, Debby, The Encyclopaedia of Knitting Techniques, Swallow Publishers, London, 1986, P.56.

16 Rutt, 1987, P.82.

17 INTARSIA: Colour knitting in which separate balls of yarn are used for each individual area of colour.

18 Robinson, 1986, P.56.

used for producing the fishermens" sweaters, knit in the round without seams.

"The fishermens' gansey may be related to knitted shirt-like garments, made in the Channel Islands for export, as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; this is usually quoted as being the source of it's name, from the Island of Guernsey.[19]*"*

It is, however, also interesting to note that silk knitted shirts and vests, made certainly by the seventeenth century, were more alike. Rutt describes that a shirt was originally meant as a garment for the upperpart of the body and was to be worn next to the skin. The undershirt or vest was only developed in the seventeenth century.[20]

Compton writes how "the silk garments were knitted in the round and were produced by framework knitters in or near London."[21] It is thought that brocaded waistcoats such as the piece shown in Fig. 6 were knitted on frames, but Rutt writes that although "it is implied that some of the brocade waistcoats were hand-knitted, we have no clear evidence."[22] The Channel Islands' knitted shirt was unpatterned, knitted in the round, but had separate sleeves sewn into place. This was not how the fishermens" sweaters were knitted as they were knitted entirely free of seams.

Henriette Van Der Klift - Tellegen states that "fishermen wore sweaters in England which were designed to replace the smocks and workmen shirts."[23] Craftsmen wore linen smocks up until the turn of the century. They were hand-woven and were

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19 Compton, Rae and Munro, Henrietta, They Lived by the Sea; Batsford Books, London, 1985, P.1O.

20 Rutt, 1987, P.131.

21 Compton, 1983, P.18.

22 Rutt, 1987, P.82.

23 Tellegen, Henriette Van Der Klift, Knitting from the Netherlands, Lark Books, London, 1985, P.13.

Fig. 7: Smock Frock

Fig. 8: Decorative Smock Frock

gathered at the front and back to give the wearer room and freedom to work in. The gathers were sewn in place; Fig. 7 shows an early example of the smock frock which was very simple. This could be long or short, as the wearer wished; this example has slits at the side. The smock frock became popular dress for workmen at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[24] The smock frock, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, became decorative. The gathers were sewn in place with embroidery stitches that were elasticised as well as being decorative. Tellegen states: "Traditionally the symbols embroidered onto the garments indicated the wearers' occupation."[25] The decorative stitching which controlled the fullness of the garments was their most characteristic feature. Madeleine Ginsburg disagrees with the statement made by Tellegen.

The garments were sometimes made at home, but the majority were the product of small scale rural industries; hence the embroidered design is not an infallible guide either to geographical location or to the occupation of the wearer.[26]

However, in Fig. 8 one can see how decorative the smock frock had become. Ginsburg wrote that some of the garments were made at home; it is possible that the home-produced smock frocks would have been personalised with the wearers initials and occupation. The photograph is dated 1864.

The earliest printed record of a fisherman's sweater was found by Mary Wright, the author of a book called 'Cornish Guernseys and Knitfrocks' (1979) quoted by Rutt:

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24 Marly, Diana de-, Working Dress; Batsford Books, London, 1986, P.1O3.

25 Tellegen, 1985, P.13.

26 Ginsburg Madeleine, Victorian Dress in Photographs; Batsford Books, London, 1982, P.1O5.

Fig. 9:
"Fishermen Offloading on the Jetty
Wearing Boat Smocks and Jumpers
Protected by Waterproof Aprons."

Fig. 10: Wedding Photograph.

In a newspaper report of the Cornwall Lammas assizes of 1858, when William Walsh aged 2O was sentenced for the theft of clothing, including a guernsey frock from James Carter of Illogan.[27]

This indicates that around the middle of the nineteenth century people were wearing sweaters. Originally fishermens' sweaters were worn as an undervest, like the silk shirts or vests already mentioned. Fishermen wore the sweaters under oilskins or tarred jackets. These covered the sweaters in bad weather. Fig. 9 shows "fishermen offloading on the jetty wearing boat smocks and jumpers protected by waterproof aprons."[28] Once fishermen were onshore, the men wore jumpers and normal lounge jackets and a trousers with the high-crowned bowler hat. The photograph of the fishermen wearing boat smocks was taken about 189O. Fig 1O shows a young couple, in possibly, a wedding photograph. The young man is wearing a knitted jersey and metal buttoned waistcoat and the bowler hat; this photograph was taken about 188O.

Oilskin, a cloth waterproofed with oil, instead of grease or tar, was produced early in the nineteenth century: "The oilskin rapidly became established as an essential outfit for rough weather at sea and was adapted by sailors and fishermen."[29]

This ancient form of waterproof outfit was still being worn in the Forces in the 192Os. For warmth, under it went a knitted jumper in fawn and pink wool. It has been claimed that by now fishermen had some 84 different patterns for sweaters, but the most common type by the 189Os was the navy blue gansy, the shetland sweater. 'Fearnought' jackets dated back to Captain Cook's voyages in 1772-84, being stout woollen cloth garments worn at sea. The nineteenth century introduced several styles of knitted woollens. The 'Cardigan' of 1855 was named after the Earl of Crimean fame and consisted of an over waistcoat with or without sleeves. The 'guernsey' was

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27 Rutt, 1987, P.131.

28 Ginsburg, 1982, P.155.

29 Marly, 1986, P.98.

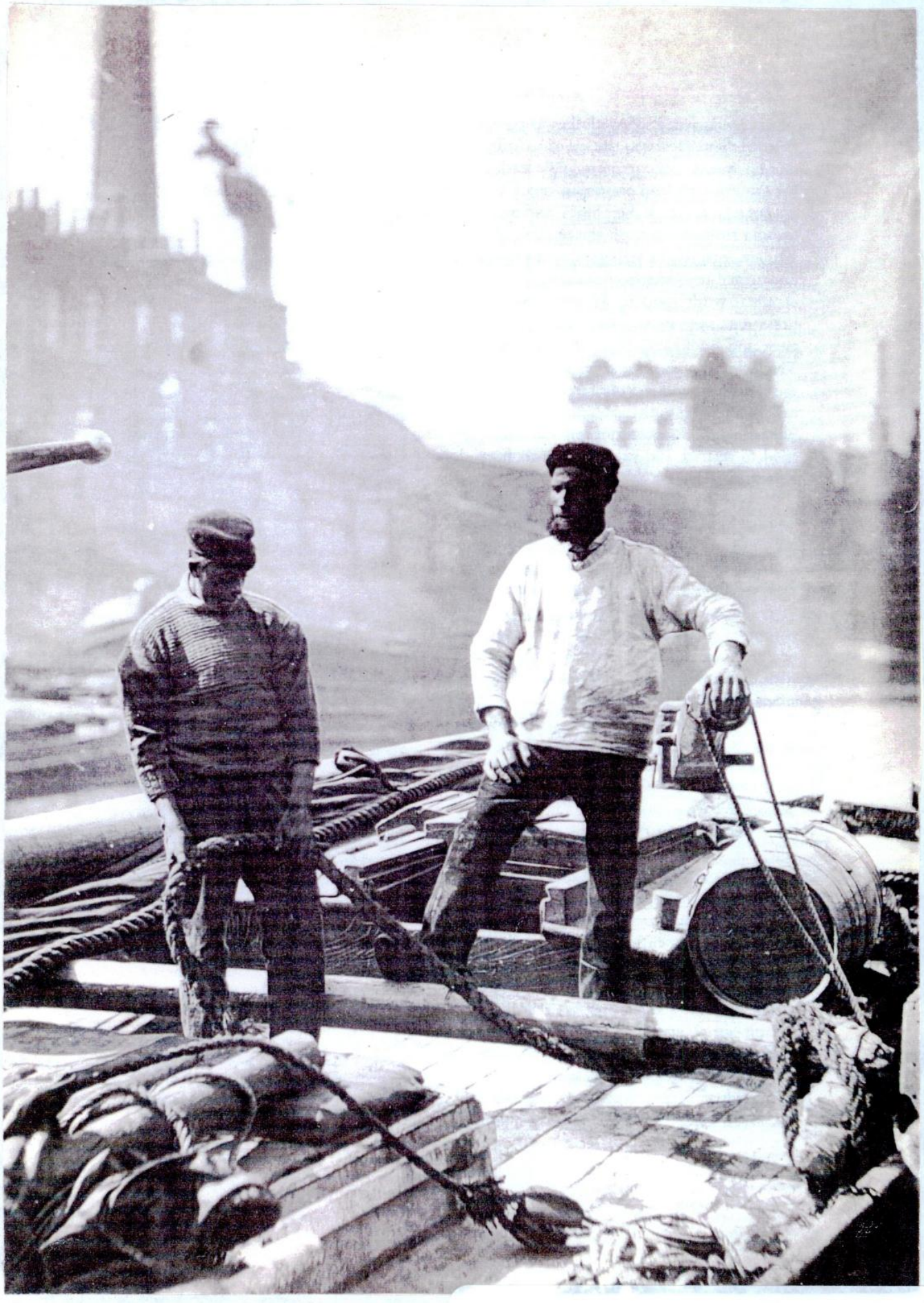

Fig. 11:
Fisherman Wearing a 'Jumper' or
Short Smock Frock and the other
Fisherman Wearing a Knitted Sweater.

a seaman's knitted vest or shirt in 1851, usually in blue or striped versions. The 'jersey' was worn under the shirt to begin with and was a long-sleeved tunic for athletes, women and sailors from 1836. The 'jumper' meant a light jacket or shirt made of canvas, serge or linen and was used for dirty jobs at sea. 'Sweaters' were originally for horses as a kind of horse blanket, but by 1882 athletes were adopting a knitted woollen version to train in and sweat.[30]

The fishermen in the photograph in Fig 11 are wearing two garments which were commonly worn at sea during the middle of the nineteenth century. One fisherman is wearing a 'jumper' or short smock frock in linen or canvas used for dirty work and the other fisherman is wearing a knitted sweater that had just begun to appear as this photograph was taken, in 1877.

"Sweaters became decorative once new patterns were introduced, menfolk wore the sweaters with pride, so the underwear soon became outerwear as a result."[31] Men wanted to show off these beautiful sweaters, so skilfully knitted by their womenfolk.

'Jersey' and 'Guernsey' are two words used for fishermens' sweaters in England and Scotland. Gladys Thompson describes the two garments:

Almost invariably Guernseys are in dark blue wool, whilst jerseys are thinner and of various colours. Jerseys became better known owing to the very large number of Jersey men who entered the Newfoundland enterprises about 16OO, and gave rise to local shipbuilding and the supply of woollen garments for the mariners.[32]

Rutt writes that "Seamen's guernseys and jerseys were not so-called because they came from the Channel Islands but because of this fabric, which had long been called

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30 Marly, 1986, P.133.

31 Rutt, 1987, P.131.

32 Thompson, Gladys, Patterns for Guernseys, Jerseys and Arans; Dover publications, New York, 1971, P.5.

'guernsey' or 'jersey'."[33] The traditional jersey patterns published by the Women's Institute of Jersey only go back as far as the last years of Queen Victoria's reign, between 189O-19OO. Rutt states that "Audrey M. Journeaux published the oldest dated pattern; it was dated 1889."[34]

The fishermens' sweater was a work garment as well as being decorative, not put away for safe keeping, but worn to work, so when they were beyond repair they were thrown out. Compton writes that "old guernseys were hard to find in Scotland,"[35] when she was researching the fishermens' sweaters. They were not considered to have any aesthetic or didactic value and so were not folded away for knitters of the future. There appears to be little documentary evidence to clearly indicate when jerseys and guernseys were first worn in England and Scotland. One can only state that the first recorded account of a fisherman's sweater was around 1858.[36]

A hand-knitted guernsey (sweater) and blue bonnet, shaped not unlike a tam 'o shanter, with a blue tassel on top, completed the ordinary 'rig' of the Eyemouth fisherman about 185O or 6O.[37]

Eyemouth is situated in Scotland and is shown in Fig. 15.

In Chapter 3, I will write about identification, which was needed when fishermen travelled abroad. The fisherman's voyage seems to have been forgotten. Travel was

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33 Rutt, 1987, P.191.
34 Rutt, 1987, P.133.
35 Compton, 1985, P.82.
36 Rutt, 1985, P.131.
37 Anson in Marly, 1986, P.132.

Fig. 12: Map of The Netherlands.

a way of life for them, as the fish moved annually. The movement of the fishermen resulted in the movement of patterns from one fishing village to the next.

Similarities in fishermens" sweaters can be found abroad. In this chapter one cannot write about the history of the English and Scottish fishermens' sweaters without writing about the travel route which the fishermen followed. The fishermen travelled clockwise from the North of Scotland down into England in the South. The sweaters which I think most resemble the fishermens' sweaters of England and Scotland are those knitted in the Netherlands, situated across the English Channel, south-east of England, directly across the English Channel from Great Yarmouth in Norfolk (Fig 12).

Authors such as Rae Compton and Linda G. Fryer have mentioned trading between Scotland, England and The Netherlands, but only Henriette Van Der Klift-Tellegen has written about the connection between these countries in any detail. She writes "how there is a strong resemblance between Dutch fishermens' sweaters and those worn in the British Isles."[38] As long ago as the fourteenth century, the Dutch had contact with the Shetland Isles, England and Scotland.[39]

The earliest recorded reference to trade between the two countries is found in the court book of Shetland, 1615-1629.[40] The manuscript was written by Richard James,

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38 Tellegen, 1985, P.12.
39 IBid.
40 Fryer, 1995, P.5.

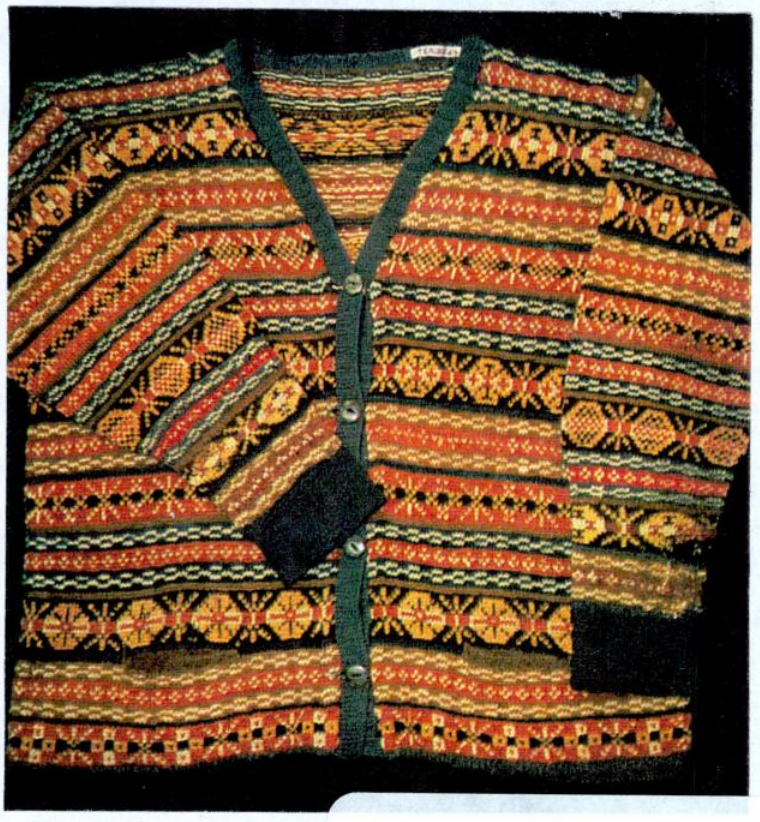

Fig. 13: Fairisle Knitting.

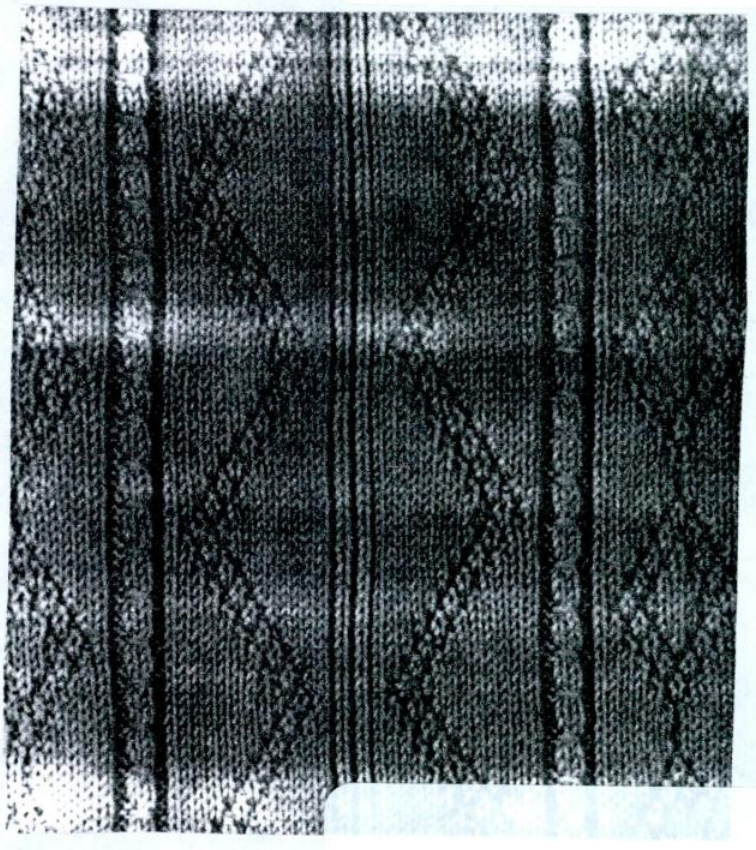

Fig. 14: Example from Whalsay in the Shetland Isles.

an Anglican priest, who visited the Shetland Islands and described the women "as given to knitting mittens and stockings which the Hollanders and the English do buy for rarity."[41]

The Shetland Islands also held a fair from 161O-171O in Lerwick. The town of Lerwick is situated to the East of the Shetland Islands; it's fair was known abroad and visited by foreign fleets. The Shetland Islands was important to foreign fleets as a trading centre and as a cross-roads for fishermen. Tellegen writes about "the Shetlanders who were kinder to them than were the English or the Scots."[42] Compton mentions that George Lee, on a visit in 1774, wrote that "2OO of these ships were Dutch and the remainder Prussian, French, Danish and Flemish."[43]

The Shetland Islands were known primarily for their coloured work (Fig: 13), but despite accounts in which authors write exclusively about their coloured work, guernseys were not unknown or unknitted on the islands. Compton states: "that in Whalsay more patterned guernseys were also worked using diamonds, and the larger more traditional motifs were influenced by fishermen visiting the islands from Denmark and Holland."[44] Whalsay was situated off the East coast of the Shetland Isles (Fig: 14).

When I wrote to the Shetland Island Council in Lerwick, a Mr. Watt replied stating that:

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41 Rutt, 1987, P.167.
42 Tellegen, 1985, P12.
43 Compton, 1985, P.25.
44 Compton, 1985, P.96.

"The type of gansey worn by the fishermen of the Shetland Islands was very similar to those mentioned in Henriette Van Der Klift-Tellegen's book. The highly coloured jumpers were rarely worn at sea by the men. During the eighteenth and nineteenth century coloured 'hat caps' were worn.[45]

[45] Watt, Tommy, Letter 6th December, 1995.

Chapter Two
The Women of the Fishing Villages of Scotland and England and the Netherlands

To focus exclusively on male activities and male social organisations in fishing would be unfair. Throughout the history of fishing, women have been a vital part of the fishing villages. Since the beginning of mankind, men have fished as a means of survival. Once there was water, people were sure of fish to eat.

Fishing became a job for many men living near the sea. It paid the rent and provided food for their families, but fishing was a male-dominated occupation. Women's work was secondary to men's, despite their skill. Their work enabled men to go to sea: women baited the lines, processed and marketed the fish. Knitting was used to clothe the family; it was rarely the case that a woman knitted as a full-time occupation in a fishing village. After their daily chores were done, women could possibly use the time at night to mend clothes; they could also use the time to knit. Women in fishing villages had a heavy work load, so night was the only time available to them. In this chapter, I want to write about women's work and about the herring girls who travelled and worked around the fishing villages of England, Scotland and abroad.

Jane Nadel-Klein and Dora Lee have described the women's work while their fishermen were at sea:

"Whilst the men and older boys were at sea, the wives and the daughters would collect bait; they would skein the flithers and bait the hundreds of hooks that a line fisherman would take out. The following day, nets might need repairing; the women would knit the distinctive gansey, which all fishermen wore as that principal upper-garment."[46]

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[46] Nadel-Klein, Jane and Lee Davis, Dora, To Work and to Weep; Women in the Fishing Economies, Canada; Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988, P.235.

Fig 15:

Map of Scotland, England and The Shetland Isles.

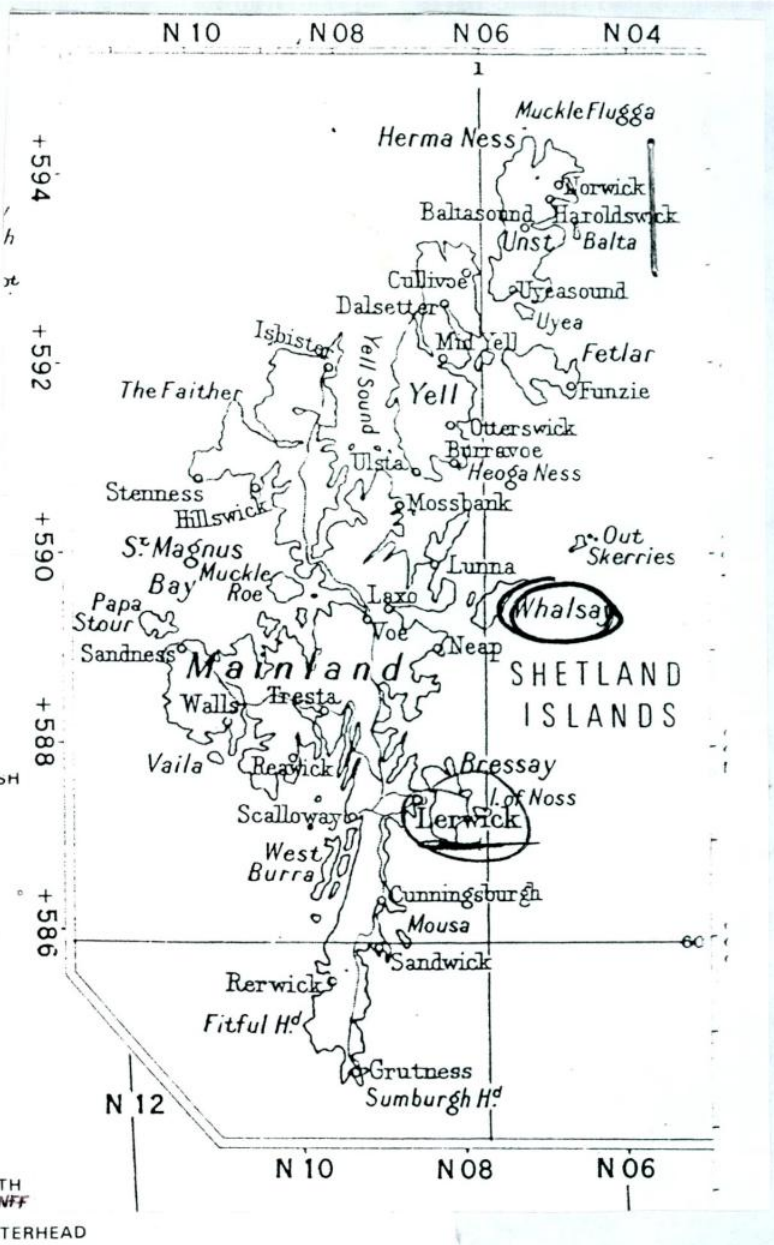

Fig. 16: Cockle and Bait Collectors from Filey.

Fig. 17: Two Bait Girls.

In Fisherrow, an ancient burgh of Musselburgh, which is shown on the map of Scotland, England and the Shetland Isles (Fig: 15), the women were described as 'Amazons' because they were so hard working.[47] Like all fishermens' wives, they had a lot of work: "Many had to kilt up their skirts and wade out to sea with their men on their backs"[48] in order for the men to remain dry (Fig: 16). The women in this photograph are cockle and bait collectors from Filey. They wore cotton frocks, hood bonnets and shawls and had to tuck up their short skirts or 'fishing kittle', running them around their knees or some wore knee breeches. Fig 17 from Flamborough in Yorkshire shows "two bait girls called Molly Nettleton and Sally Mampiece, who breeched their skirts in the ancient manner rather than adopting kneebreeches."[49]

By carrying the men from the dry land of the villages to the boats, the women, whose domain was on the land, were transporting the men to their domain, which was the sea.[50]

It was hard outdoor work, but the women of the fishing communities seemed to thrive on it, and they knew more about the real world than most ladies of that time.

Compton has described their work, which involved gathering the bait and baiting the lines. Women also had to sell the fish. They would walk 5 miles to Edinburgh Station at 4a.m. in the morning and travel to the Fife store to sell the freshly caught fish. "There were no fishshops before refrigeration."[51] According to Compton:

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47 Compton, 1985, P.75.
48 Ibid.
49 Marly, 1986, P.13O.
50 Nadel-Klein and Davis, 1988, P.2O7.
51 Marly, 1986, P.132.

Fig. 18: Scottish Fisher-Girls and Coopers.

Fig. 19: Scottish Girls Gutting Fish in Yarmouth.

"If she had time during the day to wait for a train, for the men to return, for it to be time for seeking bait and reddin the lines again, for the next days catch she would be knitting.[52]

Women's work was undoubtedly hard. Knitting may have been relaxing for them. It gave them a chance to speak to other women and to exchange patterns and to catch up on news from neighbouring fishing villages.

The fishermen lived by the sea; it was their road to many destinations. Compton has described how the men and women would work and travel to wherever they could find a good catch of fish.

Schools of herring lodge within the Firth of Forth from January until March, while they are to be found in the vicinity of the north-eastern Coast of England from April until June; then from July until September they visited the waters of the German ocean in the vicinity of Eyemouth. The months of October and December see shoals of herring in the South near to Yarmouth and Lowestoft.[53]

Any girl travelling to gut and pack the fish would be exposed to new patterns. There are accounts of how the girls, while waiting for the next catch to be brought in, would be knitting. Elliot has described how the herring girls in their leisure time could be seen strolling round the town engaged in conversation with each other, but knitting as they walked.[54] The women in the photograph in Fig. 18 are enjoying a bit of leisure time in Yarmouth early in the twentieth century.

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52 Compton, 1985, P.76.

53 Compton, R. & Munro, H. 1983, P.73.

54 Elliot, Colin, Sailing Fishermen in Old Photography; Tops Books, Newton Abbot, 1978, P.127.

Inevitably, they would see women knitting from other fishing villages and, possibly, see new patterns. If they liked these patterns, they might exchange them. In Chapter 3, I will describe how special these patterns were to each community, but how different patterns could be included to create a new sweater. When the herring girls did come home, which was usually whenever the herrings were near their village, they brought back their new patterns fresh in their minds; they then might start to knit a sweater which included these new patterns.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss how the patterns were used for identification. At one time, it was true to say that a fisherman could be identified as far as the locality he came from by the pattern on his sweater. Later this became difficult to do. One of the reasons was that herring girls were always ready to attempt any patterns they saw which took their fancy, and seemed to be an improvement on the patterns they already knew.

Ferryden, a fishing village on the East coast of Scotland near Berwick, was one of the busiest fishing villages. It had a tradition of herring girls but between 187O and 188O the situation changed. Fish-curing firms moved into the fishing villages. One company was the Montrose Curing Company, based in Berwick.

The Montrose Company changed the rhythm of work and increased the distance between fishermen and their families by encouraging them to spend greater portion of the year following the herring shoals. The route they travelled was around the North and East coasts of Scotland right over to Yarmouth in East Anglia.

The herring girls had to travel further as they were also employed by the company. The Scottish girls acquired "a public image of being physically strong and socially aggressive, which helped to set them apart from others."[55] Fig: 19 shows Scottish girls gutting herrings in Yarmouth before 1914. They worked long hours in all weathers; many of them could gut a fish at the rate of one fish per second.[56]

"Girls started working as herring girls as early as ten although they usually waited until leaving school at the age of 14."[57] Married and unmarried women went to work for the fish curing firms "although photographs indicate a preference for younger women."[58] The women working in the fish curing companies could work up to 15 hrs a day.

When they lived away from their homes, they had to stay in lodgings in certain fishing villages - David Butcher described their lodgings:

When we were young my mother used to take in Scotch girls as lodgers, to help make ends meet. She used to clear out a room for them downstairs. They had to wear oilies and boots for work, they used to take them off outside the passage and leave 'em there. When they didn't have any work they used to go around the town knitting.[59]

The herring girls were usually housed communally under conditions that were often less than ideal. "The huts were overcrowded and women were overworked, so if

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55 Butcher, David, Following the Fishing, Tops Books, Newton Abbot, 1987, P.79.

56 Nadel-Klein, Davis, 1988, P.119.

57 Ibid.

58 Nadel Klein, Davis, 1988, P.6.

59 Butcher, 1987, P.79.

disease struck it would take it's toll."[60]

Even though "the herring girls spent 15 hours a day working";[61] they enjoyed knitting; it wasn't a chore or work, it was a form of relaxation.

Women's domain was the land and men's domain the sea; fishermen had many rituals and charms designed to warn off bad luck. These included the patterns which I will examine in Chapter 3 and 4.

"The women kept the men out of water, which the men feared to enter, lest they never leave it."[62]

The stories from the fishing communities intrigue me; they are often very supertitious. Bartt describes how "if a woman steps over a fishing line", it was thought "no fish would be caught in it."[63] A fisherman who encountered this might turn back or not venture out into the sea at all. There were also stories about a woman having magical powers over her husband once he was at sea so she could unwittingly sever his lifeline. According to Butcher, "a fisherman's wife must never comb her hair, while her husband's boat was at sea, for if she did, he would surely go down."[64] As I have already mentioned in this chapter, women's work was considered secondary to men's work, which might have been because women were considered unlucky. Butcher also

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60 Nadel Klein, Davis, 1988, P.199.
61 Ibid.
62 Butcher, 1987, P.2O7.
63 Bartt in Nadel-Klein and Davis, 1995, P.2O6.
64 Butcher, 1987, P.79.

states that: "Sea work was men's work and for women to have any place in it would be a pollution."[65]

The herring girls did not only travel around England and Scotland; they also, through their employment by fish-curing companies, travelled abroad. The Montrose Company sent several women to Sweden to learn Scandinavian herring curing methods.

Although women from England and Scotland were sent abroad by the fish curing companies, there is no evidence of them travelling over to Holland. I wrote to Henriette Tellegen and asked her was there any record of herring girls from Scotland or England travelling to Holland? In reply she wrote: "I have not heard of herring girls moving to Holland but this does not prove it did not happen".[66]

The herring girls played an important role in distributing patterns throughout England and Scotland and cannot be overlooked in fishing history. They helped create a cultural link between villages; throughout their travels they adopted patterns which helped to create the fishermens' sweater of English and Scottish fishing villages. Without women and their labour, the fishing economy could not operate; without them and their reproductive capacities, the fishing community could not continue.

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65 Ibid.

66 Tellegen, Letter 10th Jan, 1996.

Chapter Three

Identification, Structure of the Sweaters and the Wool used in England, Scotland and The Netherlands.

Fig. 20: Fisherman's Initials.

In modern times, we use passports and drivers' licences as a way of identifying people from abroad. This is the modern form of identification. Today, it is not as apparent where a person is from by the way they dress. Clothes are bought abroad or imported from abroad. People around the world wear what they want to wear or what is immediately accessible. People travel more because of work or holidays. Flights are available to any destination in the world. People are fluent in a second language and communication between countries is easier.

In fishing communities in the past, identification was very important. It was thought that the patterns on the sweaters held the best form of identification. Wherever the fish were the fishermen had to go, so often they had to travel long distances to obtain a decent catch. In foreign ports, it was necessary for a person's nationality to be known.

Stories are preserved by the fishing communities. They tell of how the sweaters worn by the fishermen were patterned for recognition in the unfortunate event of a fisherman drowning. People were not fluent in each others' languages and the most common way to identify a person was by their clothing; this form of identification was used in most fishing villages. Many authors, including Gladys Thompson and Rae Compton, among others, have written about the sweater being used for identification purposes; Fig: 2O shows an example of a fisherman's sweater with initials of the wearer knitted into it.

Thompson describes how knitters worked initials into the sweaters above the *welt* [67] before the pattern started.[68] The smocks I described in Chapter 1 were worn by the workmen and traditionally the symbols embroidered onto the garments indicated the wearer's occupation. I have already mentioned that the majority of these were produced in rural industries and the small amount which were home produced would have the initials and occupation embroidered onto the garment. Authors such as Rutt and Compton, writing about these garments closely resembling fishermens' sweaters, have deduced that it is possible that the knitting of the fishermens' initials into the sweaters originated from these workmens' shirts Fig: 8.

Compton writes that knitters would immediately recognise their own handiwork, under any circumstances, as they put so much time into the knitting of each jumper.[69] In J.M. Synge's one-act play "*Riders to the Sea*" of 1902, the body of a fisherman is found drowned at sea. Synge's play is based on his experience of the Aran Islands off the West Coast of Ireland. The fisherman is identified by his stockings; his sister states: "It's the second one of the third part, I knitted and I put up three 'scour' stitches and I dropped four of them." Rutt finds this disappointing because the identification of Michael's corpse in the play was based not on recognition of the design of his sweater but on the mistake in the knitting of his stockings.[70]

In any book that I have read about fishermens' sweaters, authors write how the patterns were used as identification. Stories developed through the decades about

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67 Welt; A strip used as binding, border or hem whether knitted or not.
68 Thompson, 1971, P.5.
69 Compton, 1985, P.13.
70 Rutt, 1987, P.196.

how the corpses of those found drowned at sea could be identified by their sweaters' distinctive patterns. Stories can be exaggerated by people. It is a romantic notion to believe that every fishing community had its own distinctive pattern, as I will mention later on in this chapter. Once fishermen could travel and trade with other ports, including foreign ones, they developed cultural links which makes specific identification difficult. I have already mentioned in Chapter 2 about how the herring girls travelled around England and Scotland and foreign ports and learnt new patterns. The only proper formulation for identification at sea seems to be the initials of the fishermen on the garments.

Marriage was another reason for the movement of patterns to another area. Many of the fishermen married from their own community, but some of them married outside their area because they were able to travel.

Throughout Ferryden's fishing days, village endogamy was practised intensively. Occasionally men brought in fisher lassies from other villages along the coast, but for years even this was relatively rare. As one author says: "none of the communities would easily absorb outsiders whether male or female."[71] This was mainly because fishing villages were closely knit communities; they had strong bonds with each family in the village. The herring girls who travelled with the fishermen met people outside their village; this made it possible for them to have relationships with men outside their own fishing village.

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[71] Nadel-Klein and Lee Dawn, 1988, P.2O1.

"Traditionally young women particularly the youngest girl in the family, stayed at home to help the old folks, only leaving to get married. The prospect of finding a suitable partner in these circumstances was limited because of Shetland's continuing unbalanced sex ratio and for this reason despite the hard work entailed, many young women looked forward to the fishing search as it was at the curing station that many found a marital partner.[72]

If the women were knitters they might use the patterns from their area, introducing them into a new sweater, traditionally knitted for their husbands. According to Compton, "Guernseys were worn to work; with the newest one kept for best until the next in line took its place. In many areas, it was also worn for the wedding ceremony."[73] Fig. 1O and Fig. 11.

In the Netherlands, this tradition of the bride knitting a sweater for her husband-to-be was common. Tellegen states that "in Scheveninger near The Hague, a bride began to knit the day her wedding date was set."[74]

The bride-to-be knitted into her sweater long hairs, which she pulled from her head. This not only strengthened the yarn, but resulted in a very personal and romantic garment through which she linked herself to her man.[75]

This statement written by Tellegen shows that the tradition of women knitting sweaters for their future husbands was not just to consecrate their marriage but it also shows that the people in the fishing villages in The Netherlands were somewhat superstitious.

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72 Fryer, 1995, P.81.
73 Compton, 1985, P.5O.
74 Tellegen, 1983, P.14.
75 Tellegen, P.75.

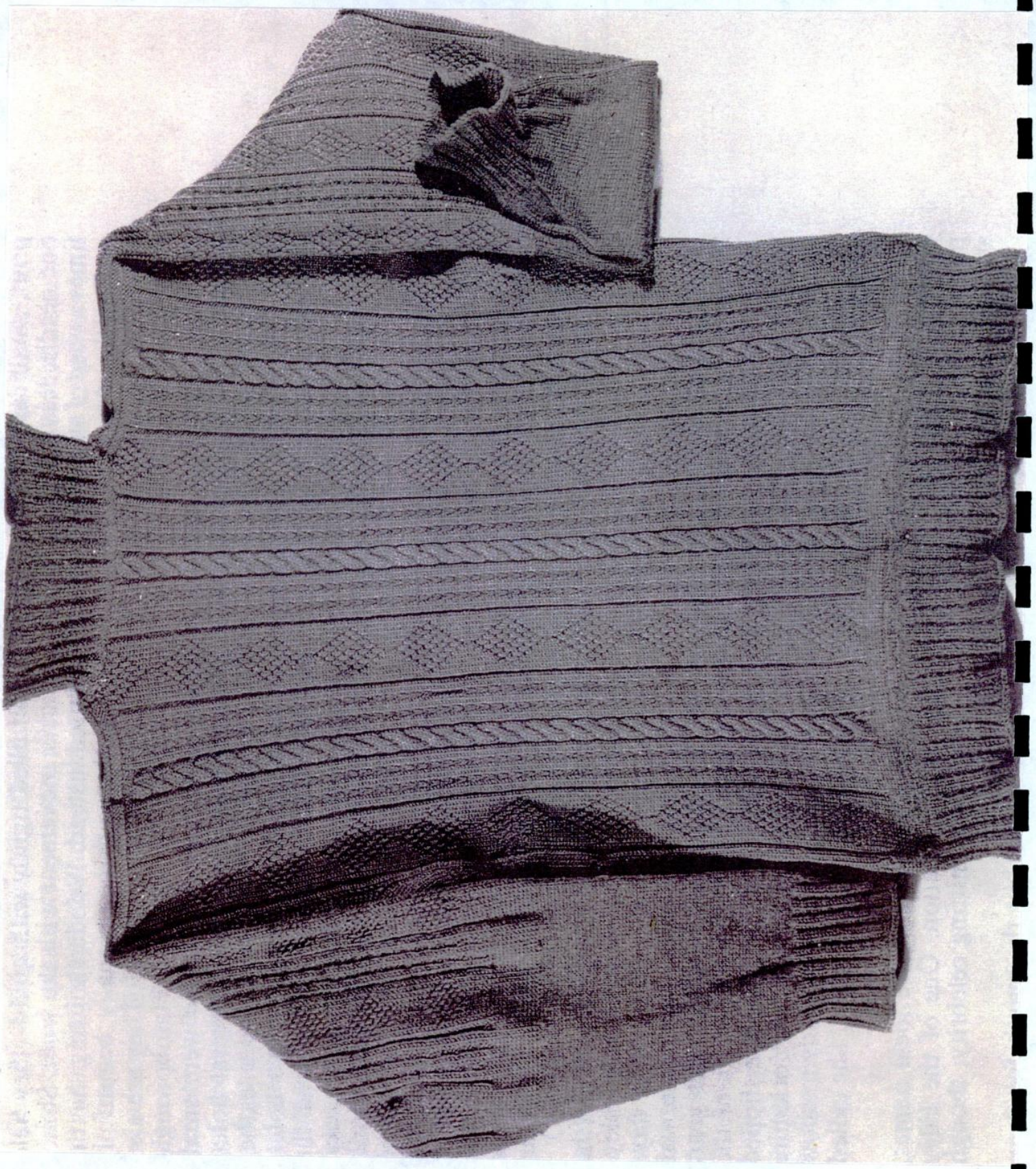

Fig. 21: Close up of Sleeve of Sweater from Filey.

One question I asked Tellegen was: "Did English or Scottish girls marry Dutch fishermen? Tellegen replied:

There is no mention, that I found, of Dutch fishermen marrying foreign girls. Marrying was a concept of the community, so was splitting up. I don't know if they would have accepted foreigners as they did not, for a long time, accept people from outside the village.[76]

The earliest reference I have found to trade between the countries began around the early sixteenth century. Tellegen wrote in her first letter to me about "the original patterns coming from the British Isles, but which adapted by Dutch knitters."[77] The patterns used by the knitters from Holland are similar to those used by Scottish and English knitters, as photographs from each country will show. The structures of the sweaters from England and Scotland seem to be the same, although travel did mean that patterns were adopted by other regions.

In Chapter 1, I described how fishermens' sweaters were work garments. They were worn until it was no longer possible to wear them. These garments had to be hardwearing and fishermens' wives discovered techniques to help create a more sturdy work garment. The wool used had to be strong and knitted tightly to produce a waterproof garment. In England and Scotland fishermens' wives cast on in double wool and also cast off the cuffs the same way, making garments look bulky but adding to their strength. (Fig: 21). Fishermens' work was with equipment like nets and hooks, which could easily catch and break the wool and produce a hole. Unless it was

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76 Tellegen, Letter, 10th January, 1996.

77 Tellegen, Letter, 8th December, 1995.

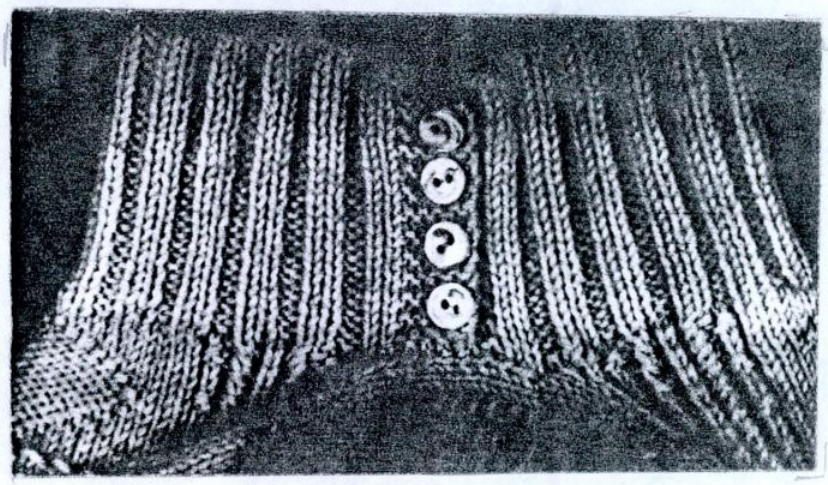

Fig. 22: Neck of Sweater from Scotland.

Fig. 23: Sweater from Scarborough.

Fig. 24: Shoulder Strap and Gusset, Runswick Bay.

Fig. 25: Sweater from Pernis in The Netherlands.

Fig. 26: Sweater from Maassluis in The Netherlands.

mended, the garment would have to be disposed of as it would no longer function in it's working role.

Necklines caused problems for knitters, as they were often too tight or too loose. In Scotland the neckband was fastened by buttons and strong buttonholes Fig: 22), which created a neater neckline, without stretching the neckband, each time it was pulled over the wearer's head. In England the neck lines were stitched, taken from the back and front after the shoulder had been cast off. The stitches were knitted in the same way as the cuffs or rib of the jumper. This meant knitting, usually, two plain and two purl stitches, then repeating it across the new row. (Fig: 23). Another method of drawing in the neckline was to work a small gusset at the base of the neckline and decrease as the neckline was knitted (Fig: 24). The neck lengths varied in fishing villages; Fig: 23 shows a sweater from Scarborough in Yorkshire and Fig: 22 one from Filey just South of Scarborough.

In the first example, from Scarborough, the neck measures one and a half inches. In the second example, from Filey, the neck length is six inches.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch knitters had their own method of knitting the neck for fishermens' sweaters. The neckbands had a row of eyelets for a drawstring with a pompon on each end (Fig: 25). A twisted string went through the eyelet; not every man wanted pom pons so the drawstring sometimes had tassels on it instead (Fig: 26).

Fig. 27: Sweater from Middelharnis in The Netherlands.

The idea behind this method was that the drawstring was pulled tight, so that the neck of the sweater did not allow the cold air to get in. Although this method is different from that used in Scotland, where buttons were used, the idea of the sweater being loose enough to pull over the wearer's head, and also the neck of the sweater being able to be closed tight enough to prevent cold air entering, is the same. These methods also meant the neck of the sweater didn't loosen or tear from its being constantly worn.

In the letter I wrote to Tellegen, I asked her "Why were pompons used by the Dutch knitters?". She replied:

"The pompons originated from the cold hands with which the ties could not be knotted. The pompons were easier to hold on to.[78]

Although drawstrings and pompons were commonly used on the necks of the sweaters, there are photographs in Tellegen's book from a fishing village, called Middelharnis, in the South of the Netherlands. The photograph in Fig: 27 shows two boys wearing sweaters with buttoned necks instead of drawstrings.

Fishermens' wives spent a long time knitting these sweaters. They knitted them to be admired and also to be comfortable even the shoulders and underneath the arm were neat and decorative. The sweaters reflected the wearer's admiration for the work put into them and also showed the knitter's attention to detail. An often-used shoulder

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78 Tellegen, Letter, 10th January, 1996.

Fig. 28: Fishermen from Zuidholland in The Netherlands.

Fig. 29: Example of Gusset.

pattern was the 'rig and furrow', also called 'rig and fur' in Runswick in Yorkshire (Fig: 24), [79] like so many patterns, named after a particular object or area in or around a fishing village. In Runswick Bay, as well as some other fishing ports, the rig and furrow pattern was the only decorative piece in the sweater, as some knitters left the body of the sweater plain. This was economical as less yarn had to be used in a sweater when it had no patterns knitted into it.

The Netherland sweaters also had decorative shoulders. Unfortunately, Tellegen does not mention this in her book in great detail, but one photograph of a group of men from Zuidholland, (Fig: 28)[80] in Holland, clearly shows the rig and furrow pattern being used in the sweater on the man seated on the left of the photograph. The other three men also have sweaters with decorative shoulders but they have patterns called the 'Fishbone' and another pattern called 'Arrows', also known as V-forms.

The gusset, or 'gushet', as it is known in Scotland, was a way of widening the garment under the arm; it was also used for widening the neck of the sweater. Once the shoulder was completed, the stitches were decreased (Fig: 29). This left only the seam and sleeve stitches. The seam stitches were reduced to shape the sleeve until there was the right amount of stitches for the cuffs and the length of the sleeve. The knitter cast off the cuff with double wool to prevent the cuff from tearing. In the Netherlands there seems to be no indication that the gusset was used, from either diagrams or photographs. Although I asked Tellegen, "Was the gusset used by the

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79 Thompson, 1971, P.53.

80 Tellegen, 1985, P.45

Dutch knitters?" She replied: "The gusset was used but more often at the neck than under the arm."[81]

Fishermen had to work in all types of weather. Even during terrible weather conditions they needed to keep on working, so they needed some sort of protective garment against the harsh weather conditions of being at sea. Wool had protective qualities, it's most important feature being it's ability to absorb moisture without feeling wet. When it does absorb moisture it gives out heat. When a fisherman's sweater gets wet, as long as the knitting is close together, it will keep the wearer dry. The natural oils in the wool, which are often lost in the production of jumpers today, act as protection. These are the natural oils from the sheep's skin, which protect the sheep from the elements.

Some writers have tended to over-emphasise the use of wool for it's protective qualities. Rutt describes how the fishermen wore oilskins or tarred jackets to keep them protected in the bad weather, as described in Chapter One. The boat smock worn in Fig: 11 was worn over the sweater. The real value of the knitted shirt lay in it's comfortable fit, it's warmth and in it's splendid appearance.

In England and Scotland, as I have already mentioned, the names 'jersey' and 'guernsey' are given to fishermens' sweaters. Guernseys are in dark blue wool, which is thick, while jerseys are knitted in thinner wool and of various colours. Guernseys are knitted in 5 *ply*[82] wool, similar to double knitted worsted wool, sometimes also called

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81 Tellegen, Letter, 10th January, 1995.

82 *Ply*: This is the thickness of the wool.

'wassit' or 'worsted', only denser. This was worked in a tight tension and in the round, in order to produce a water-proof and tough garment. The wool had the nickname of 'seamens' iron'.[83]

Thompson states that in Yorkshire, in fishing ports such as Runswick, Whitby, Scarborough and Filey, the 5 ply worsted wool in Guernseys was known as the 'wassit' and was sold by the hesp, hand or *cut*.[84]

In Scotland much softer 6 ply black or dark blue wool than the wool knitted in England was used. The wool used in Scotland was supplied by laidlows of Keith and was soft, very smooth and dark in colour, almost black. It was also colourfast, which meant it retained its colour even in harsh weather conditions and after plenty of washing. It was hard wearing, which was the most important feature of the fisherman's sweater.

The sheep bred in the Netherlands for it's wool was called the Merino, as the wool from this sheep was long and soft. It stayed soft but it was also strong because it was spun tightly.

The wool from the sheep called Texalaar was short and rough; to spin good yarn, it had to be firmly twisted. The Dutch name for this was 'sajet'. It was cheap and, as the fishermens' wives had to be economical, this wool was popularly used to knit

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83 Rutt, 1987, P. 135.

84 *Cut*: This is a measure of yarn, a hank or skein. These names are used for a measure of yarn.

fishermens' sweaters.

Sajet is a cheap 'short wool', spun very tightly to make it hard wearing. When worn and washed several times it started to spike, which is very typical of sajet. The wool was dyed in black, navy blue and "nassau" blue. The nassau blue had little red specks. In some areas this was the most liked colour but in other areas it was considered "poor looking". There was another colour that was introduced only after the war and was called 'underpants colour' and looked greyish beige. This never became very popular.[85]

The use of synthetic wools by knitters today in all fishing villages has altered the texture and the classical look of these jumpers. The aroma of the oils and the quality of the garments have been lost, along with those features which made them unique as fishermens' clothing. The waterproof qualities and the closely knit technniques used are not needed anymore in today's society. This is because modern fishermen can obtain waterproof protective clothing from shops which cater for people who work outdoors.

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[85] Tellegen, Letter, 8th December, 1995.

Chapter Four
Similarities in Patterns in Sweaters From England, Scotland and The Netherlands.

"From the Hebrides, clockwise round Scotland past Northumbria and East Anglia to Cornwall, British seamens' jerseys are essentially the same."[86] Patterns seem to be universal in the fishing communities of Scotland and England. Patterns used by the Scottish and English have certainly been adopted by Dutch fishermen. In every fishing community these patterns might look similar, but the meanings and the names are likely to be different.

Fishermen depend a lot on the elements for their livelihood; as they tended to be superstitious, as I have already mentioned in Chapter 2, the meanings and names for the patterns used in their jerseys grew in these surroundings. Most of the patterns had names and were called after every day objects or what the fishermen used in that occupation.

As noted, similarities in patterns throughout Scotland, England and the Netherlands came about through fishermen travelling to different ports. Patterns were not written down but handed down from mother to daughter, from visual memory. In England, around 1889,[87] the first pattern was published, as already mentioned in Chapter 1. It was claimed that by the 192Os fishermen had 84 different patterns for sweaters.[88]

Patterns used by the Dutch knitters were adopted from Scottish and English sweaters. I asked Tellegen: "Why was there a difference in sweaters in each harbour?" She replied:

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86 Rutt, 1987, P.133.
87 Rutt, 1987, P.191.
88 Marly, 1986, P.133.

"As people from Holland do not believe in many symbolics we do not use names. The patterns were copied from British knitwear the fishermen took with them and used in combinations the knitters liked best. The difference between the harbours was because of the lack of communication. Protestants did not talk to Catholics, so a lot of visiting did not occur."[89]

In the Netherlands, patterns were never written down but were taken directly from the original sweaters. The Dutch were very like the English and Scottish in that the families in a particular village might vary the scale of these patterns but, essentially, the same patterns were used on a national scale.

The language barrier may have caused the meanings to be different since the patterns took names from objects.

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[89] Tellegen, Letter, 1Oth January, 1996.

Fig. 30: Cable or Rope Pattern - Patrington in England.

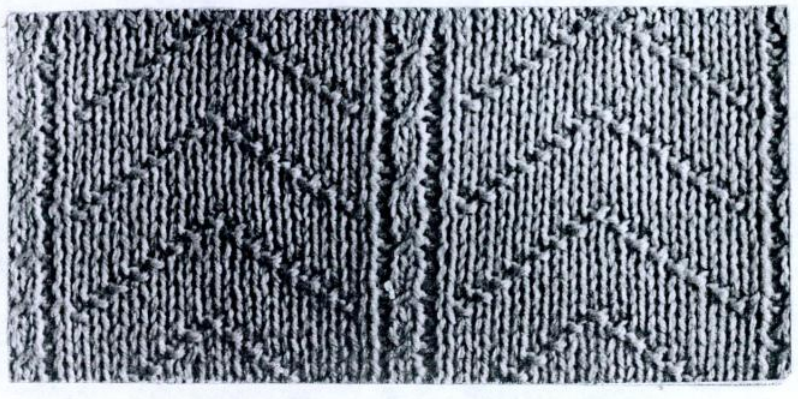

Fig. 31: Cable or Rope Pattern - Banff in Scotland.

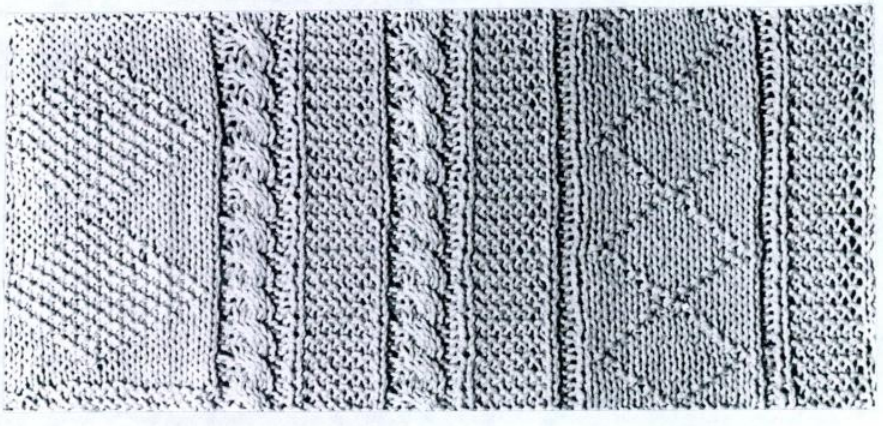

Fig. 32: Cable or Rope Pattern - The Netherlands.

LIST OF PATTERNS

Cable or Rope Stitch : This pattern appeared in sweaters from Scotland, England and the Netherlands. It symbolises the ropes and cables used on the fishing boats. They were knitted vertically up along the sweaters with panels of another pattern alongside it. In Fig. 3O, from Patrington in England, the cable pattern is knitted alongside the ladder stitch and the moss stitch. Fig. 31 from Banff in Grampian, in Scotland, shows how the cable pattern could be knitted small alongside the herringbone pattern.

In the Netherlands, cables also symbolised the same objects. In Fig. 32 there is an example of cables being knitted beside a central panel of diamonds knitted in moss stitch. An example of this pattern can be seen in Gladys Thompson's Book, (1971), P.13. Cables could be varied in scale, as I have already shown.

Steps : These were used in all the countries mentioned.

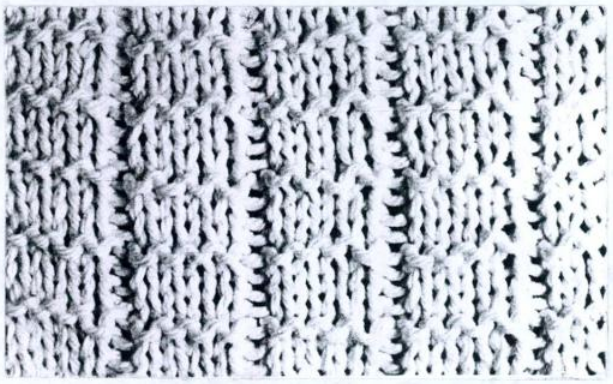

Fig. 33: Steps - The Netherlands.

Fig. 34: Zig Zag - Filey in England.

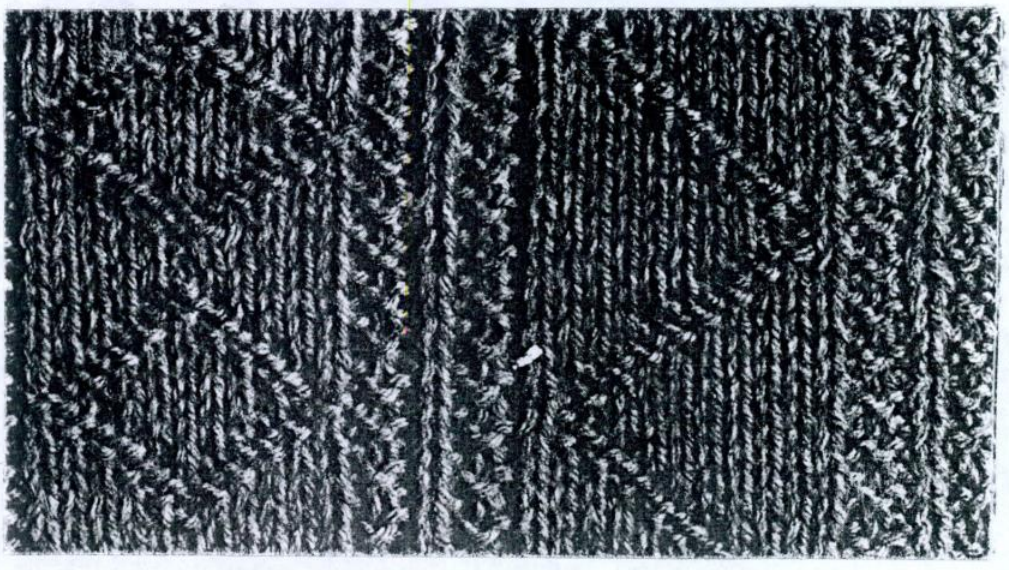

Fig. 35: Zig Zag - Scotland

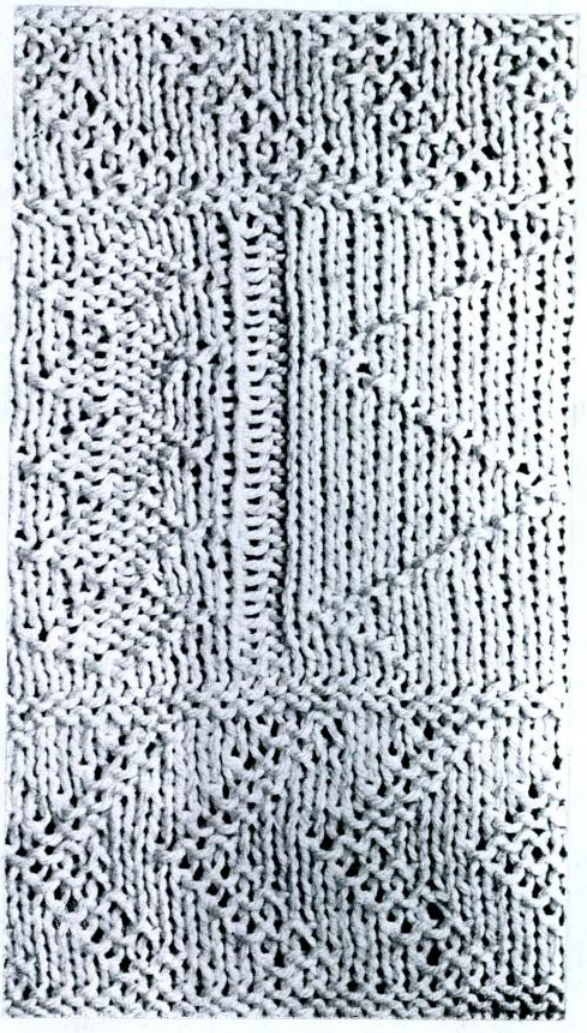

Fig. 36: Zig Zag - The Netherlands.

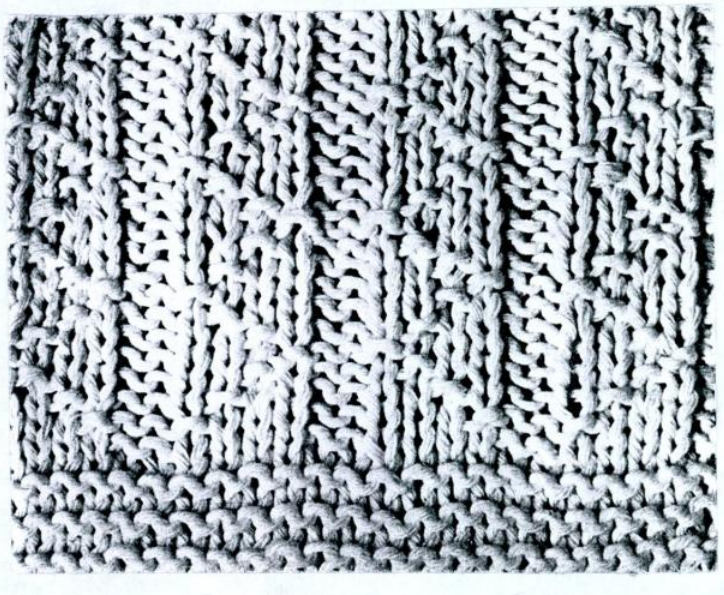

Fig. 37: Double Zig Zag - The Netherlands.

This pattern was also called blocks: "It had no real significance in Holland."[90] Fig. 33 shows an example of the step pattern, which was used as a pattern to cover the entire sweater. In England and Scotland it was used alongside panels of various patterns, such as cables.

Ladders : This was knitted in the same way as the step pattern, Fig. 33, but it was wider. Fig. 3O shows an example of the ladder pattern. In the Netherlands, they used the smaller variation of this pattern which is the step pattern, but I have found no example in the Netherlands of this pattern.

Zig Zag : In England, Scotland and the Netherlands this represents lightning. In the Netherlands it also represents the snake, which is thought to warn off evil. Fig. 34 from Filey, in Yorkshire in England, shows the zig-zag pattern being used alongside the cable and moss stitch. In Fig: 35, from Scotland, it is used with the diamond and the fisherman's rib. Fig. 36, from the

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90 Tellegen 1985, P.22.

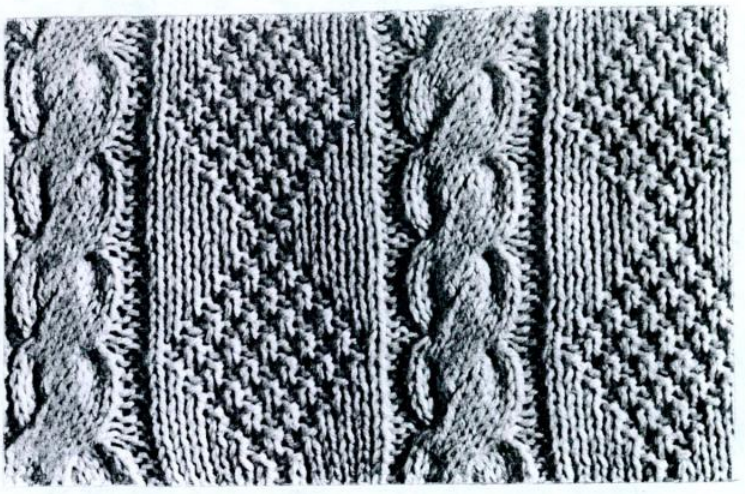

Fig. 38: Diamond - Scarborough in England.

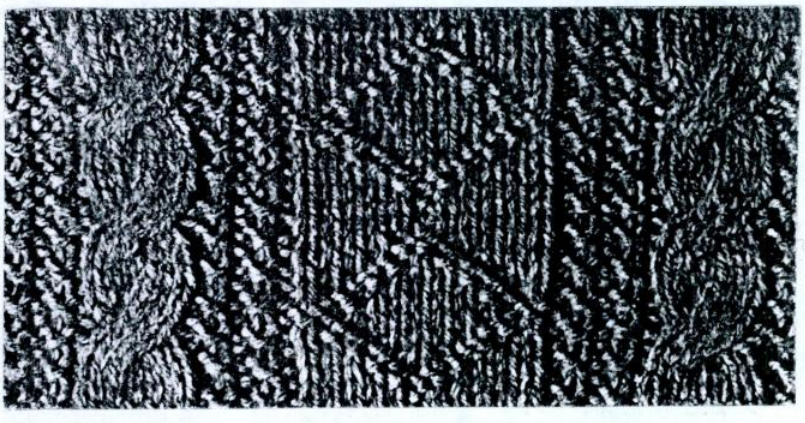

Fig 39: Diamond - Scotland.

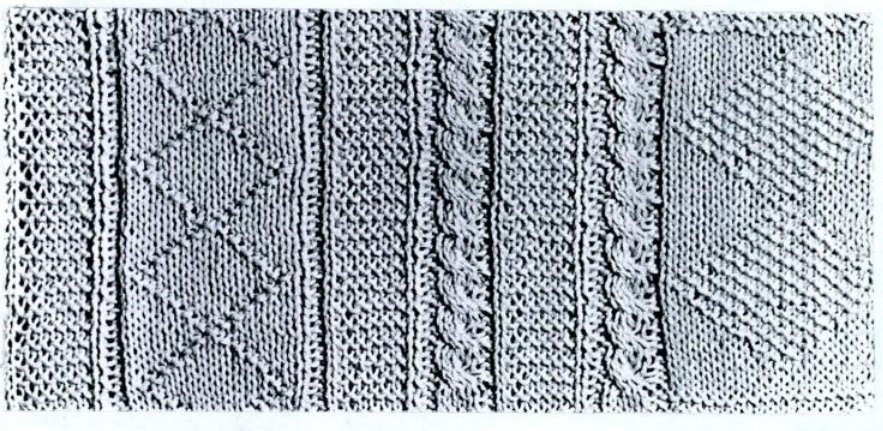

Fig 40: Diamond - The Netherlands.

Netherlands, shows the zig-zag knitted beside the diamond pattern.

Double Zig Zag : This represented the marriage lines, the ups and downs of married life; this was if there was more than one zig zag knitted parallel to each other; (Fig. 37) from The Netherlands.

Diamonds : This represented the nets used by fishermen. They could be filled with plain knit stitches or purl, moss and double moss stitches. Fig. 38, from Scarborough in Yorkshire, shows a diamond with a moss stitch. Fig. 39 from Scotland, shows diamond knit with purl stitch, filled with plain stitches. From the Netherlands Fig. 4O shows an example of diamonds knitted with plain and purl stitches.

Continuous Diamonds : This pattern is seen in Scotland, England and The Netherlands. In The Netherlands it is called the fishnet. Fig. 41, from Flamborough in Yorkshire, and Fig. 39, from Scotland, both show the continuous diamond pattern which is commonly called the netmask in England and

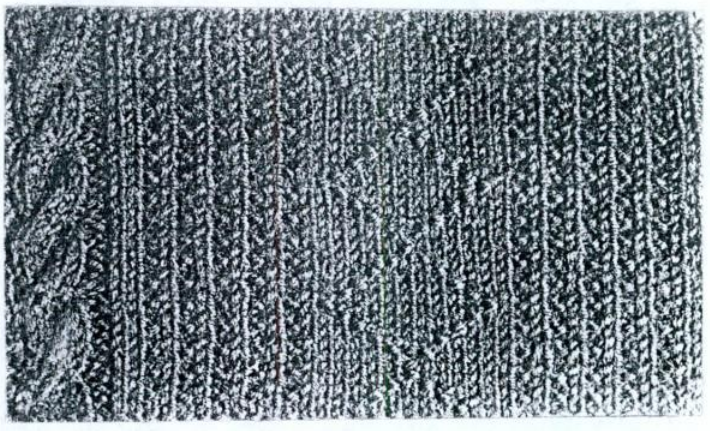

Fig. 41: Continuous Diamonds - Flamborough in England.

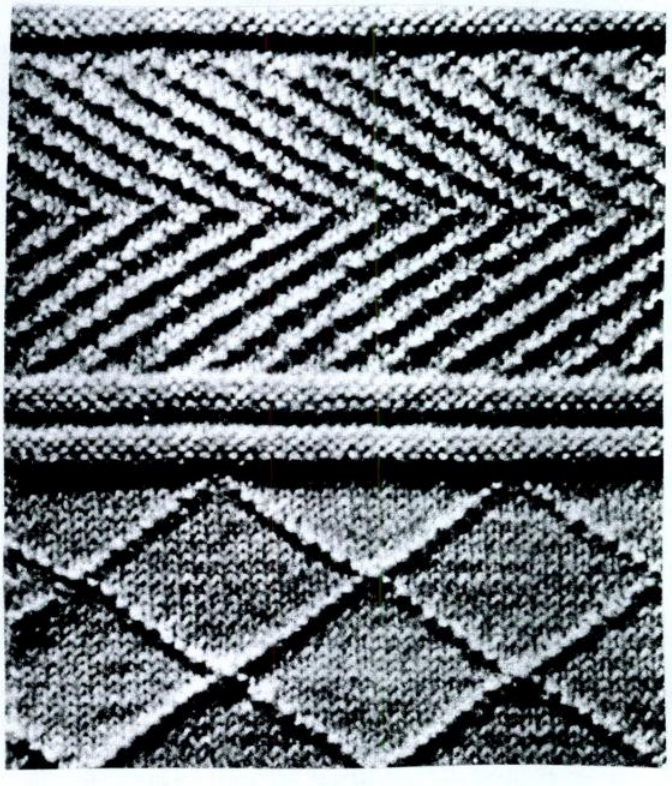

Fig 42: Continuous Diamonds - Scotland.

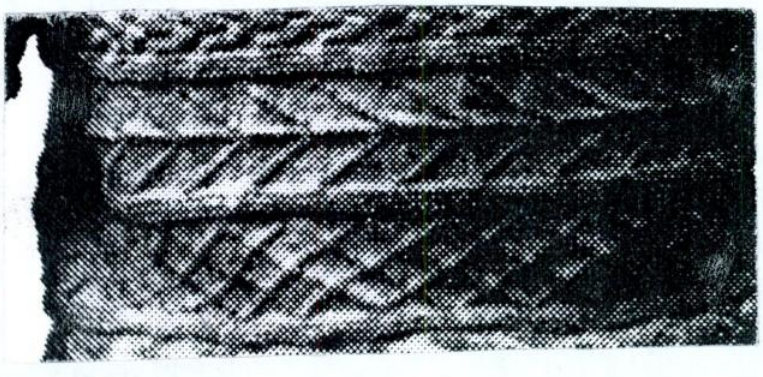

Fig. 43: Continuous Diamonds - The Netherlands.

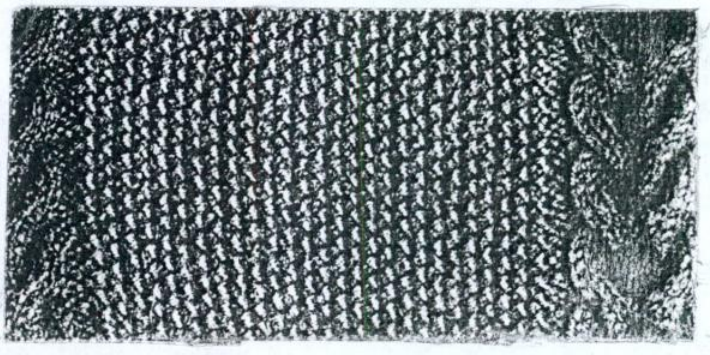

Fig. 44: Print O'Hoof - Filey in England.

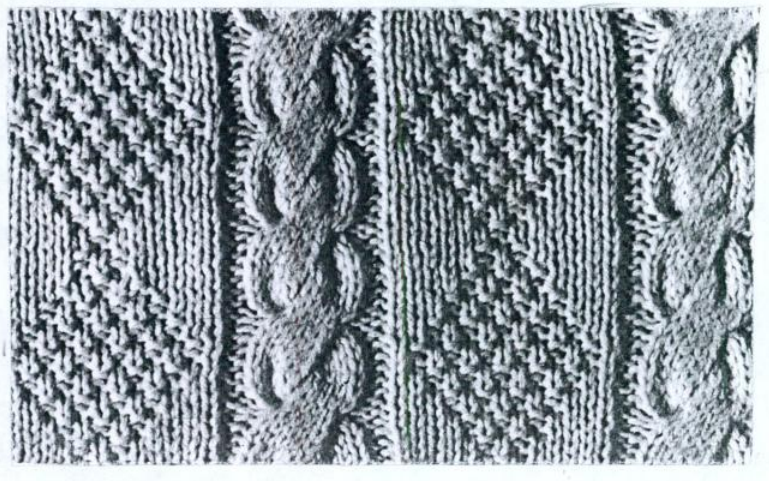

Fig. 45: Sand and Shingle Pattern - Scarborough in England.

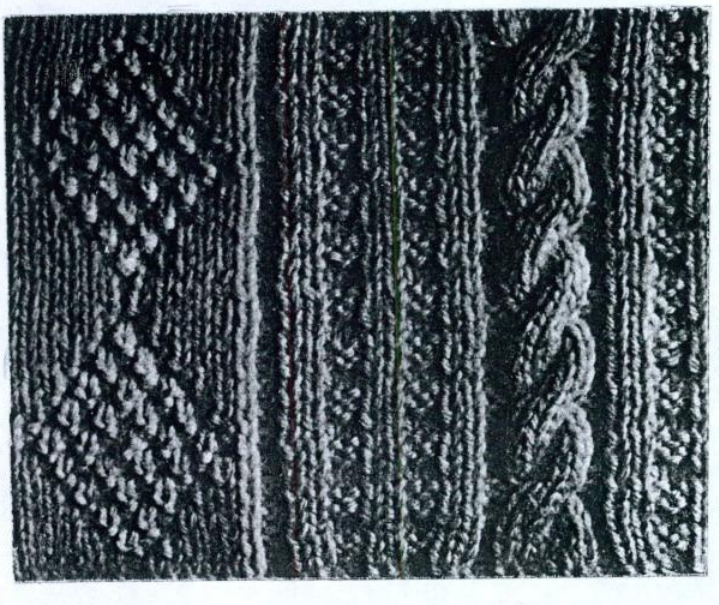

Fig. 46: Scotland - Sand and Shingle Pattern.

Scotland. In Scotland some of the patterns were knitted circular instead of vertical. In Fig. 42 there is a clear example of this pattern, which resembles a pattern from The Netherlands shown in Fig. 43 from Pernis in the South of Holland. The two patterns are similar; they are knit horizontally across the sweater with a row of garter stitch and then a section of the tree of life for the sweater from the Netherlands. In Scotland, in Fig. 42, the diamonds have been knitted the same with a band of 'Poor Man's Wealth' separating the diamonds from the panel of herringbone knit horizontally across the sweater.

Print O'Hoof : This represented the hoof prints of a horse in the sand and is found in a sweater from Filey in Yorkshire, Fig. 44, but is also found in parts of Scotland also. In the Netherlands it was not used as they preferred the cable pattern.

Hit and Miss : Double moss stitch is said to represent the moss on the stones.

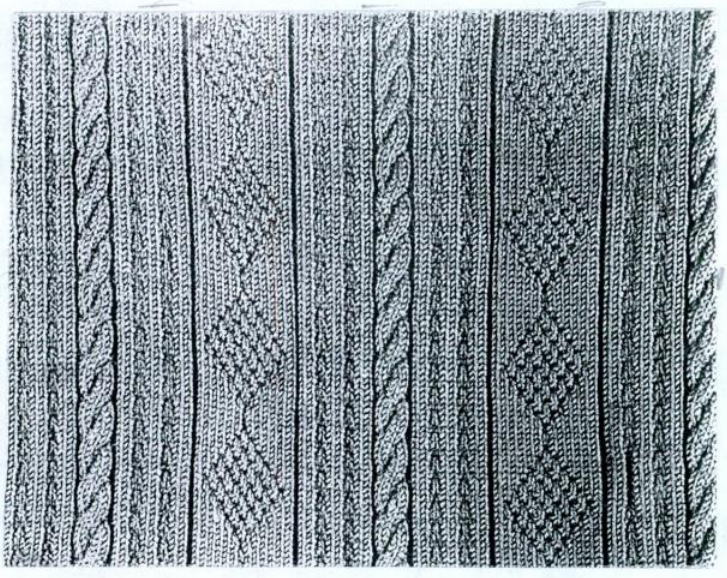

Fig. 47: Betty Martin - Yorkshire in England.

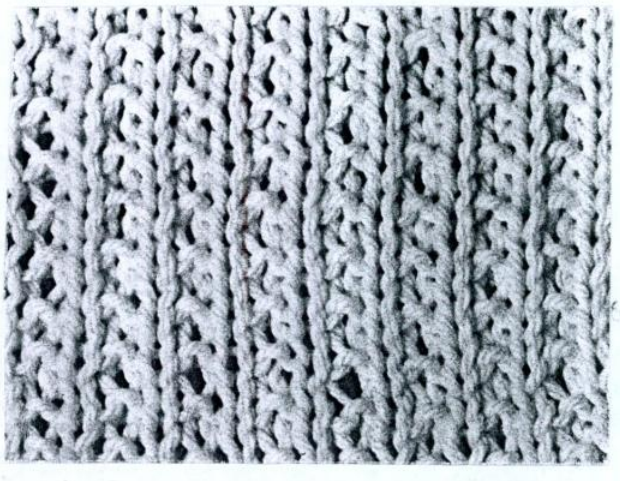

Fig. 48: The Netherlands.

Sand and Shingle : Double and single moss stitch. Both of these patterns are used in the countries mentioned. In Fig. 45, from Scarborough in Yorkshire, and Fig. 46, from Scotland, both use moss stitch to fill in diamond. It is interesting to see the single and double moss stitch being used in England, Scotland and The Netherlands which will be mentioned in regional similarities.

Poor Man's Wealth : This consists of rows of purl knitting; in between the rows of purl knitting, rows of plain knitting are knitted. This forms a ridge across the sweater. It is seen in Fig. 42 from Scotland. It was not used in sweaters from The Netherlands; instead they used the Garter Stitch which was used to divide up panels like the 'poor man's wealth'. Fig. 44.

Betty Martin : This pattern was found in Filey shown in Fig. 47 from Yorkshire and Fig. 46 from Scotland. In both photographs it is interesting to see that the pattern is identical. In both, the diamond pattern is filled in with single moss stitch with a panel of Betty Martin beside the Diamond; to

Fig. 49: Tree of Life - Scotland

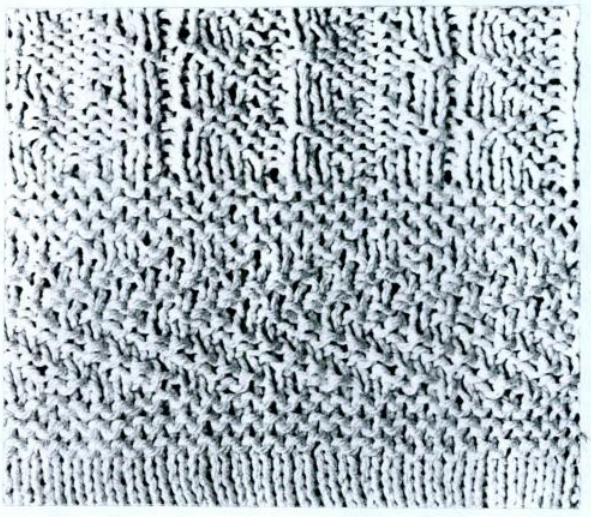

Fig. 42: Herringbone or Feather, Arrow or V-Form - The Netherlands.

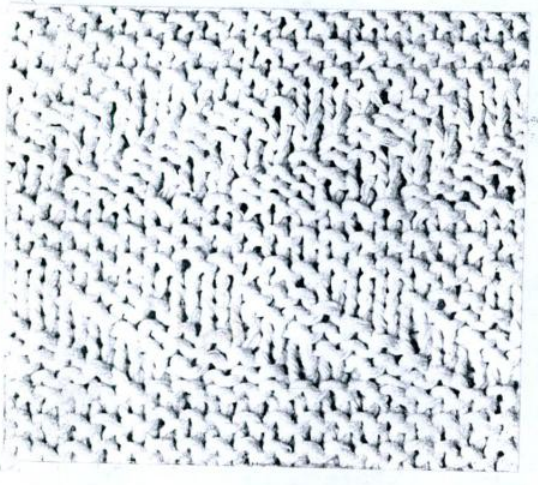

Fig 50: Tree of Life - The Netherlands.

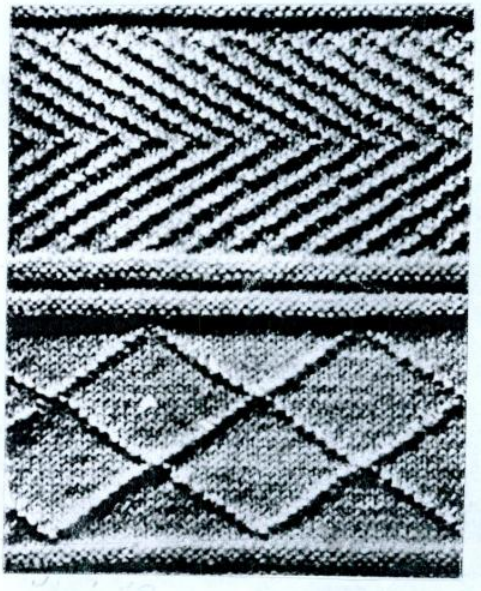

Fig 53: Herringbone or Feather, Arrow or V-Form - Scotland

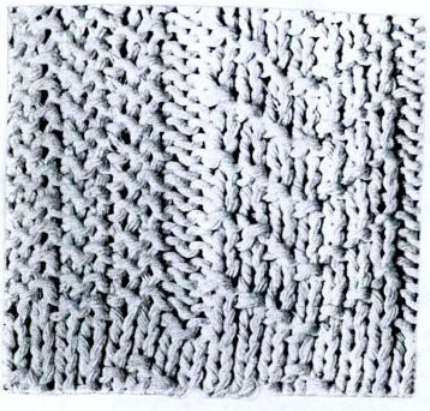

Fig. 51: Herringbone or Feather Arrow or V-Form - The Netherlands.

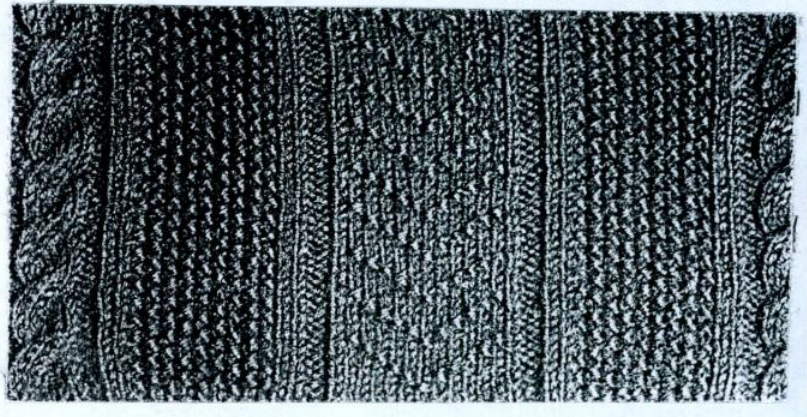

Fig. 54: Filey in Yorkshire - Herringbone or Feather, Arrow or V-Form

the other side of the Betty Martin is the cable stitch. In The Netherlands the closest example I could find was Fig. 48. It is similar, but uses a knit stitch and one purl stitch alternatively. In the Betty Martin pattern one knit stitch and two purl stitches are alternatively used.

Fisherman's Rib : This was like what was seen in Fig. 48 from The Netherlands. It is like the Betty Martin, like a double fisherman's rib.

Tree of Life : In England, Scotland and The Netherlands the tree of life symbolises the generations. The father is the trunk of the tree and the sons are the branches. I have no example from England but Fig. 49, from Scotland, and Fig. 5O, from The Netherlands, show it being used horizontally. It could be used by knitting vertically.

Herringbone or Feather, Arrows or V-Forms : It could be worked horizontally or vertically. In Scotland and England it was known as the herringbone or feather pattern. In The Netherlands it was called arrow or V-forms, although it was the same. In Scotland and

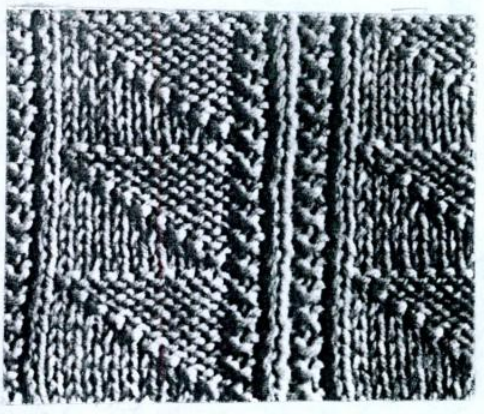

Fig. 55: Flags - Scotland.

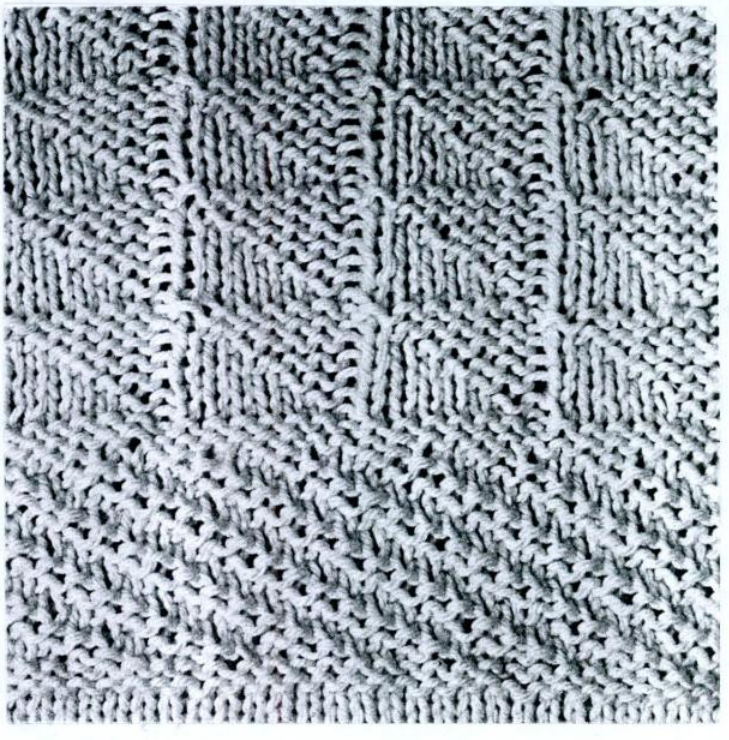

Fig. 56: The Netherlands - Flags.

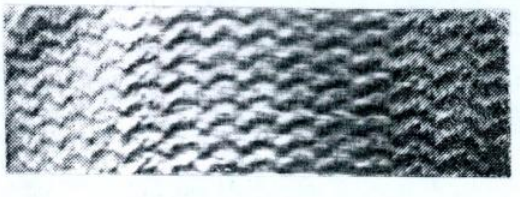

Fig. 57: Triple Sea Waves - Scotland.

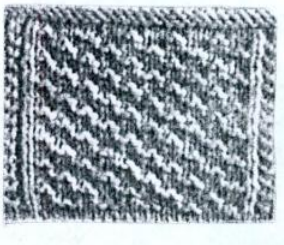

Fig. 58: Triple Sea Waves - The Netherlands.

England it symbolises the fishbone; in Holland it represented the harpoons used by the Whalers. Fig. 51 shows the pattern worked vertically from the Netherlands and Fig. 52 shows it worked horizontally, also from the Netherlands. In Fig. 53 from Scotland, it is worked horizontally close together; in Fig. 54, from Filey in Yorkshire, it is knit vertically.

Flags : Sometimes known as the KILT pattern, this pattern came in many forms. It was generally associated with Scotland although Gladys Thompson, (1971), P. 1O4, states that it was also found in Whitby in Yorkshire. Usually flags were knitted alongside ribs and cables; in Fig. 55 it shows a flag pattern beside fisherman's rib. In The Netherlands the flag pattern is sometimes called the point pattern. In Fig. 56 from The Netherlands.

Triple Sea Waves : Composed of knit and purl stitches and symbolising the sea, it appears in many different ways in sweaters. In Scotland the closest example I could find was Pl: 57 with the diagonal

pattern knitted across the sweater. In The Netherlands it was also used and called waves; Fig. 58 shows a fisherman wearing another variation of the wave pattern.

Rig and Fur, Ridge and Furrow: This was used for the shoulders of the sweaters. It was decorative and also made the seams invisible. I have mentioned this pattern in Chapter 3 as it was used both in England and Scotland. I also think that it was used in Holland but Tellegen does not write about the shoulder pattern in her book; there are examples of these in Fig. 28, from Zuidholland, and Fig. 24 from Runswick Bay in Yorkshire.

Fig. 59: Regional Similarities: Straithes in England.

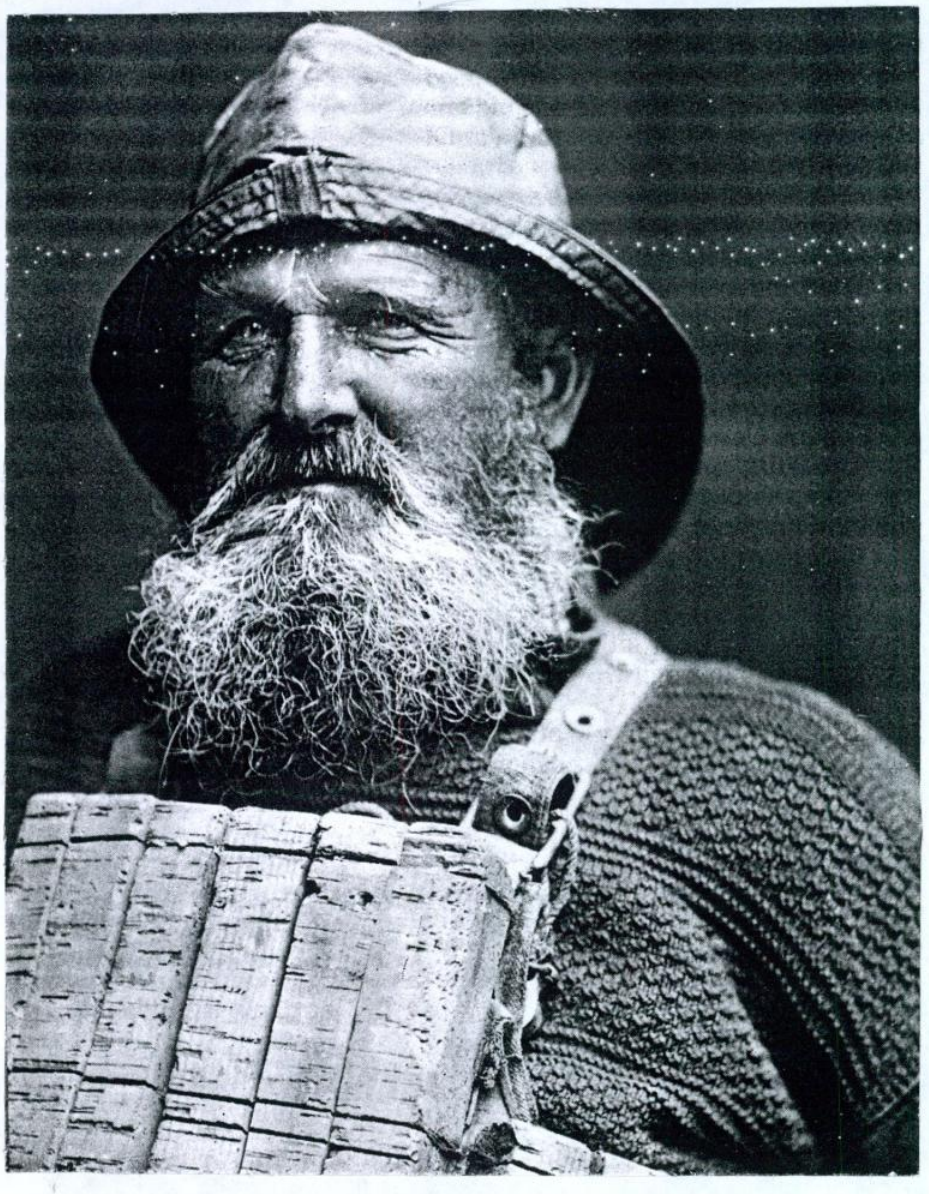

Fig. 60: Regional Similarities - Whitby in England.

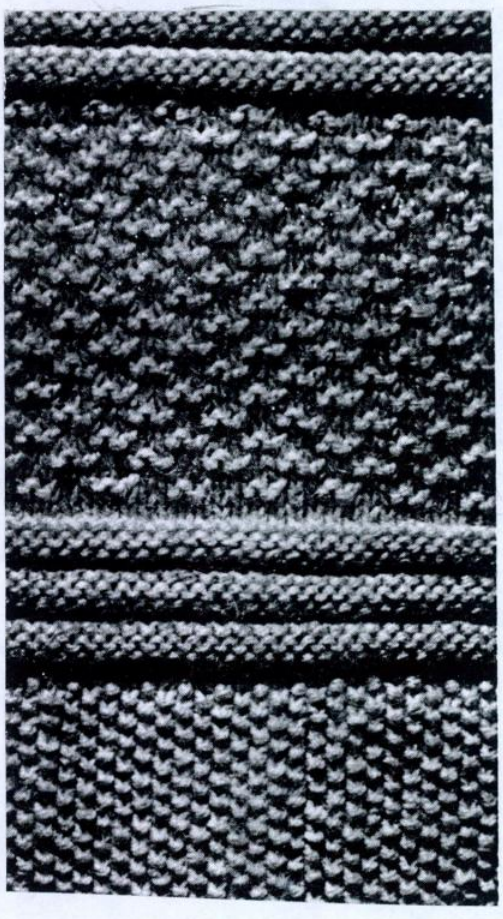

Fig. 61: Regional Similarities - Scotland

Fig. 62: Regional Similarities - Velsen in The Netherlands.

REGIONAL SIMILARITIES

From looking closely, one can see similarities in various designs. In this Chapter, I will write about the different variations in these patterns and the similarities I have found in sweaters from Scotland, England and The Netherlands.

In the countries that are mentioned, I have found one pattern for a fisherman's sweater, which is similar in both countries in Fig. 59 from Staithes in England, Fig. 6O from Whitby in Yorkshire, Fig. 61 from Scotland and Fig. 62 from Velsen, West in The Netherlands, all of which show this particular pattern.

In the four sweaters, bands of a variation of knit and purl stitches alternate to form what is called the moss stitch, sometimes worked single or double. In Fig. 6O and Fig. 62 one can clearly see how the panels were separated with bands of garter stitch. This was a row of plain knitted across the sweater six times. In Fig. 59 and Fig. 62 one can see how the pattern knitted was plain halfway up the body of the sweater. I have mentioned in Chapter 3 how some sweaters from both countries were knit in this technique as it was more economical and less yarn was used. In Fig. 59 and Fig. 61 the bands are knitted differently from those in Fig. 6O and 62. The bands are knitted in the 'Poor Man's Wealth' pattern in Fig. 59 and Fig 61; this was several rows of purl stitches, which form a ridge after alternative rows of plain stitches are knitted. It is interesting to see that the 'Poor Man's Wealth' is also used as a rib on the body of the sweater in Fig. 59.

Fig. 64: Regional Similarities - Scarborough in England.

Fig. 63: Regional Similarities - Egmond aan Zee in The Netherlands.

The sleeves in both Figs. 59 and 62 use a panel of moss stitch; in Fig. 59 the panel is small without bands of 'Poor Man's Wealth'. On either side of the pattern the rest of the sleeve is knit plain.

In Fig. 62 there are three bands of garter stitch separating the moss stitch on the body of the sweater. The moss stitch is also used on the sleeve; unlike Fig. 59 the panel of moss stitch is knitted from the top of the sleeve to just above the elbow and it is knitted in between the garter stitch. The use of the moss stitch is the same with bands of garter stitch or 'Poor Man's Wealth'. It is interesting to look at four types of sweaters from three different regions which look similar.

From Egmond aan Zee, North-West Holland (Fig. 63), this sweater is very similar to a sweater from Scarborough in Yorkshire; Fig. 64 shows this pattern. In both sweaters the pattern starts half way up the body of the sweater. The top half of the sweater is in double moss stitch, which continues up to the top of the sweater. In Fig: 64 the pattern is similar, but there is an edging of the step stitch knitted to either side of the moss stitch up the sides of the armholes. There is also a band of 'Poor Man's Wealth' separating the patterns. It is used again, as in Fig. 59, from Whitby in Yorkshire, for the rib on the body of the sweater.

The sleeves are left plain, as is also the case in Fig. 63 from Holland. In Fig. 63 the garter stitch is not used to separate the plain pattern from the moss stitch. The garter stitch was commonly used in Holland to divide patterns but is not used in Egmond aan Zee.

Fig. 65: Regional Similarities - Yorkshire in England.

Fig. 66: Regional Similarities - Vlacardingen in The Netherlands.

I have shown two other patterns in sweaters which are similar, from England and Holland. Fig. 65 in Yorkshire, shows a group of men; I am interested in the sweater worn by the man seated to the right in the photograph. Fig. 66 from Vlaardingen in the South of Holland also shows a group of men. I am interested in the sweater worn by the man kneeling to the right in the photograph wearing a hat and smoking a cigarette with his hand on his hip. Both of the sweaters are knitted with a panel of plain stitch and then a panel knitted in the moss stitch in panels of the same width up along the sweater. The sleeves of the sweater from Holland can be seen knitted in the same way as the body. In Fig. 65 we cannot see the sleeves of the sweater because the fisherman is wearing a jacket. Other sweaters knitted in Filey all seem to use the pattern which is knitted on the body of the sweater as well as on the sleeves. It is usually knitted down to the elbow and the rest is left plain to the cuff. I think Fig. 65 could possibly have been knitted in the same way, if one could see the sleeves. Examples of sweaters knit in this manner are seen in Fig. 20 and Fig 22.

CONCLUSION

In my Study of Fishermens' Sweaters from England, Scotland and The Netherlands, I have found many similarities between production in the three countries, which I have written about and illustrated in my thesis.

Even though I have found many sweaters to be alike, I have also found that each knitter achieves her own individual qualities, which are unique to the garment she makes. This was achieved in England and Scotland by using the initials of her husband and knitting them into the sweater. The Dutch have given their sweaters various features such as a drawstring with pompons or tassels, which is threaded into the neck of the sweater. As well as using the popular 'rig and fur' pattern on the shoulders of their garments they adapted other highly decorative patterns into the shoulders of their sweaters in some regions, such as Zuidholland.

The English and Scottish sweaters are similar because of the movement of the fishermen, but most importantly because of the travel route of the herring girls around specific ports of the British Isles. The Dutch, however, seem to have adapted patterns from both Scotland and England, but altered these to suit their own conditions.

Although research has shown that the fishermens' sweaters from the three countries are similar, I personally think the Dutch knitters have used their imagination in the most resourceful way bringing a unique individuality to their work.

LETTERS

Tellegen, Henriette, C., 8th December, 1995.
Tellegen, Henriette, C., 1Oth January, 1996.

Watt Tommy, F.S.A. Scotland, Curator, Shetland Museums Service, 6th December, 1995.

Henrietta C. Tellegen
Javalaan 11A
3742 CN Baarn
Nederland
Tel. 035 - 5431042

10 January, 1996.

Dear Jacinta,

Thank you for your lovely card and yes I will try to answer your questions.

1 - The gusset was used but more often at the neck then under the arm.

2 - I have not heard of herring girls moving to Holland this did not prove it did not happen. I will try to find out more about it and let you know.

3 - As people from Holland do not believe in ~~many~~ symbolics we do not use names. The patterns were copied from British knitwear the fishermen took with them. and used in combinations the knitters liked best. The difference between the harbours was because the lack of communication. Protestants did not talk to Catholics so a lot of visiting did not occur.

4. There is no mention, that I found, of Dutch fishermen marrying foreign girls. But they did not marry here either. Marrying was a concent of the community so was splitting up. I don't know if they would have accepted foreigners as they did not, for a long time, accepted people from outside the village.

5. The pompous originated from the cold hands with which the ties could not be knotted. The pompoms were easier to hold on to.

I hope this will help you further. If you have any more questions do write.

Henrietta

Shetland Islands Council

LEISURE AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Shetland Museum - Croft House Museum - Böd of Gremista

Tel: 01595 695057

Fax: 01595 696729

SHETLAND MUSEUMS SERVICE,
LOWER HILLHEAD, LERWICK,
SHETLAND. ZE1 0EL

TOMMY WATT, F.S.A. Scot.
Curator

Jacinta Leigh,
Blackhail,
Colbinstown,
Dunlavin,
Co. Kildare,
Ireland.

6th December 1995

Dear Jacinta,

There are two books I would recommend you get a hold of from your local library. They are:

Knitting by the Fireside and the Hillside, Linda Fryer, Published by Shetland Times 1995.
The Fair Isle Knitting Handbook by Alice Starmore, published by Blandford, 1990.

The first book is excellent for the history of the growth of Shetland knitwear, the other for the patterns and historical information. Shetland fisherman's ganzies is an interesting topic, as the type of ganzy worn by the fishermen of Shetland was very similar to those illustrated in Klift-Tellegen's book. That is dark blue in colour and often with ribbed or chain patterns set in a panel on the front. The sad thing is that in the past years collectors of patterns and items have ignored these ganzies in favour of the highly coloured Fair Isle and Shetland knitwear. To this end there are no examples of normal everyday wear jumpers in the museum's collections and we know very little about them. The highly coloured jumpers were worn but rarely at sea. What was worn at sea by men during the 18th and 19th centuries were colour 'haf caps' some of which are illustrated in Starmore's book.

If you read the two books mentioned and would like to ask me specific questions, then please contact me again.

Yours sincerely,

TOMMY WATT
CURATOR

PS. we do not have Klift-Tellegen's address.

Henrietta C. Tellegen
Javalaan 11A
3742 CN Baarn
Nederland
Tel. 035 - 5431042

December 8, 1995.

Dear Mrs Leigh,

This morning I received your letter through my publishers. As I don't know how little time you have to write your thesis I am answering you directly.

Sajet is a cheap "short wool" spun very tightly to make it hard wearing. When worn and washed several times it started to shine, which is very typical of sajet. The wool was dyed in black, navy blue and "Nassau" blue. The Nassaublue had little red specks. In some areas this was the most liked colour and in others it was considered "poor" looking. There was another colour that only was introduced after the war and ~~that~~ was called "underpandscolour" and looked greyish-beige. This never became very popular.

The original patterns came from the British Islands but were adapted by our own knitters. As the villages were through religious differences and lack of transport isolated ~~why~~ the patterns did not change very much. This was the reason of the patterns belonging to a village. The women knew by looking at a pattern where it came from. Later on it became a identificationmark. Like, in the war a fisherman washed ashore while his kinfolk were moved to another part of Holland. By recognising his knitted sweater his family could be traced. Many more stories are told about this subject, some old and some new.

I wish you much fun making your thesis and will answer your questions any time.

With friendly greetings from a cold and sunny Holland,

Henrietta.

P.S.
I "found" a real fisherman's knit as far is Finland.
HCT.

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