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National College of Art & Design

Faculty of Design, Department of Fashion &  
Textiles

*The 'Smock Frock': Making and Meaning*

By

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the Degree of  
Batchelor of Design in Textiles, B. Des. (Textiles)  
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Dublin 2

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(b)

Aisling McLaughlin

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Design & Communications Department  
the Degree of  
Bachelor of Design in Architecture  
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## Abstract

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## INTRODUCTION

This garment:

"Looks like a grannies nightgown"

Cian Mc Loughlin (7 years old)

"Looks like a christening robe "

Pauline Maguire (middle aged)

"Looks like a little girls dress "

Keith Maguire (teenager)



Fig.1.Cream linen smock from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Cambridge Folk Museum.

## INTRODUCTION

This garment

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Keith Maguire (teenager)



Fig. 1 Cream linen smock from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Cambridge Folk Museum.



Based on these readings of this magnificently smocked and embroidered garment, it is clear that, today the pale colours, gathered cloth and decorative qualities of this smock communicate qualities of femininity.

The idea that an ordinary man would have worn this garment nowadays seems wholly unlikely and particularly unlikely that he'd have worn it to work.

This "smock frock", as it was originally known, is an example of the ordinary work wear of laboring –men in England from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. That the uses and significance of one garment can have changed so dramatically from that of a laboring male to a pretty girlish garment in one hundred years is what motivates this thesis.

However, before these issues came to interest me it was the beautiful, skilled workmanship of the smocked and embroidered garments that I found exciting and inspirational.

To research the garments, their manufacture and their changing significance over two hundred years, my main sources were the garments themselves examined in English folk museums, small museum-type publications about the history of the technique of smocking and the smocks themselves. The best of these books was English Smocks by Alice Armes (1977), the main museums visited were Guildford, Luton and Cambridge.

What this thesis aims to examine is the changing significance of the English smocks and smocking from its position as male work-wear in the

The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the  
theoretical aspects of the problem. It is shown that the  
problem is equivalent to a problem in the theory of  
differential equations. The second part of the paper is  
devoted to a discussion of the numerical aspects of the  
problem. It is shown that the problem can be solved  
numerically by using the method of finite differences.  
The third part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of  
the results of the numerical calculations. It is shown that  
the results are in good agreement with the theoretical  
results. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a  
discussion of the conclusions of the paper. It is shown  
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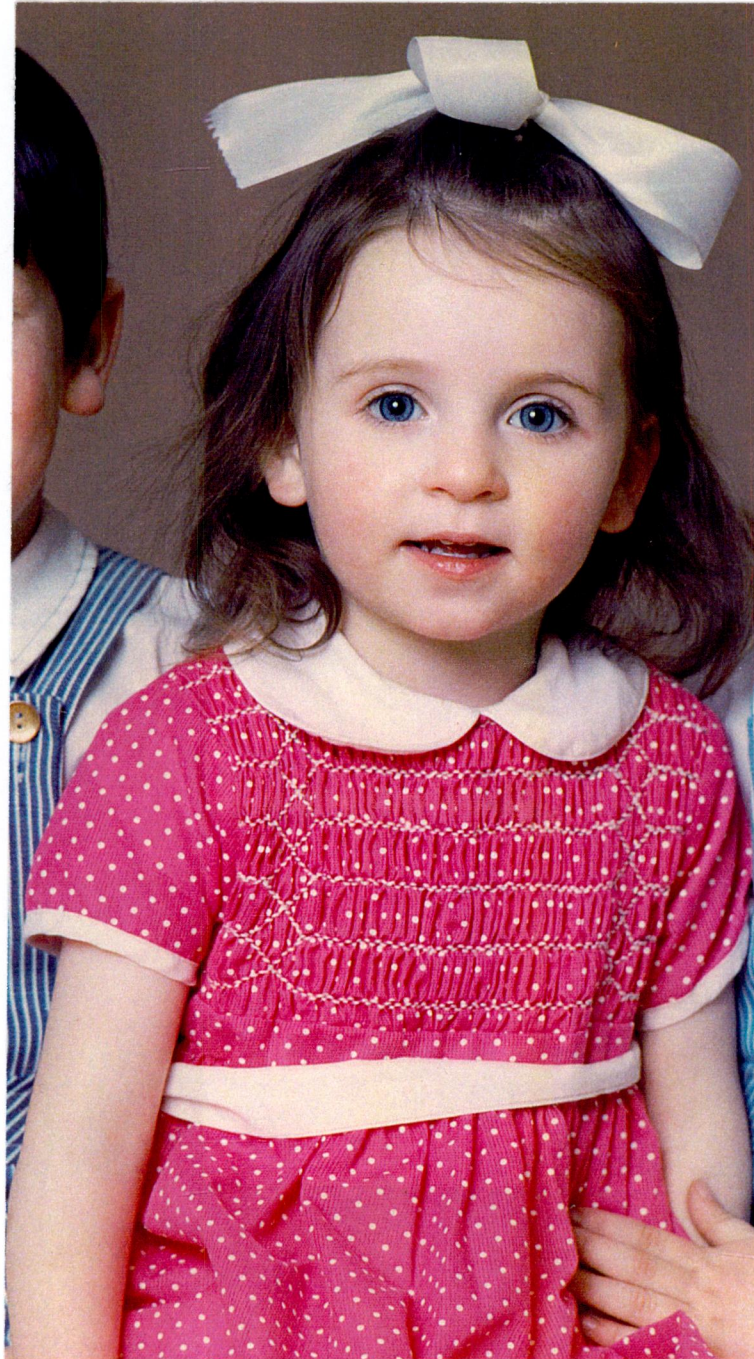


Fig.2. Claudine Smyth wearing a smocked dress.1973.



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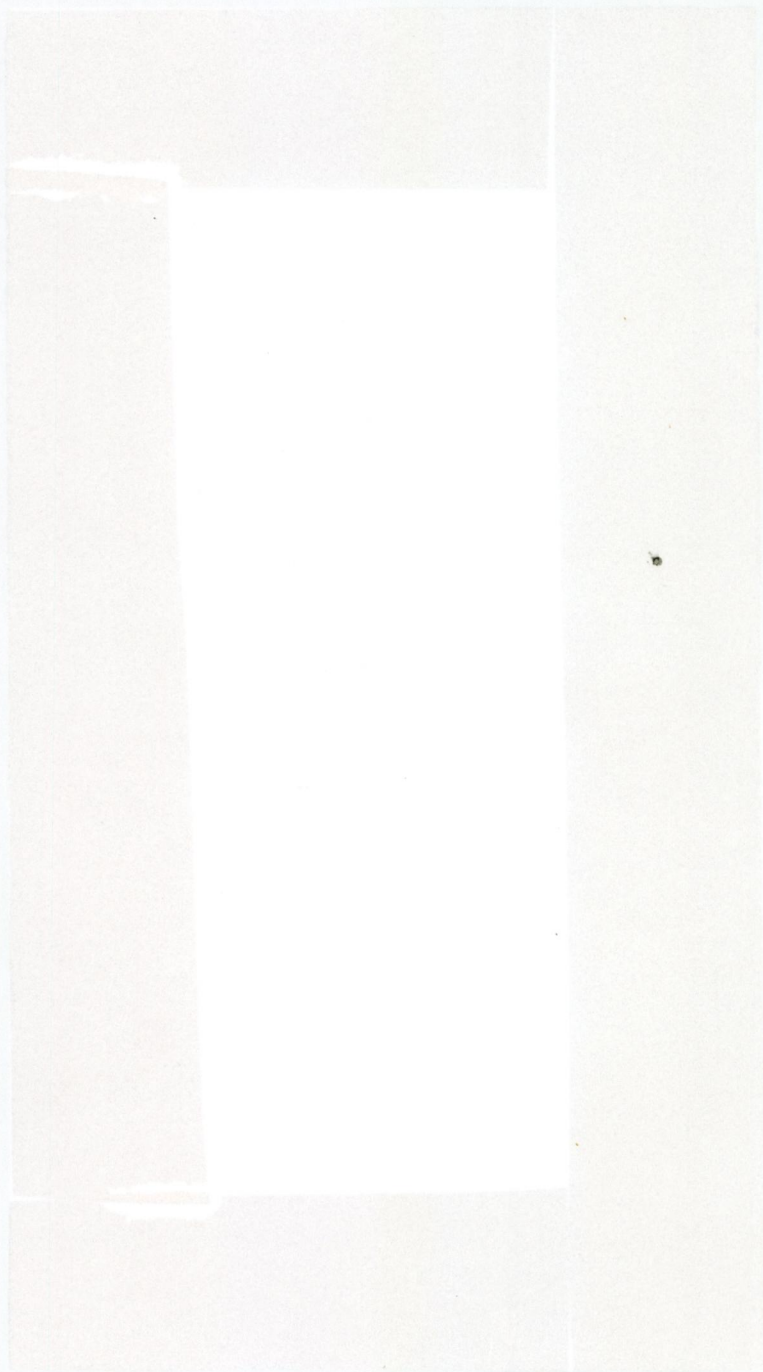


Fig. 2. Claudine Smyth wearing a smocked dress 1973.

## **Chapter One :**

### **SMOCKS AS MEN'S WORKWEAR IN THE 18<sup>th</sup> AND 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**

#### **EMBODYING NOTIONS OF GENDER , CLASS AND OCCUPATION :**

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century smocks were mainly associated with those employed as farm labourers, but they were also worn by other country men of different professions. For example ploughmen, wagoners or carters, gardeners, woodsmen, gamekeepers, shepherds, butchers, fishmongers and tailors were also known to have worn smocks and Pynes drawings of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century show cider makers and brewery workers wearing them (Hall '79 pg23).

The smocks were made by the wife of the wearer or a female member of the family. Smocking was a female creation for male consumption and was at this time made in the domestic sphere for 'love' not money. "When women embroider, it is not seen as art but as a expression of femininity and categorised as craft" according to Parker in her book 'Subversive Stitch'. During the seventeenth century embroidery was such a measure of femininity that from an early age most girls inevidently learned the skill from their mothers.

As smocks became more common among working men demand increased and they were produced in larger quantities according to Maggie Hall ('79 pg19). The manufacture of smocks took place mainly in the south and midlands of England in a scale ranging from one woman in the village making all the smocks for the village to industries like the 'Newark Smock-Frock Industry' where there were ten manufacturers of smocks working in Newark between 1826 and 1872 when the industry was at its height



Fig.3. An image of a waggoner from a contemporary playing card 1679 England.



### The Earliest uses of the Smock

The smock was originally called the smock frock. It is possible that the smock grew from the loose linen garment called a chemise. The word frock came from the name given to the full-skirted coat worn by men until the end of the eighteenth century. In a letter in 1746 Henry Purejoy requested his tailor to "bring the coachman a linen frock to put over his cloaths when he rubs his horses down" (Hall'79 pg5).

Sailors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have worn a short loose coat with a restricted neck opening but a more likely forerunner of the frock is the Carter's coat shown in a later seventeenth century illustration Fig 3. (Rural Costume its Origin and Development in Western Europe and the British Isles, A.Oakes and M.Hamilton 1970.pg 140)

According to Barbra Baines in her book Fashion Revivals in Elizabethan times (1533-1603) a suit of clothes made of a waistcoat and petticoat were sought after signs of status and sufficiency by those of lesser rank while a loose smock or chemise like garment was not. When courtiers enjoyed the freedom of such clothes, long white and loose they were within the confines of their own rank and the smocks distinguished from those of the poor by silk and luxury decorations.

Alice Armes in her book English Smocks writes that a picture around the time of Charles the first (1625-1641) is the first record we have illustrating a full smock. She does not include the picture but states that "It is not possible to see whether the gathers are controlled by stitchery"





Fig.4. William Oakford of Haslemere wearing a smock.  
Dated around the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Surrey England.



There were several varieties of 'cut' in smocks, the most general being that which was reversible, with the back and front having the same pattern. This design proved very practical since washing could be postponed until both sides were dirty. There was a small opening left at the neck to allow the weaver to pull the garment over his head easily.

Another type was that which was opened like a coat from neck to hem with a square cut collar, shallow at the back and extending at the shoulder so much so that it reached near the elbow. Figure 4 shows William Oakford of Haslemere wearing a typical smock dated around the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Surrey England. This is a very simple smock showing a large square cut collar.

In all cases the cut of the smock was of the utmost simplicity so that they were economical work wear. Practicality was the priority in making smocks and it is thought that this is how the smocking came about for the chest area. The smocking technique gathered a lot of fabric together and held the folds in place with the surface stitches. This created shaping around the top of the garment and plenty of space for the legs to move freely. If all this fabric fell forward each time a worker bent to do something it would get in his way, making jobs difficult and dangerous, thus concealing the task.

There was no waste of fabric in the production of these smocks. the component parts were entirely squares and oblongs. Curves were never introduced in cutting a smock as this would create a waste of fabric. Many smocks were planned entirely by folding and cutting the material.



Fig.5.A surrey smock, dated late 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century. Guildford Folk Museum No. 1214.



Linen was the material used for smocks; it is naturally waterproof because the fibre swells when wet, but can be made more waterproof by soaking in linseed. The linseed however also weakened the fibres, this made the smock more liable to rot so there are few surviving waterproof smocks. There is one in the Guildford museum that is unworn (Figure 5).

As the linen used is always closely woven it acts as protection from the wind to an extent. The neck opening is usually restricted to keep out the cold. Linen is strong, does not tear easily and can withstand a lot of washing. Since the other clothes of the late eighteenth century were of heavy wool and later corduroy or moleskin (heavy cotton), so these were relatively expensive, people had few clothes and they were taken care of and certainly not worn doing dirty and heavy jobs. Smocks were more economical, easily washed and not prone to fashion changes and that is why they were made especially for workmen.

Clothes in general were a major expense in the labourers budget so it was essential to make them last as long as possible. According to Alexander (pg1) "at the turn of the eighteenth century smocks cost approximately one weeks wages for a farm labourer and coats, shoes etc. cost roughly twice that".

The influence of the industrial revolution brought the arrival of cheaper mass produced clothing which became widespread in the second half of the nineteenth century with the result being that the smock became less necessary. This coincided with an increase in the use of machinery, since the smock was liable to be caught up in machinery its design was becoming unsuitable for most labourers.



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In the second half of the eighteenth century there was a vogue for the natural, picturesque and all things that signified country living. According to Working Dress "Middle and upper classes began to wear trousers because they were rural". The change from men wearing breeches to trousers was gradual. They were a craze for the urban and the young and were given political significance by the French revolution in the revolt of the sans culotte (those without knee breeches).

The trousered peasants were pulled against the aristocratic establishment, therefore any man who considered himself liberal and radical adopted trousers. High society still insisted on the wearing of knee breeches for court and evening-wear. In the dress of labourers smocks were worn over trousers.

Decorative smocking had begun to appear near the end of the eighteenth century but only on the smocks of the wealthy farmer to begin with, since it was very time consuming. It wasn't until the 1810's that smocking featured on ordinary workers smocks (Working Dress pg84).

The industrial revolution brought a growing importance in industrial and commercial activity. This strengthened the element of practicality in dress and brought a new status to the dress associated with this new industrial machinery.

According to Dress in Eighteenth Century England the plainer style of dress now expressed wealth, position and power through personal activity and achievement. The smock through this period of the eighteenth century thrived as a simple garment.

It was at this time, in the late eighteenth century to nineteenth century that the break appeared between the dress of men and women. Men's dress now expressed



status through activity and achievement and lost most of its decorative element.

Women's clothes still remained the expression of status by leisure achieved by the activity of others, namely men. This association of decoration with women's clothes may have played a crucial role in the decline of wearing smocks which was to follow in the nineteenth century.

Embroidery was beginning to signify a leisured, aristocratic life style. Not working was becoming the hallmark of femininity. It provided evidence that a man or husband could support his wife, a leisured woman. This may have influenced the decline in the sort of domestic embroidery that was produced out of necessity, which is what smocking was.

The industrial activities had other effects on dress. Through technical inventions fabrics could be produced cheaply and in large quantities. The distribution of fashion was made easier by the improvement that had been made by the second half of the nineteenth century to roads and the introduction of railways. Women who had once spun cloth for their families now worked for wages as they produced fabrics, first in their homes and then in factories. The fabric would be sold all over the country.

The smock was an institution in itself by the first half of the nineteenth century. With increased industrialisation, rural workers were starting to prefer the new more accessible ordinary country clothing to a smock. The smock specifically indicated rural labouring status and a distance from progressive industrialisation and the urban centres. The increased availability of cloth and improved methods of



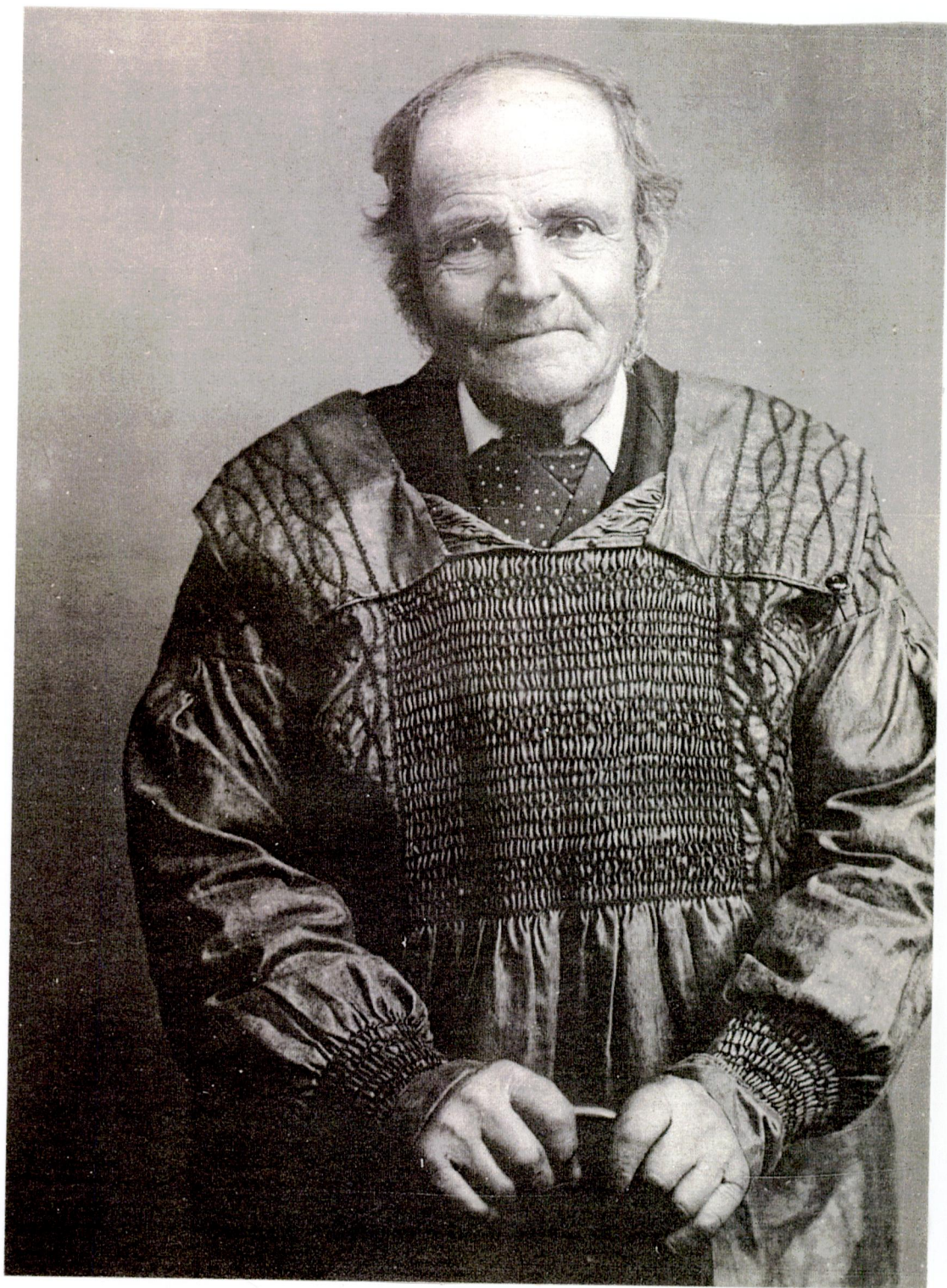


Fig.6. John Turvey a farmer of Swanbourne England  
wearing his smock over his best suit.



A social reason for the decline of the smock is mentioned in an article written in 1937 for The Sussex County Magazine. It tells of a countryman whose daughter in service in London about 1887, deplored her fathers old-fashioned way of dress and substituted a new coat for his best Sunday smock, the old man it is recorded was so appalled at the idea that he preferred to walk through the village in shirt sleeves rather than wear the new coat .

Another story recorded in the same article tells of a similar countryman who visited his daughter in London. He wore his best smock-frock for the occasion and the little boy of the house was heard to ask "Liza, why does your dad come to see you in his night-gown?".

These two stories show how the smock although cherished by its owner was often socially unacceptable to the young people towards the end of the nineteenth century as it branded its wearer as a country-man, which was not fashionable in the new city lifestyle. Figure 6 dated 1910 shows John Turvey a farmer of Swanbourne wearing his smock over his best suit, showing that it was still worn with pride by some men at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Smocks varied in ways to suit the needs of the worker for example, those worn by stone masons had very little gathering on them as the stone dust would collect in the gathers and make the smock too heavy to work in particularly during wet weather. According to Hall one pig farmer always wore a smock when catching pigs for market as it stopped the pigs running between his legs. This farmer obviously required a smock of good length to fulfil his needs.



Fig.7.White smock. Dated mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
Guildford Museum No.62 .



for market as it stopped the pigs running between his legs. This farmer obviously required a smock of good length to fulfil his needs.

A resident of Worplesdon, who died in 1940 remembered the parish clerk who was also a pig killer going from killing pigs to church still in his blue round frock(smock) (Dingle, J. Torey, 1974 pg 14). Blue was a cheap dye and was also associated with butchers (Alexander pg8).

White smocks were worn at funerals as a sign of mourning and a village would sometimes have a set of smocks for the pallbearers. Hall describes how the village of Paddington in Oxfordshire had a set of six identical ones and they were kept in the church so that on the occasion of a funeral the men could come straight from the fields and exchange them for their working smocks. This could also have been because the pallbearers may not all have had respectable costumes to wear to the funeral. The fact that smocks were seen as suitable for such a religious occasion as a funeral reaffirms the respectability associated with wearing smocks.

Funeral smocks were usually white rather than the unbleached cream linen, this signifies that the act of wearing them was more important than their practicality on these occasions. There was a set of white funeral smocks at Ashted, England where a burial guild was formed in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century to provide a free burial service for poor people. Smocks and hats were provided for the pallbearers from donation. One of these smocks is now at Guildford museum (figure 7). This is an example of an elaborately embroidered white smock. Its stitching is white on white cotton fabric. It is not as durable as most other smocks as its function is decorative and symbolic rather than practical.





Smocks were also worn for more festive occasions. The Buckinghamshire county museum has a smock that was won in a ploughing match. Naomi Tarrent in the booklet 'Smocks in the Buckinghamshire county museum' states that at the carnation festivities in Aylsebury 1838 smocks were given as prizes for a race for 'men between fifty and sixty' for 'boys to eat rolls and treacle' and for 'jumping in sacks'. Since a prize is offered because one desires to receive it this shows the worth and value placed on a smock in society in 1838.

This was still the case for some people in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as Alexandra writes in 1912 an old couple from Busbridge celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary the husband was wearing a 'smock frock' beautifully worked by his wife and adorned with a rose (Larner, '47 pg8).

According to Cambridge customs and folklore W.H. Barnett learned from his parents that it was a custom for a Fenland bride to embroider a cross as soon as possible after the wedding Ceremony, on her husband's smock. The garment was then wrapped in paper and kept in a drawer until after the man's death, when he was buried in it. This tradition was practised until the middle of the last century (Porter Pg8). These wedding smocks were white and made of light linen since manual work wouldn't be carried out on them. The significance of the smock as the outfit suitable for a man on his wedding day has many meanings. It demonstrates that he is a man of trade, that he's capable of providing for his new family. It would also have been an affordable and practical option.

Smocks were primarily for the working class but there are occasional accounts of it being worn by the upper classes. A landowner Squire Vaughnan of



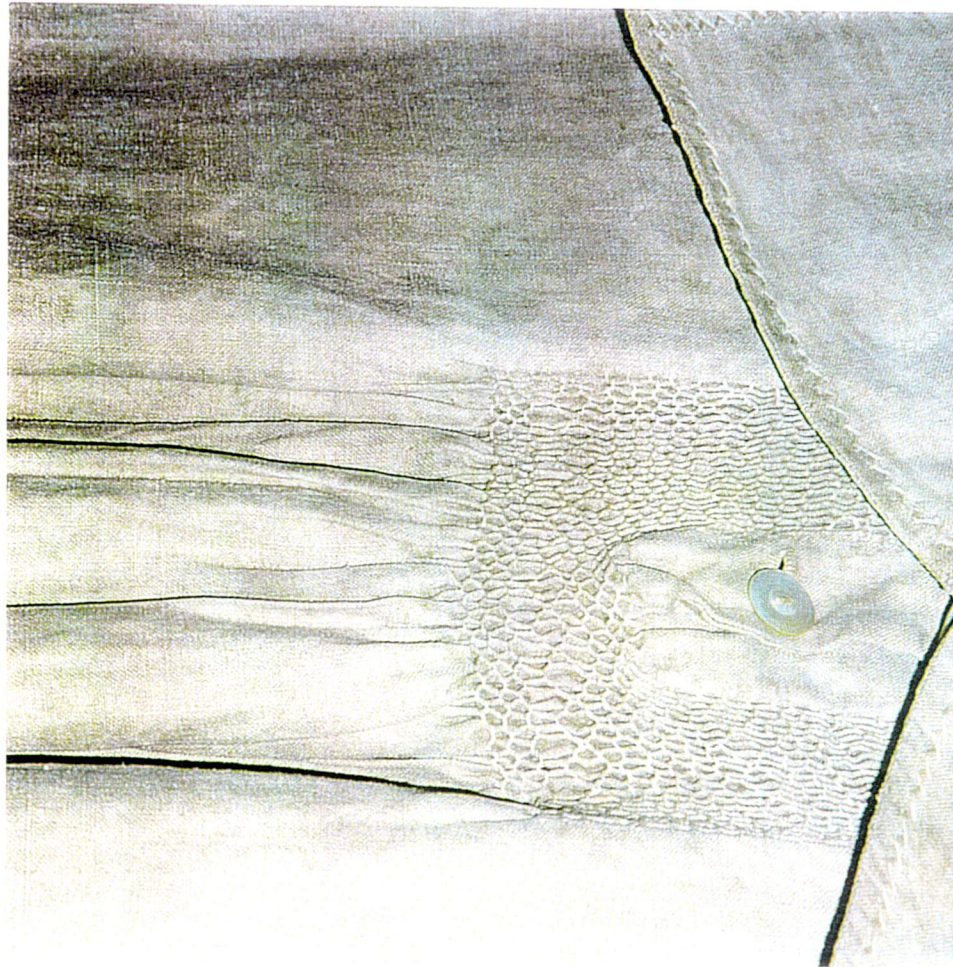
Handlefalle had a smock made for him (Hall '79 pg23). This was unusual and it suggests that Squire Vaughnan was a man who wished to be part of his community. No date is given but it is likely to have been in the early half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

All market days were interesting because people came from neighbouring villages all wearing their proper smock frocks. Each county had its distinctive colour and some of the smocks were decorated by much hand stitching. Even the squires wore their smocks over their black suits. It is suggested that this was probably in the 1850's or 1860's. These squires may have been landowners who worked their own farms or more likely wished to wear the acceptable.

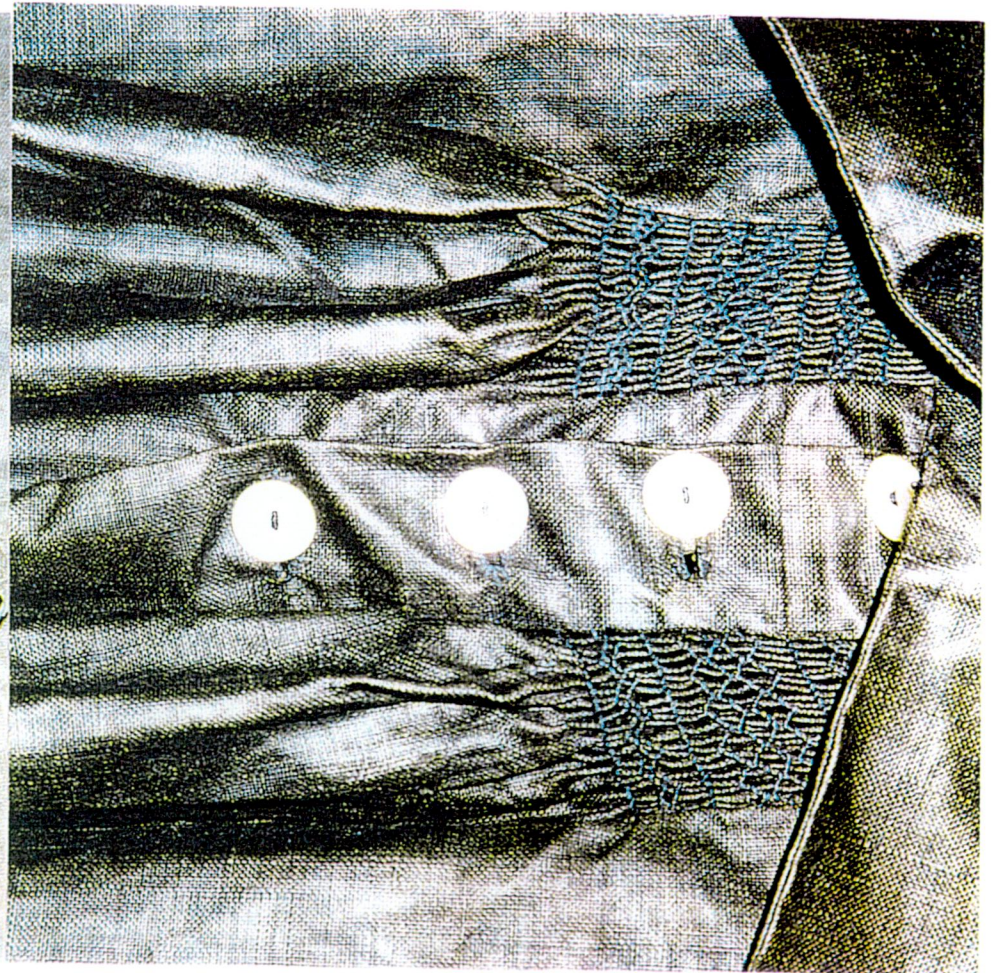
What is becoming very clear about the smock from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until early 19<sup>th</sup> century is this: Men wore them with pride and they symbolised a rural occupation and that women were not wearers of smocks during this period but produced them.



Fig.8.Surrey smock.Dated 1770. Guildford Folk Museum No.881



Surrey smock .Late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century.Guildford Folk Museum No.1214.





## Chapter 2

### **HOW SMOCKS ARE MADE:**

The most common and suitable material for a smock is well-woven linen, preferably of natural colour as it will not have been weakened by bleaching or dying. It was common practice for a man to have two smocks one for work wear and one for special occasions (Hall '79pg1). Working smocks were generally made of coarse linen and usually beige or fawn in colour. In some parts of England other colours were more common. In the midlands blue smocks were popular and were manufactured at Newark.

Hall accounts where different colours were worn. Brown smocks were worn in Surrey, Sussex, Essex, Herefordshire and Suffolk and green ones were worn in Surrey, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. She also says that Messrs. Brown and Crosskey who were makers of smocks for a century made black smocks as well as supplied dark grey ones for shepherds and royal blue for butchers.

The thread used to construct the smock should be a wide twisted linen thread such as linen lace thread. A rule for smock making was that a linen smock should be worked with linen thread and a cotton one with cotton thread. The thread was generally the same colour as the fabric e.g. white on white, or black on black however there are a few cases where a thread of contrasting colour was used (fig.8).

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midlands blue smocks were popular and were usually made of flannel.

It is recorded that different colours were worn in different smocks were

worn in Surrey, Sussex, Essex, Hertfordshire and Kent. In Kent green ones

were worn in Surrey, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire and

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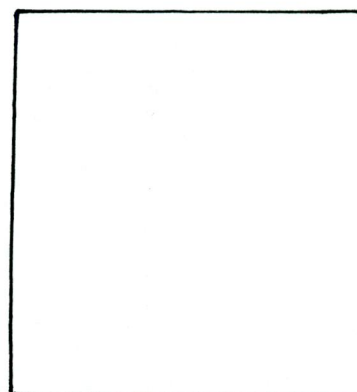
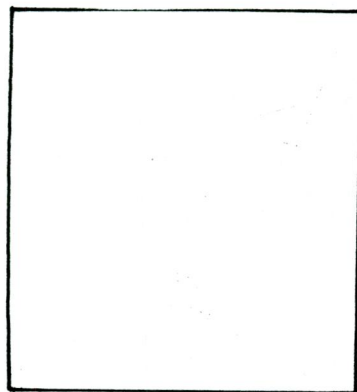
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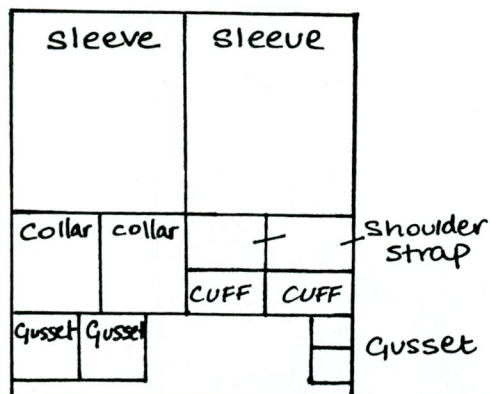
For a mans smock four yards of material (3.65m) not less than thirty-six inches wide was required if a fairly heavy quality of linen was is used. If a lightweight or thin material was used a wider width was better as it naturally gathers up into smaller folds. Lighter weight linen would have been used for wedding or funeral smocks.

The cutting out of the smock could be planned entirely by folding and cutting the material in the following manner: The length required from neck to hem was taken and three times this length of material was required. It was then folded into three equal lengths, two of which formed the back and front of the smock. The third piece was again folded into three, two pieces for the sleeves and the third piece made the collar, gussets and shoulder straps(Fig.9)

Fig.9.The fabric used for making a smock,divided into three equal lengths.



USED FOR FRONT OF SMOCK . USED FOR BACK



REMAINDER PARTS OF SMOCK





Fig.10.Smock with various parts named.

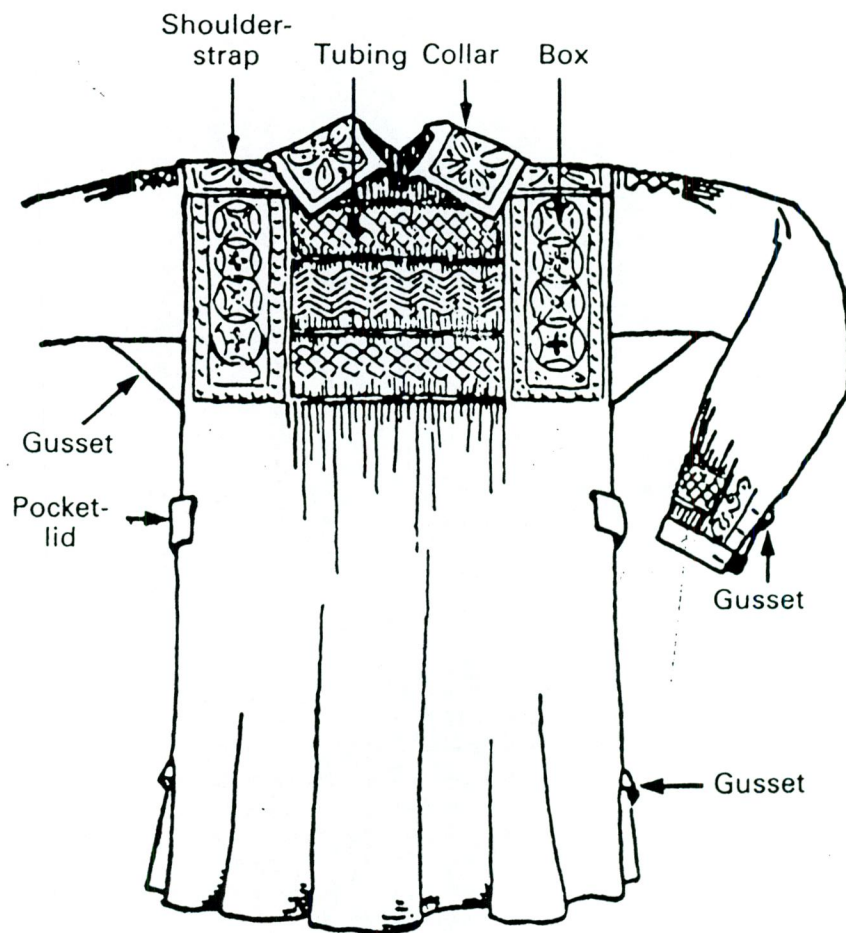


Figure 10 shows a completed smock with the various parts labelled.

The measurements given on figure 11 are general and would vary according to requirements of the wearer. The back and front pieces of the smock (usually 30 inches wide and 40 inches long), are connected by two shoulder straps or yokes of double material. These pieces measure 8 inches from neck to shoulder and approximately 6 inches wide and are for strength. All these measurements change according to wearer. The sleeves are about 21 inches long and 18 inches wide. They are set into narrow cuff bands of double material. All pieces are square and oblong with no curves.





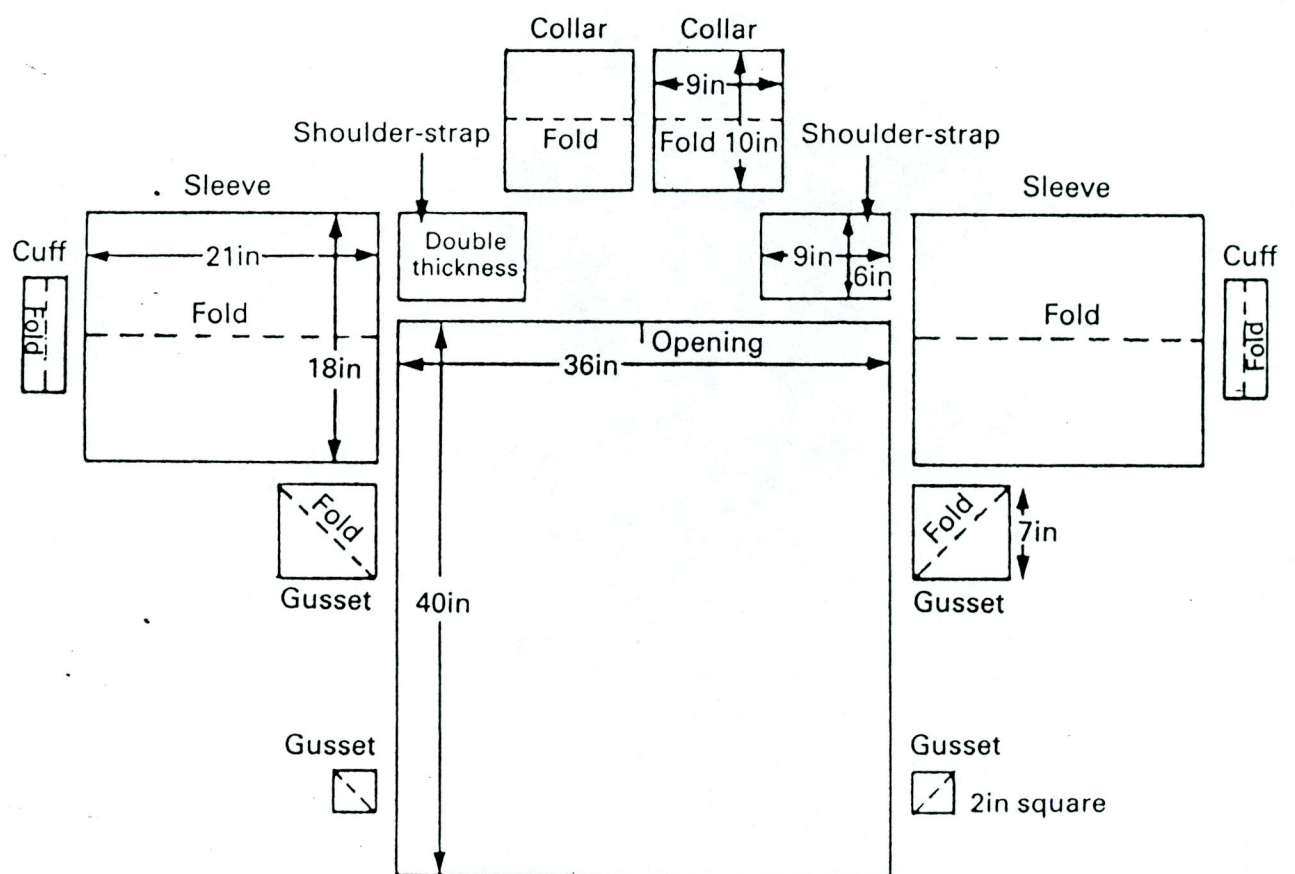


Fig.11.The pieces that make up the smock.



A small opening is made in the center of the back and the front of the neck of the smock to allow for the wearer pulling it over his head. The collar is also open back and front and is of double material, each piece 9 inches long and 5 inches wide when folded.

Four square gussets are required for a smock. Two measuring 7 inches square folded diagonally are let into the under arm seam of the sleeve to give ample space to the wearer. The side seam of the skirt is left open for 2-3 inches at the base and a small gusset 2 inch square is inserted in the same way as the sleeve.

After all the pieces have been cut out, the 'box' is embroidered before gathering or 'tubing' the front and back, this makes it easier to handle the fabric. The base of the 'box' should be level with the underarm base of the sleeve. The width of the 'box' should be half that of the center panel after the tubing is completed. A tacking thread of coloured cotton should mark the boundary of the tubing on either side and should be run in carefully following the thread of the warp of the material.

The smock is then ready to be 'tubed' back and front. The 'tubing' of the smock needs to be done accurately as the elasticity of the smock depends on it. This elasticity is what makes a good smock. The gathering threads should be run in and out, by using the thread of the material as a guide (figure 12) and not by applying marks, dots or transfers (Armes pg16). If gathering threads do not follow the thread of the material, the smock will hang crooked.





Transfers are difficult to apply in line with the thread of the material and so are not advisable. According to Armes, none of the old skilful smockers used dots but gathered straight 'by eye'.

Very strong cotton or thread must be used for the gathering and the ends must be very securely fastened off. This is the only time when a good knot may be used in smocking. All the rows of thread should be drawn up to exactly the same length (Fig.13). This should form a firm compact series of regular tubes. The rows of gathering should not be more than half an inch apart and the stitches should be of equal length on both side of the material. The rows of gathering should begin half an inch from the upper edge of the material and extend to at least one inch below the edge of the stitching. Each row for the gathers should be started from the right. The embroidery holding the tubing, seen in figure14, should be started from the left. These embroidery stitches will be described in more detail later in the chapter.

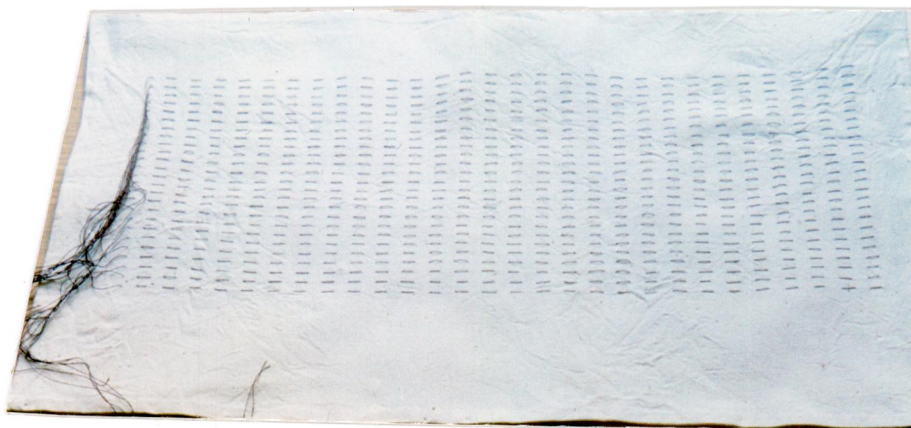


Fig.12. The gathering threads running in and out of the fabric.

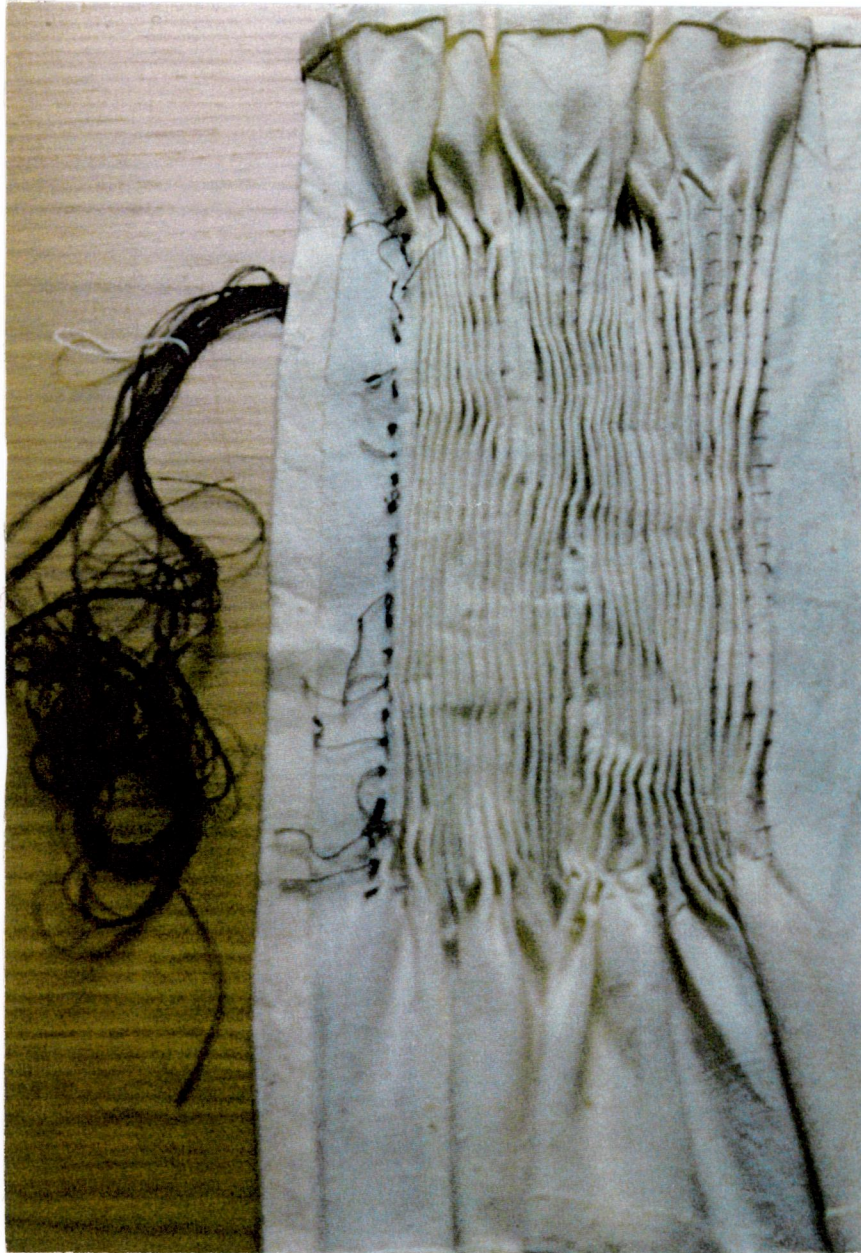


Fig.13.The gathering threads very tightly pulled and securely fastened by knotting.





Fig.14.The embroidery on the tubing.



Fig.15.An agricultural labourer wearing a smock.  
Dated 1894.



### Embroidery

Elaborately decorated smocks were not produced before the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and they reached their peak in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Armes). Figure 15 shows an elaborately decorated smock worn by Thomas Pitkin of Swanbourne, an agricultural laborer who gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Old Age Pensions in 1894, when he was sixty-seven.

It has been suggested that the embroidery patterns found on the 'box' of the smock varied in different counties, with each having its own traditional design (Figure 16-19).

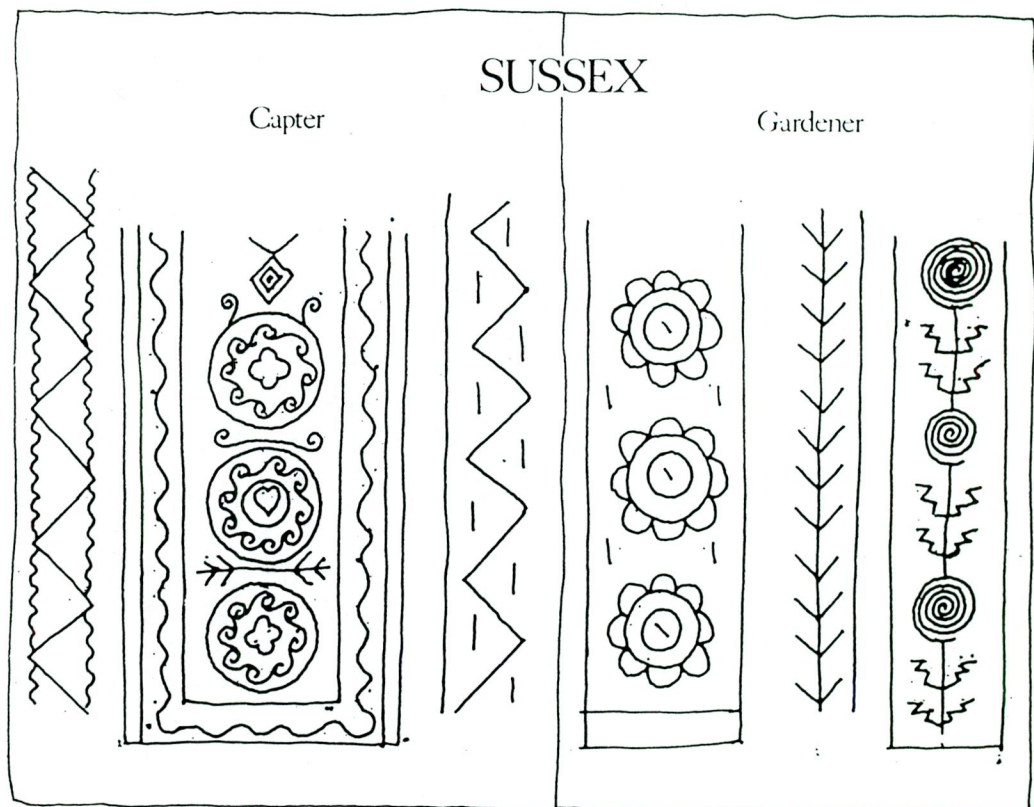


Fig.16. Embroidery pattern from a smock from Sussex.





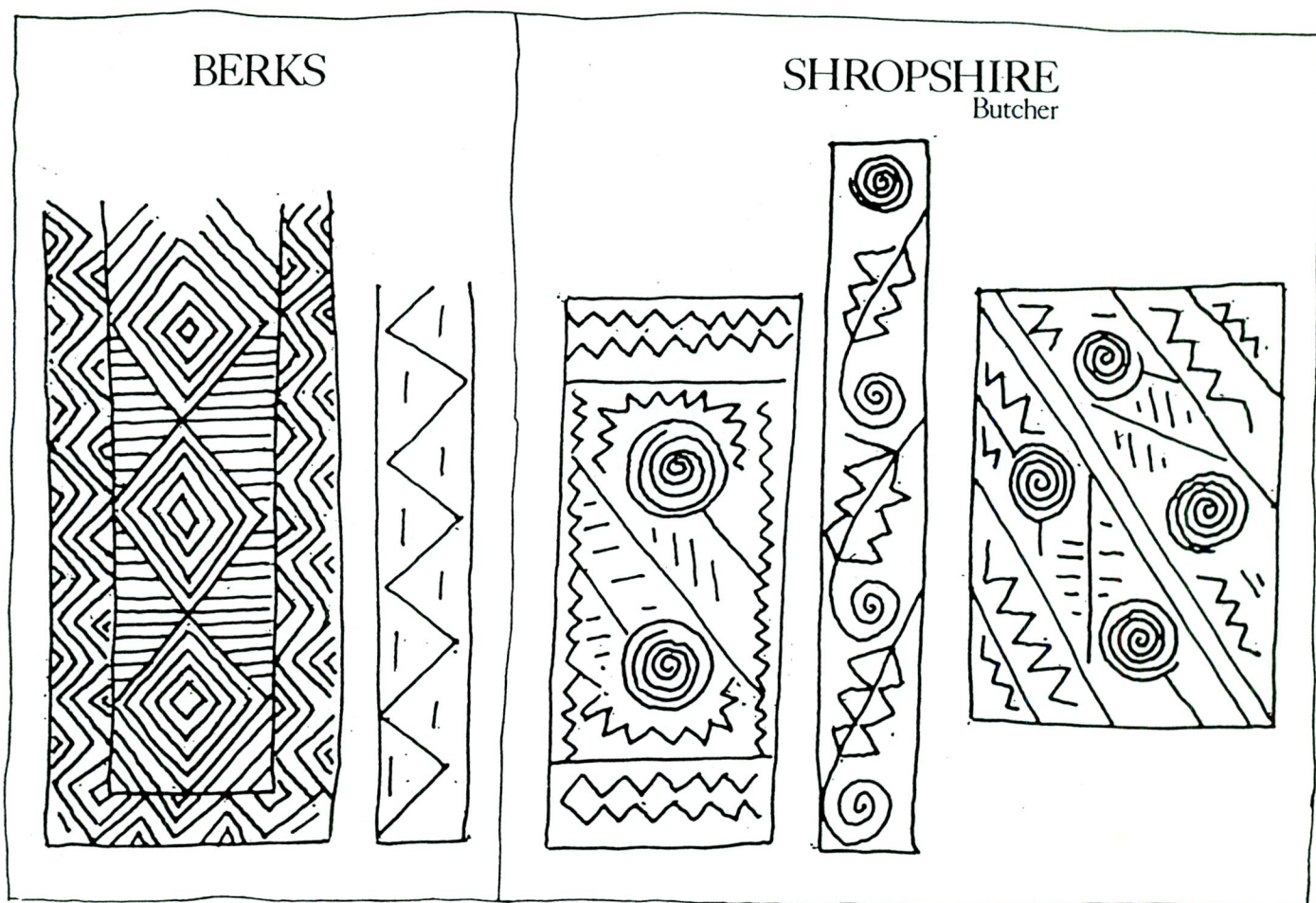


Fig.17.Embroidery pattern from a smock from Berks  
suitable for a butcher.



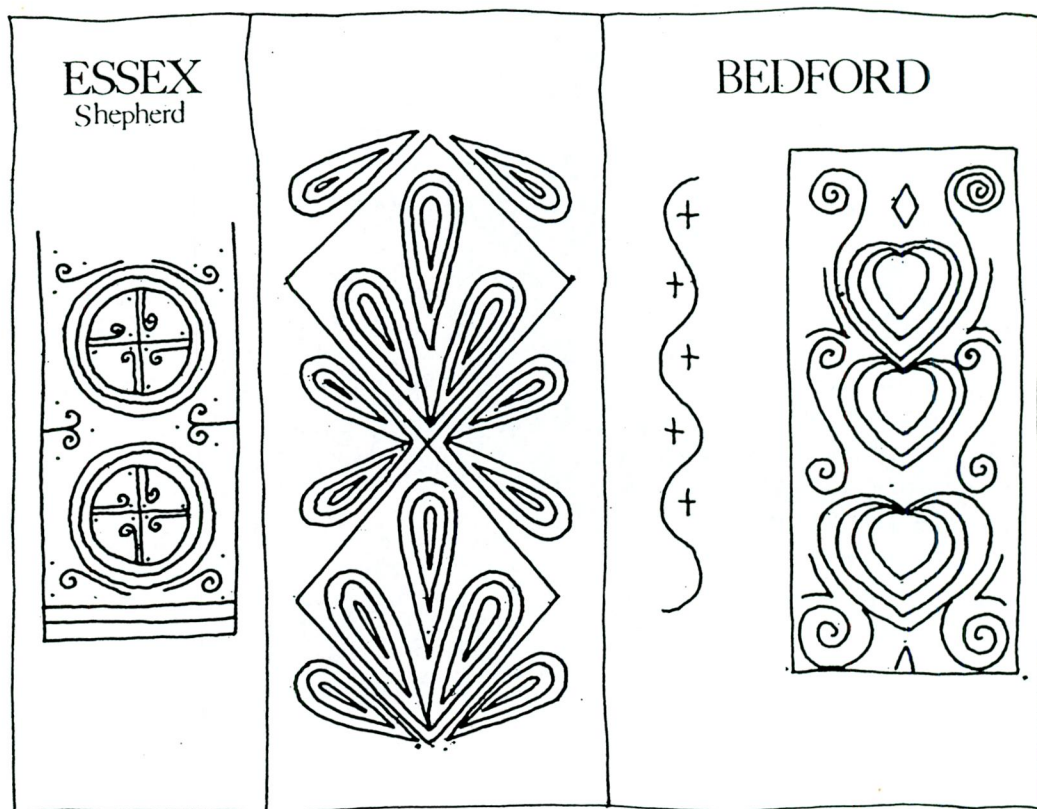


Fig.18.A shepherd pattern used for a smock.





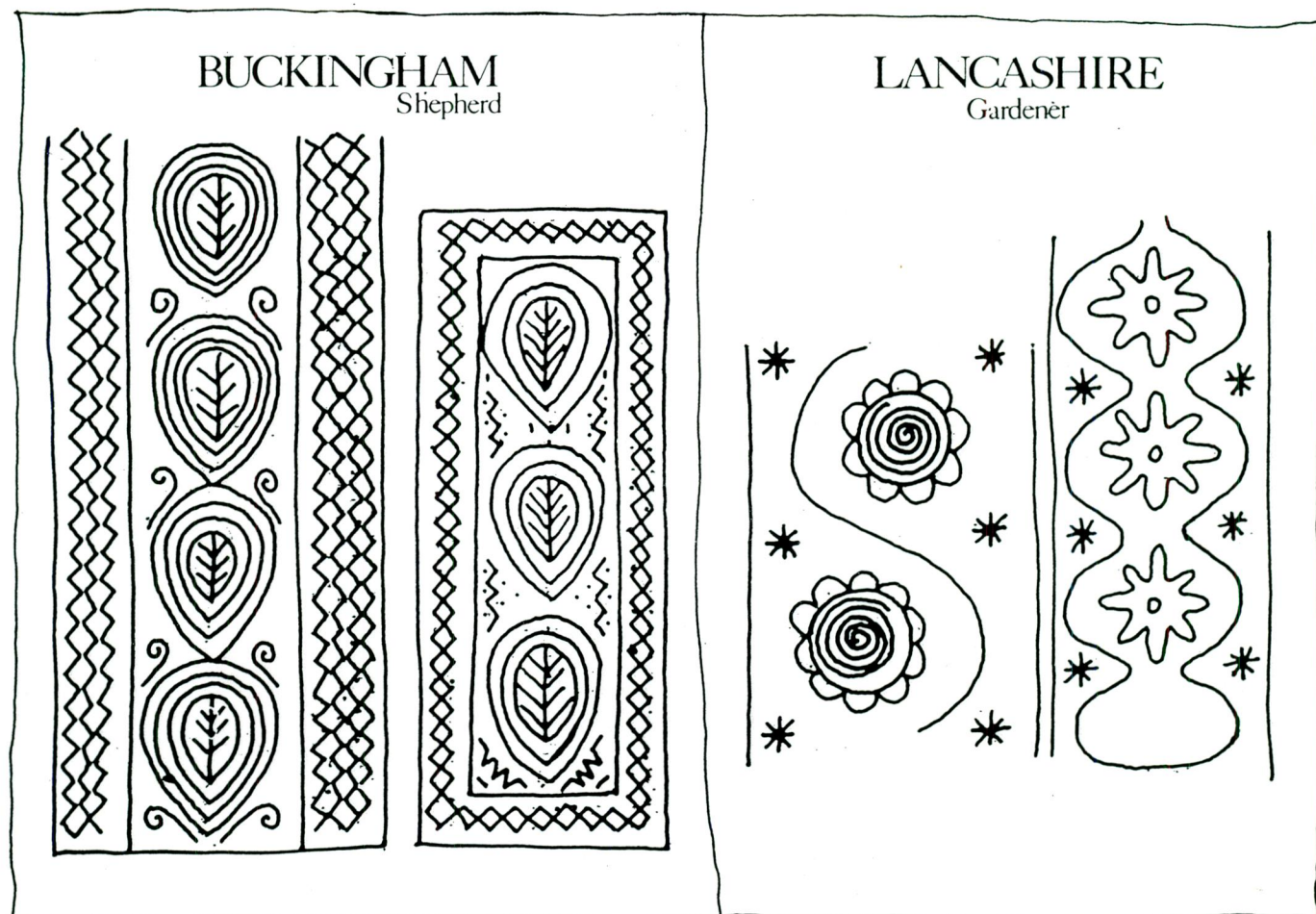


Fig.19.A shepherd pattern from Buckingham and gardener pattern from Lancashire



Fig.20.Reversible adult smock dated around 1850 to 1870.  
Luton Museum.



There is also the opinion that the variety of patterns used distinguished the various trades of the wearers, they were placed on the plain piece of material on either side of the 'tubing' on the smock and this area was called the 'box'. These designs were made up of very simple units. Generally speaking the motifs are the basic patterns of coils and circles, squares and lozenges, stylised flowers and leaves and the heart shape.

Figure 20 is a smock from Luton museum dated around 1850 to 1870. It is a reversible adult smock worn by a farm labourer at Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire. It is made from olive brown linen and the embroidery is in contrasting brown linen thread. Curves and coils are worked in double feather stitch. The collar is edged with a row of feather stitch. The central panel is smocked with rope, chevron and basket stitch holding it in place.

Figure 21 is a child's smock. It is labelled and comes from a shop at Pulloxhill, Beds, England. It was sold and possibly made by Henry Hyde of Pulloxhill, who is described in local directories from 1850 to 1890 as a tailor, draper and grocer (Nichols 1980, pg. 11). The smock is reversible and made of olive green linen. On either side of the central area of gathering the design is of diamonds, executed in single feather stitch using dark brown linen thread. The central area of gathering is worked in rope and cable stitch. The opening at the neck shows how the tubing is the same on both sides of the fabric.





Fig.21.A child's smock. Luton Museum.





Fig.22.A linen smock with "heart" motif  
Cambridge Folk Museum.

A study of smocks was carried out by Anne Buck at Platt hall, Manchester in 1962. This study produced no definite evidence of a connection between the embroidery and the occupation.

The designs that were used for the various trades generally included conventionalized representation of the following emblems. (Ref.: Armes pg13)

**Waggoners or Carters:** Cartwheels, whiplashes, reins and bits.

**Gardeners:** Flowers and leaves.

**Shepherds:** Crooks, sheep-pens, hurdles and sheep.

**Milk Maids:** Churns, butter-pats, hearts, etc.

**Gravediggers:** crosses.

Figure 22 is an example of a 'heart' motif cream linen smock. It is held at Cambridge Folk Museum. There are no records kept about this smock or it's origin, but it resembles a commercial smock of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The cream linen that it is made from is not as coarse as earlier smocks. Since hearts are a suitable motif for use on marriage smocks, this may suggest why a smoother less durable cloth was used.

Another example is a shepherd's smock in the V&A museum with what looks to be crooks and hurdles embroidered on it. This smock was made for a bridegroom by his bride (Hall '79 pg14). An old shepherd from Hertfordshire recalled, that his smocks were bought plain and decorated by his womenfolk. The pattern included crossed crooks on the shoulders. (Hall'79pg14) The most used motifs were leaves and flowers and since most





wearers were employed in agricultural work these motifs would have been appropriate. However it is possible that the women who embroidered the smocks for a village or a number of men used motifs that were familiar or favourite to her and that her design was symbolic of at least one wearers occupation.

Birmingham City museum holds three smocks and there are two in Hartlebury Castle which have identical design of flowers and leaves. All three came from a small area in Worcestershire and the work is distinctive enough to be made by the same person. The occupation of one owner is unknown but the other two belonged to a farmer and a butcher. These are two very different occupations and the design of flowers could not be related to a butcher.

Anne Buck carried out a study of smocks, at Platt hall, Manchester in 1962. This study produced no definite evidence of a connection between the embroidery and the occupation.

Fig. 23 shows an example of a motif of oak leaves and acorns held at Luton museum. This white smock is made of bleached linen and is embroidered and gathered with four strands of white linen thread are used in the needle The design on either side of the central areas of gathering is of oak leaves and flowers and on the collar there are coils. All these are executed in chain stitch.

This smock is much more delicate than most smocks as it was made for a special occasion like a wedding or funeral. The gathered areas





Fig.23.A smock with a motif of oak leaves and acorns.  
Luton Museum.



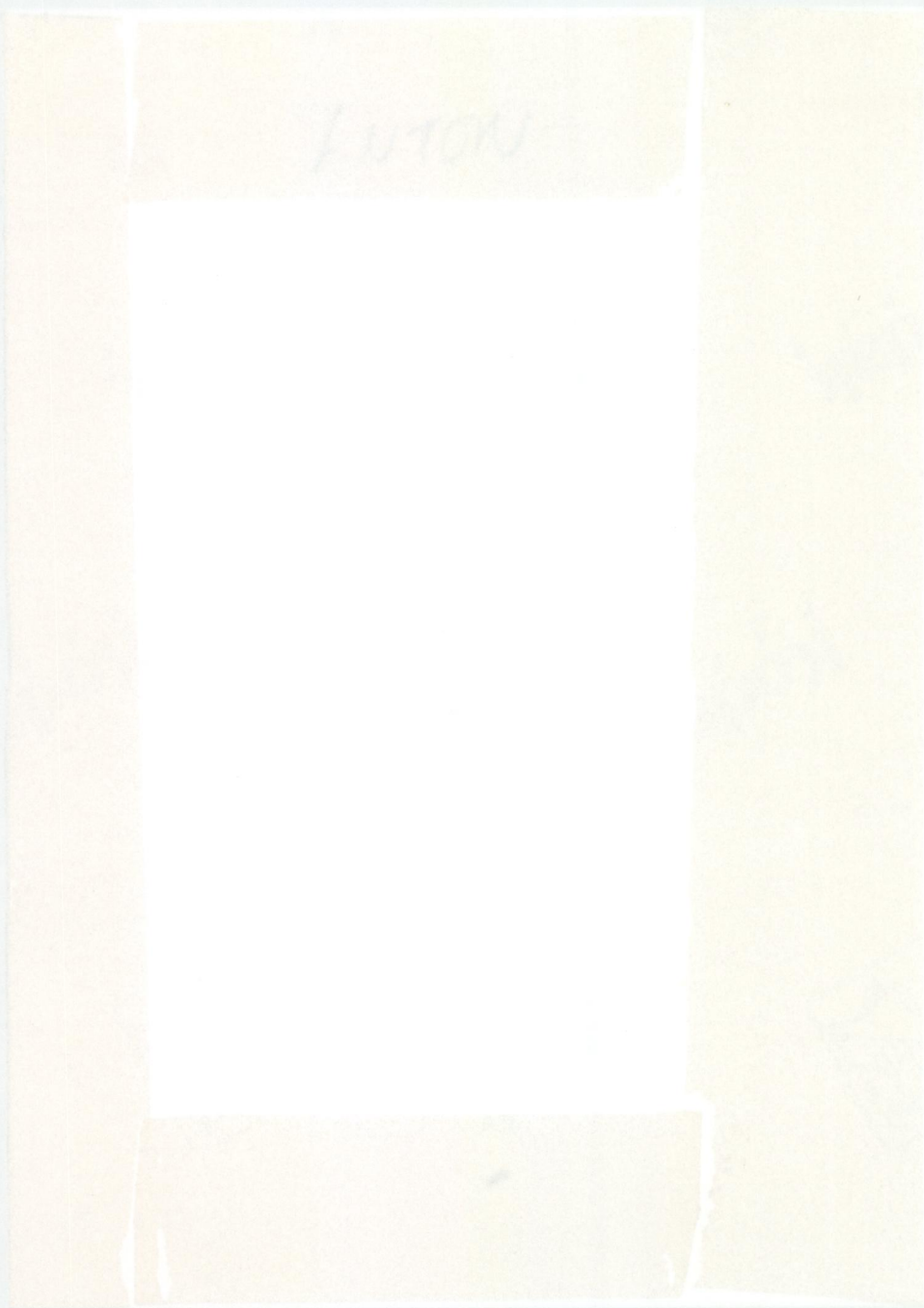


Fig. 23. A smock with a motif of oak leaves and acorns.  
Luton Museum

(fig.24),center front and back, above the cuff and at the top of the sleeve are worked in chevron, rope and cable stitches. These stitches are discussed in detail later.



Fig.24.Details of white smock in figure 23.



(fig. 24), center front and back, above the cuff and at the top of the sleeve are worked in chevron, rope and cable stitches. These stitches are discussed in detail later.



Fig. 24 Details of white smock in figure 23.





Fig.25.Surrey smock Dated 1770.Guildford Folk Museum No.881.

Although areas and occupations can not be directly connected to patterns it is possible to group some frocks according to shape or form. The following groupings were shown by the study carried out by Anne Buck in 1961. One example is the smock with a very small amount of gathering on either side of the neck opening and very limited embroidery, this garment resembled a shirt and was typical of Surrey and Sussex (Fig.25).

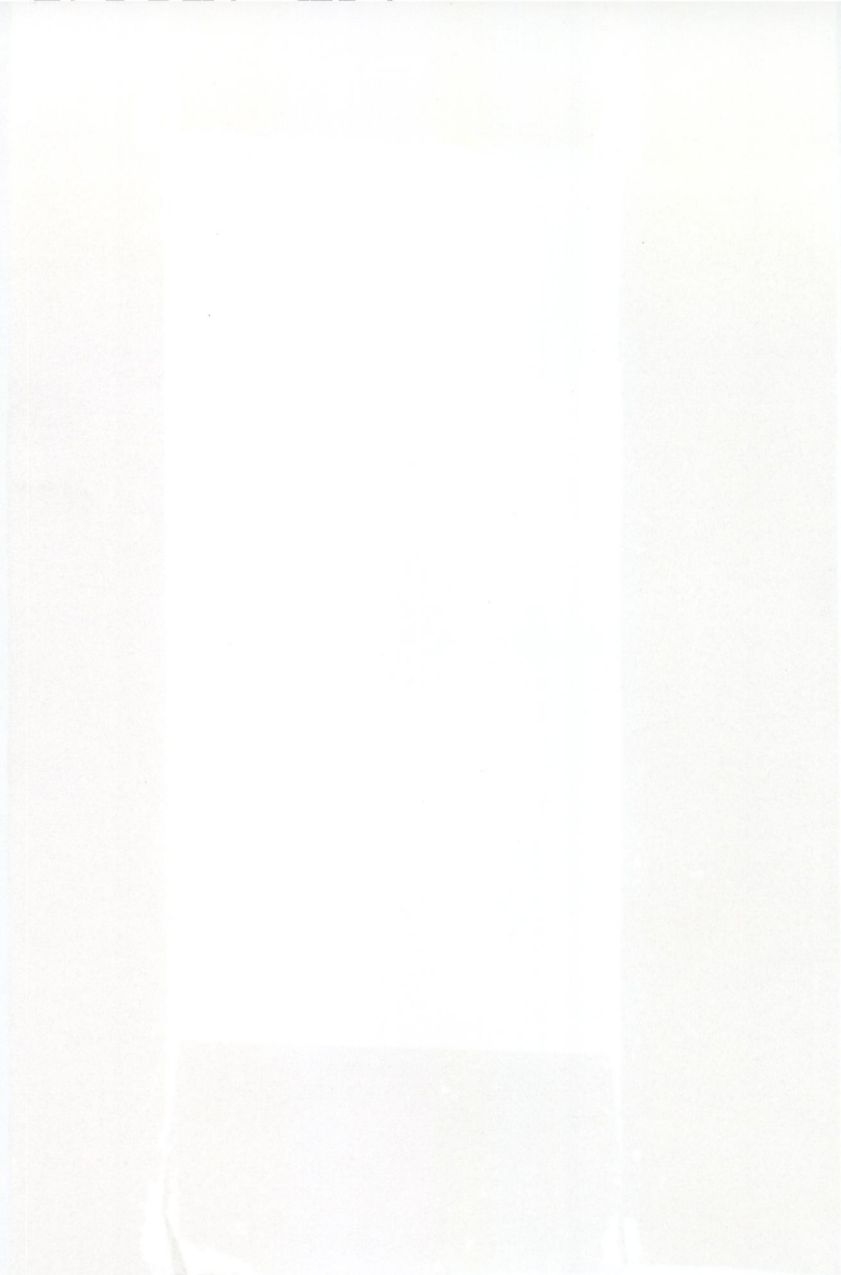


Fig. 25 Surrey smock. Dated 1770 Guildford Folk Museum No. 881

Although areas and occupations can not be directly connected to patterns it is possible to group some frocks according to shape or form. The following groupings were shown by the study carried out by Anne Buck in 1961. One example is the smock with a very small amount of gathering on either side of the neck opening and very limited embroidery, this garment resembled a shirt and was typical of Surrey and Sussex (Fig. 25).



Another variation was the large 'shoulder collar' which was a rectangular flap extending over the shoulder. This was common in Herefordshire and Wales although there are examples in other areas.

There is also the Surrey round frock which it is suggested, represents the original type of smock (Alexander pg1). On the Surrey smock the back and front are made of one piece of material with a narrow shoulder piece section for strength (Fig.26) whereas other types of smocks are made of separate pieces, for back and front hanging from a yoke of double thickness on the shoulders.

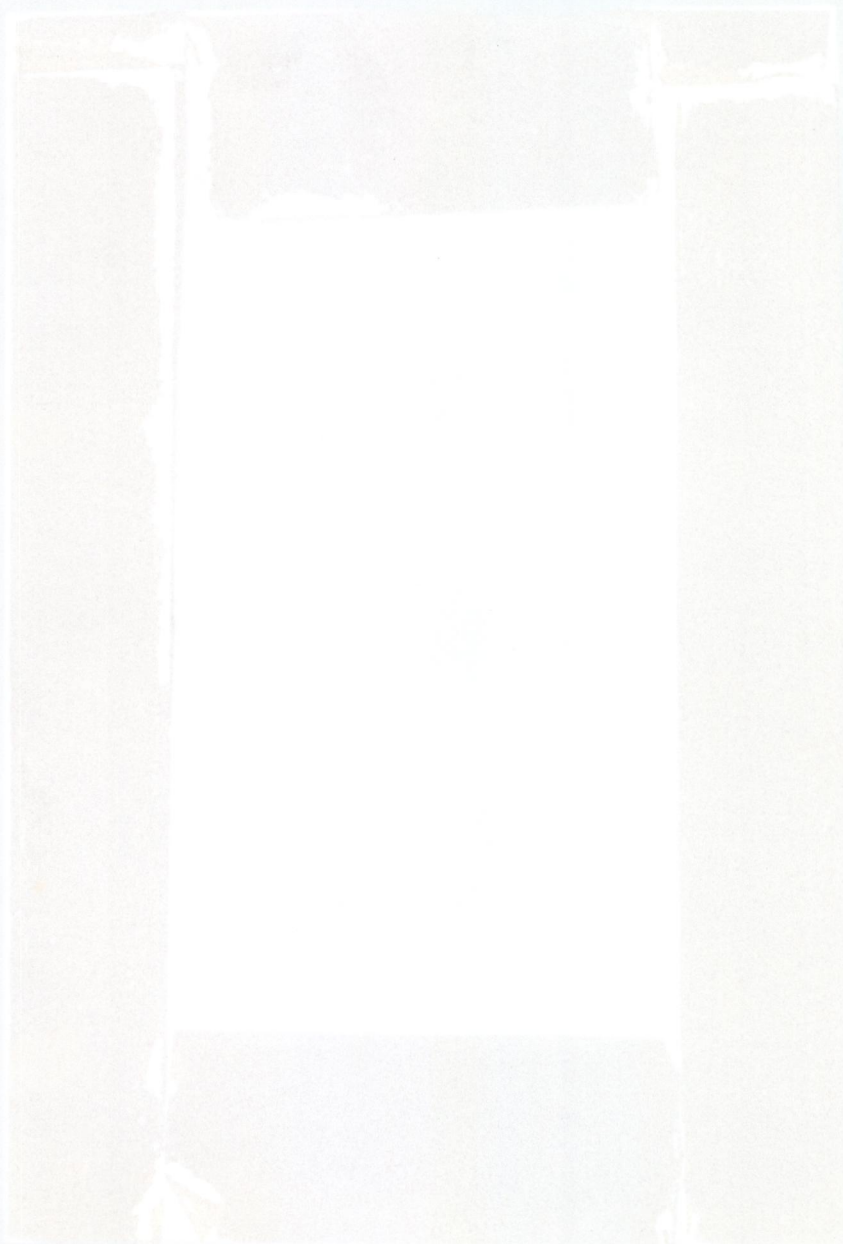
Fig.26. Brown Surrey smock. Dated the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.





Another variation was the large 'shoulder collar' which was a rectangular flap extending over the shoulder. This was common in Hertfordshire and Wales although there are examples in other areas. There is also the Surrey round frock which it is suggested, represents the original type of smock (Alexander pg1). On the Surrey smock the back and front are made of one piece of material with a narrow shoulder piece section for strength (Fig 26) whereas other types of smocks are made of separate pieces, for back and front hanging from a yoke of double thickness on the shoulders.

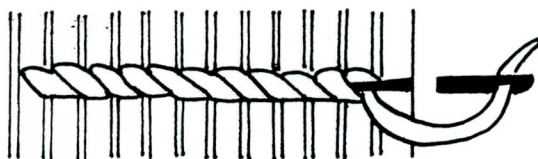
Fig 26 Brown Surrey smock. Dated the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



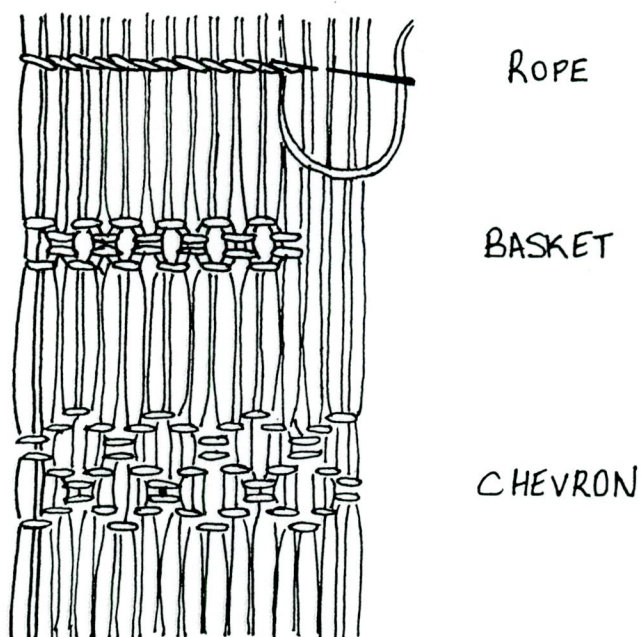
### Stitches

The stitches used in the construction and decoration of the smock are of the simplest kind, such as feather-stitching, single, double and treble stitching. Occasionally chain-stitch, stem stitch and satin stitch are used. The only stitch used on the 'tubing' was the stem stitch (fig.27). Stem stitch is made with the needle passing from right to left horizontally through the pleat and with the thread always under the needle. The tension should be constant and so should the amount of fabric picked up. This stem stitch is used in different combinations rope, basket and chevron (Fig.28). These three stitches obtain excellent overall effects when worked with even tension and regularity.

**FIG.27. The stem stitch**



**FIG.28.**





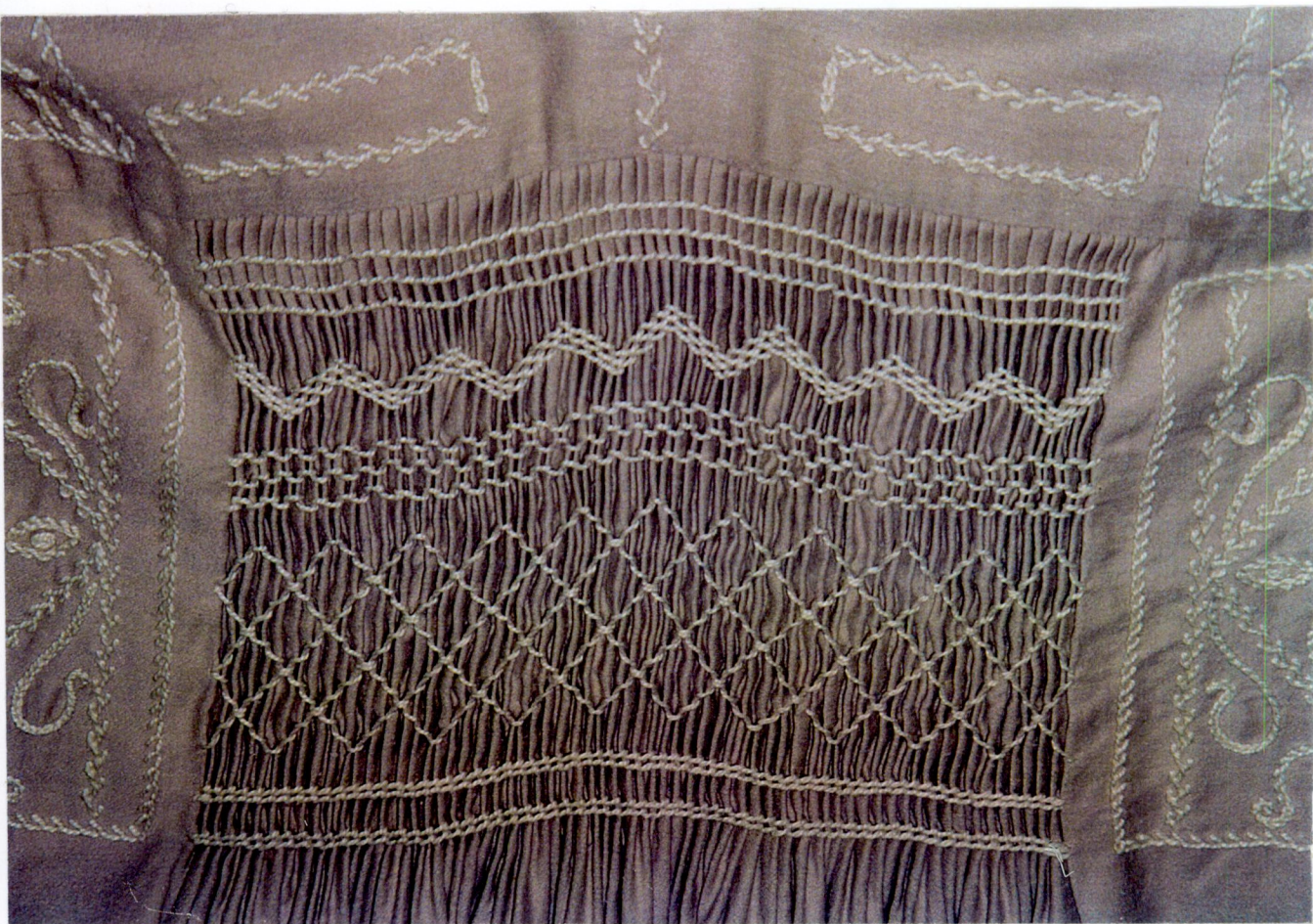


Fig.29.The front of a cotton smock showing the rope, basket and chevron stitches.



### **Rope**

This is a line of stem stitch worked from tube to tube, taking a small piece of the material on the needle. It can be used in two ways. It is used at the top of figure 29 with three rows of stem stitch worked in the same direction in each row. The other way is at the bottom of the sample with two rows of stem stitch worked in opposite directions.

### **Basket**

Working two lines of rope stitch forms the basket stitch. The thread is thrown alternately to the right and left of the needle when working across, the upper stitch in the second row of stitch is on the same 'tube' as the lower stitch of the first row and this creates the basket stitch.

### **Chevron**

This is the rope stitch, worked in steps to form chevrons or zigzags. In working this stitch care must be taken to keep the stitches at right angles to the tubes. By placing the thread to the right or left of the needle governs the direction of the chevron.

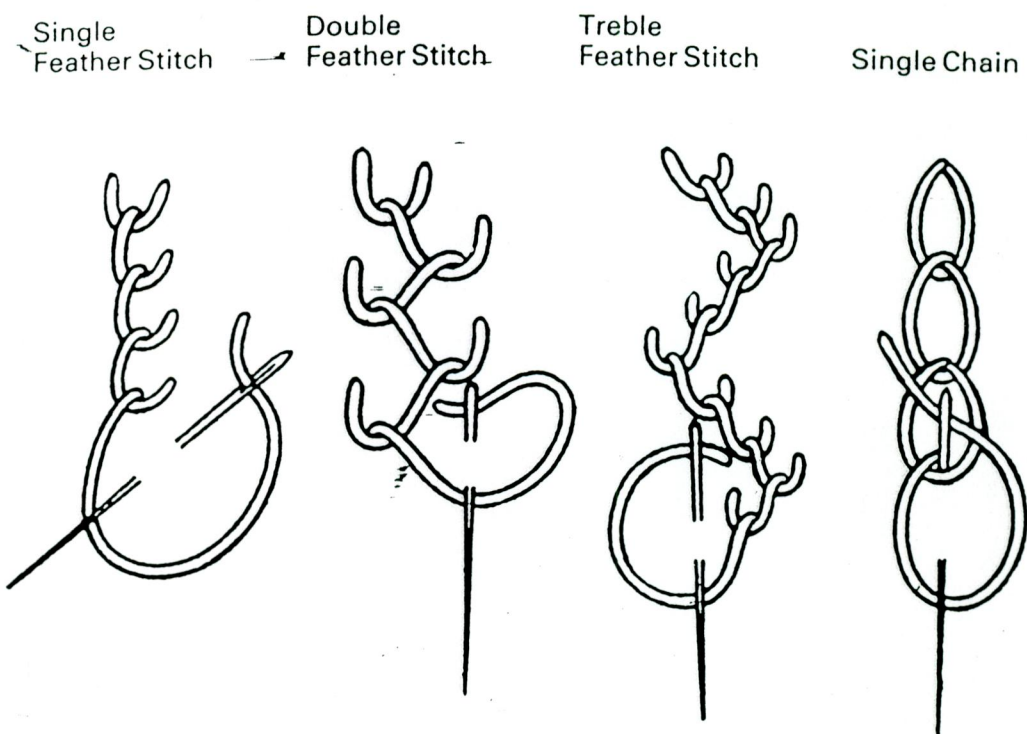


Fig.30. Shows the single, double and treble feather-stitch and single chain stitch.

The only knot permissible in the stitching on the tubing is at the beginning of each row, therefore the needle must have enough thread to complete the stitching right across. A knot in any other part of the tubing is bad workmanship and causes unevenness in the tubing. When the stitching is completed the tacking threads are removed, the tubing will then be elastic and give to the movements of the wearer. It is this elasticity which makes smocks suitable garments for work activities. The fullness at the top and the wrist of the sleeves tubed and worked in exactly the same way as the body of the smock.

The embroidery on the collar should be worked through one thickness of the material only, before the collar is folded and made up. In the same way the embroidery on the shoulder strap should be worked before it is attached to the garment.

The embroidery on the 'box' of the smock is single, double and treble feather-stitch and single chain stitch (Fig.30).

Figure 31 is an example of a smock with a large amount of embroidery. It is kept at Luton folk museum. The smock is said to have been worn at Stewley, Bucks, about 1840. The density of the decorative embroidery and the fineness of the stitch are characteristic of this period. The smock is of the coat type open all down the front and fastened with brass



The only knot permissible in the stitching on the lining is at the beginning of each row, therefore the needle must have one thread to complete the stitching right across. A knot in any other part of the lining is bad workmanship and causes unevenness in the lining. When the stitching completed the facing threads are removed, the fabric will then be clean and give to the appearance of the exterior. It is this clean finish which makes smocks suitable garments for work activities. The collar is at the top and the wrist of the sleeves tubed and worked in exactly the same way as the body of the smock.

The embroidery on the collar should be worked through one thickness of the material only, before the collar is folded and made up. In the same way the embroidery on the shoulder strap should be worked before it is attached to the garment.

The embroidery on the "box" of the smock is single, double and triple feather-stitch and single chain stitch (Fig. 30).

Figure 31 is an example of a smock with a large amount of embroidery. It is kept at a local folk museum. The smock is said to have been worn in Stewley, Bucks, about 1840. The design of the decorative embroidery and the fineness of the stitch are characteristic of this period. The work is of the cross type, worked all down the front and fastened with brass



Fig.31. An elaborately embroidered smock.  
Dated about 1840. Luton Museum.



Fig. 31. An elaborately embroidered smock.  
Dated about 1840.1. von Museum.



buttons, as are the cuffs. The material is brown linen and the embroidery is executed in dark brown linen thread. The main design on the sides of the central gathered areas and on shoulders, is in closely worked single and double feather-stitch and consists of a row of the characteristic pine shapes of paisley shawls, surrounded by two rows of straight and zig-zag stitching. The collar is decorated with straight and zig-zag feather stitching and so are the wrist bands and pocket flaps. The gathering in the centre is worked in rope, chevron and basket stitch.

Another example of an elaborately embroidered smock is shown in figure 32. This is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century smock and was donated from unused stock in a village shop in Cambridgeshire to Guildford museum where it is now in reserve. The large circular designs on the side panels resemble cartwheels and are stitched in chain-stitch.

The smock in figure 33 is made from unbleached linen twill and was purchased, probably in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century at Herts, England. The center gathering is worked with 2 strands of unbleached linen thread and the chevron, rope and cable stitch. The design on either side of the central areas gathering is of diamonds and stylised flowers. The design on the shoulders is squares and stars and on the collar and wrist bands there is a row of zig-zag feather stitch.

buttons as are the cuffs. The material is brown velvet and the embroidery is executed in dark brown floss thread. The collar is worked in the sides of the central fastened areas and on shoulders. It is a 19th century worked single and double leather-stitch and consists of a row of the diamond in the pine shape of parallel shawls surrounded by two rows of straight and zigzag stitching. The collar is decorated with straight and zigzag leather-stitch and on the wrist bands and pocket flaps. The gathered neck is worked in a row of chestnut and basket stitch.

Another example of an elaborately embroidered smock is shown in Figure 32. This is a late 19th century smock and was donated from a man who lived in a village shop in Cambridgeshire in 1880. The smock is made of a fine white cotton in reserve. The large circular design on the left panel resembles a cat's head and is stitched in chain-stitch.

The smock in Figure 33 is made from unbleached linen twill and was purchased probably in the early 19th century in North England. The center gathering is worked with 3 strands of unbleached linen thread and the leather-stitch and cable stitch. The design on the left side of the central area is a row of diamonds and stylized flowers. The collar on the shoulders is a row of zigzag and stars and on the collar and wrist bands there is a row of zigzag leather-stitch.



Fig.32.A 19<sup>th</sup> century smock. Guildford Museum No.401.



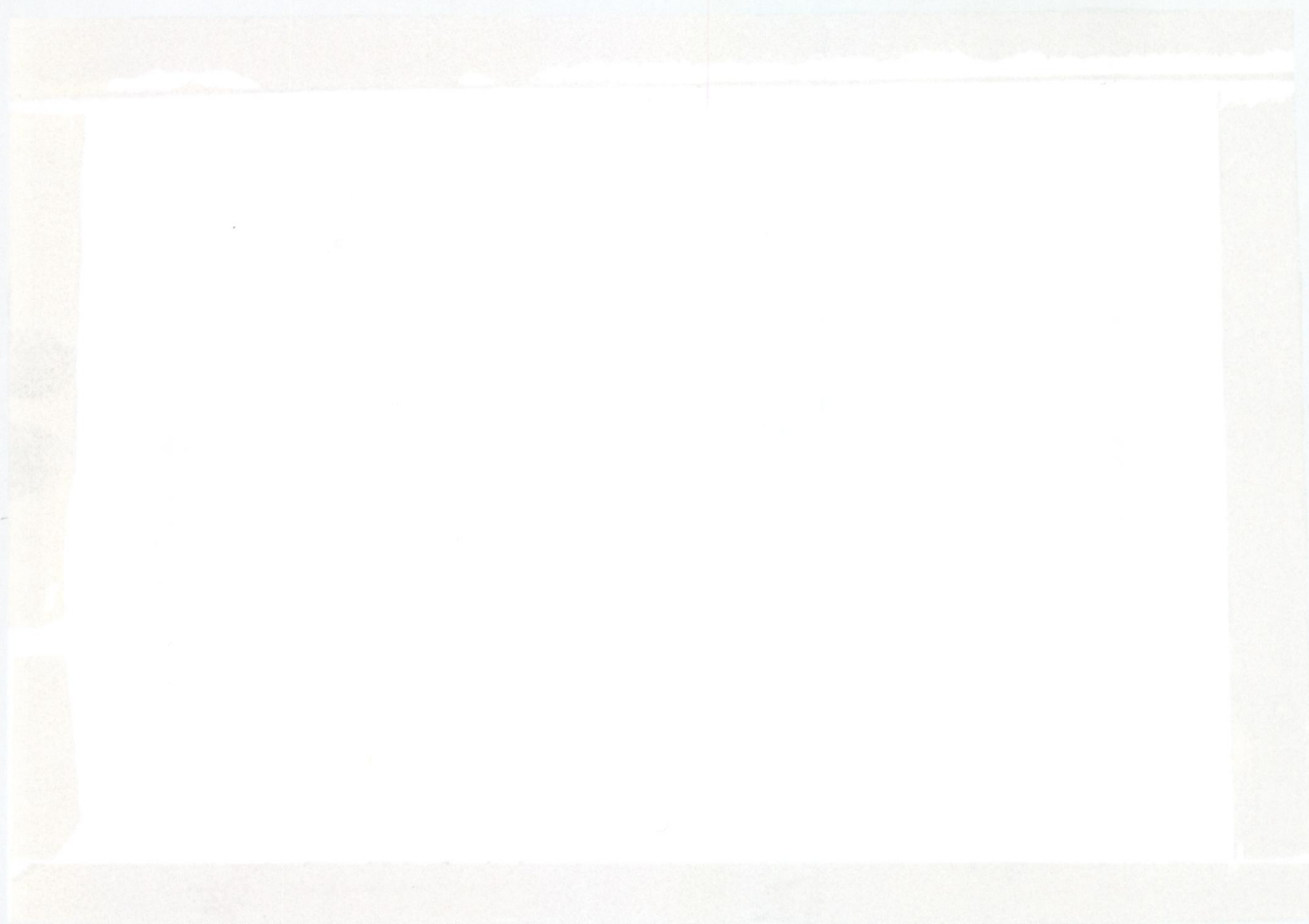


Fig 32. A 19<sup>th</sup> century smock. Guildford Museum No 401.





Fig.33.A linen twill smock. Dated early 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
Luton Museum.

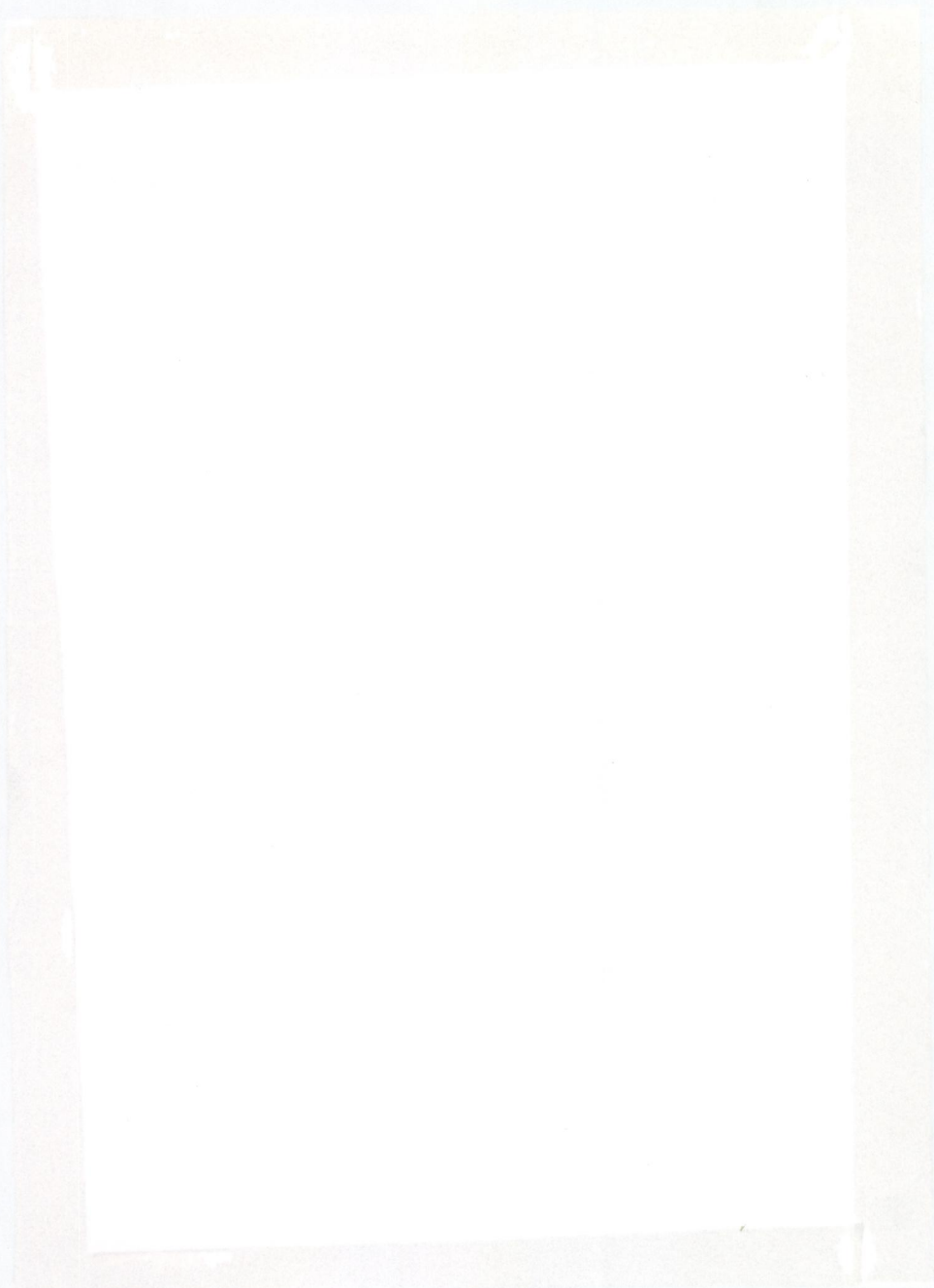


Fig. 33 A linen twill smock. Dated early 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
Luton Museum.



### Chapter Three:

## SMOCKING IN THE LATE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY AND NOTIONS OF GENDER, CLASS AND OCCUPATION

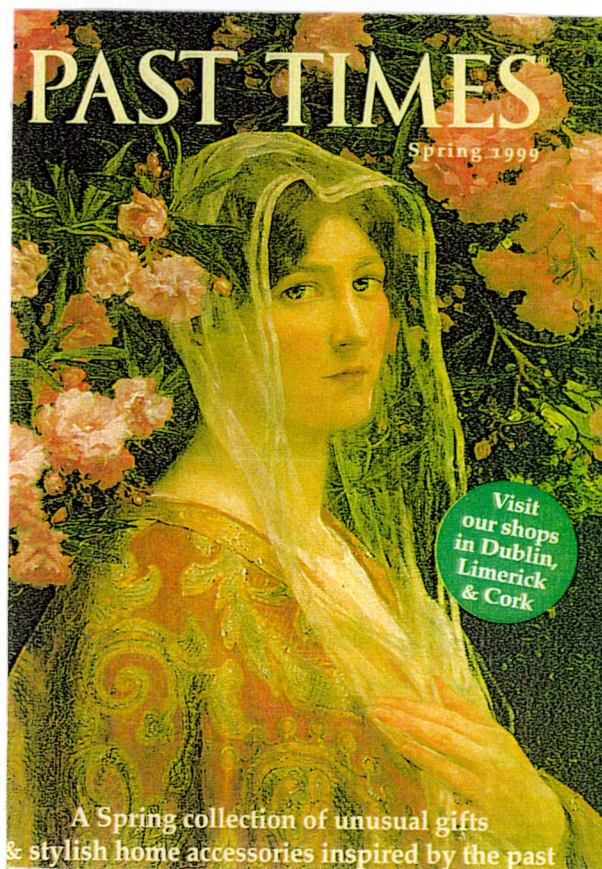


Fig.34.The cover of Past Times catalogue. Spring 1999.

The marketing of English history for the sale of products has become a growth industry in Britain. The company 'Past Times' launched in 1986 has more than sixty outlets in the UK and Ireland. Its products are available by mail order in many overseas countries. This company provides a collection of items with a 'feel for the past' made exclusively for 'Pastimes' shops. They supply replicas based upon many historic styles (Fig.34).



Fig.35. Victorian Smock featured in Past Times catalogue  
Spring 1999.



The 'Victorian Smock' featured in fig.35 is photographed against an old style wooden door and handle with a basket of wild flowers reaffirming its association with 'Country Living'. These 'period garden' pages are covered with objects from an English Heritage of rural idyll. (Fig.36)

What is ironic about this smock is the few similarities it shares with from its forefather of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. This "beautifully worked smock" is worked with an embroidery stitch, which was not common to a smock. This machine-executed pattern which achieves no practical purpose, unlike smocking, is made up of flowers to create a reminisce of the countryside but the flowers are not similar to the original motifs applied to smocks.

The shape of this smock is 'loosely' based on the coat style smock. The gathering across the chest, which creates the fullness of the smock is not created by 'smocking' which is characteristic of a smock. This example uses a row of gathering to create an affect similar but without the decorative element. Similarly with the shoulders and cuffs which shapes the garment to a modern style. The grandfather style collar is not like that found on a smock, which has a larger flat style of collar, which on some examples would cover most of the shoulder. However the 'grandfather' collar is understandable in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century as "old style".



Fig.36. Shows pages from Past Times including the photo of the smock.

42

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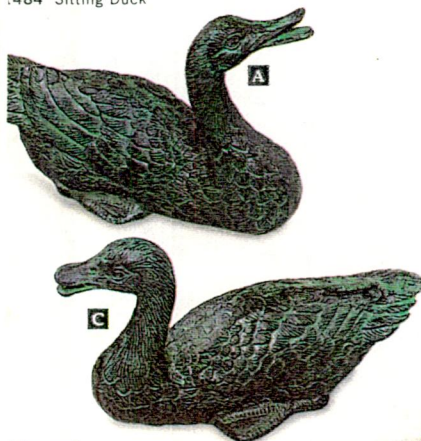
### Victorian Smock

Looking at this beautifully worked smock, it is hard to believe that in the 18th and 19th centuries such garments were worn by workers in the field to protect their clothes.

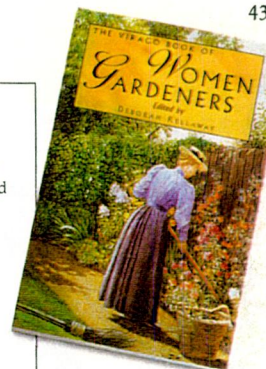
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S-M 36"-41" L-XL 42"-48"



\*P: see p2



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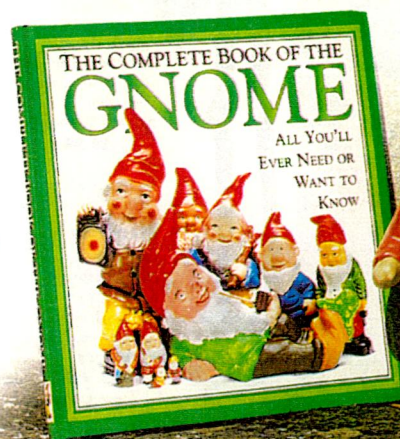
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0241 Gnome Book	£11.99
D 3674 Albert	£9.99
E 3723 Alfred	£9.99







The cotton used to make this smock is much softer than the linen of earlier smocks, which were usually hand-woven and more durable to outdoor conditions. This smock is mass-produced in a factory without any personal input. It would most likely be fulfilling the requirement of a housecoat or a garden jacket rather than exposing it to the conditions which original smocks experienced.

The fact that this company can achieve such a high volume of sales internationally shows the high appeal of the past for contemporary customers, even though the products have little real foundation in fact.

Nostalgia has played a significant role in the production and consumption of smocks in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There has always been a belief that the quintessential England is based in the countryside rather than the city. It is taken for granted that most English people prefer country life to city life and tend to buy products, which remind them of the country.

“A spirit of nostalgia located in a seemingly familiar yet historically unspecified past were frequently extolled in advertisements, packaging and a wide range of artefacts.” (Woodham 1997, pg215). This nostalgia for simple country life that Woodham speaks of was expressed for example through the clothes of ‘Laura Ashley’ a company formed in 1954. The company was concerned with the marketing of a lifestyle once associated with the countryside. An important factor at this time was the popularity of pure cotton fabrics. There was a demand for cotton and linen fabrics printed with patterns reminiscent of a country life, sold in simple items for example as

The cotton used to make the smock is much softer than the linen in earlier smocks, which were usually hand-loomed and more durable in outdoor conditions. This smock is mass-produced in a factory without any personal input. It would most likely be fulfilling the requirement of a hosiery or a garden jacket rather than exposing it to the conditions which outdoor smocks experienced.

The fact that this company can achieve such a high volume of sales internationally shows the high appeal of the fact for contemporary consumers even though the products have little real foundation in fact. Hosiery has played a significant role in the production and consumption of smocks in the 20th century. It has also been a belief that the traditional Esmock is based in the country side rather than the city. It is taken for granted that most English people prefer country life to city life and tend to buy products which remind them of the country.

A sportswear designer located in a country town but historically in a city had first been frequently exhibited in advertisements, packaging and a wide range of products. (Woodward 1997, p.115). This nostalgia for simple country life that Woodward speaks of was expressed for example through the clothes of James Lister, a company founded in 1974. The company was concerned with the marketing of a lifestyle once associated with the countryside. An important factor in this time was the popularity of pure cotton fabrics. There was a demand for cotton and linen fabrics printed with patterns reminiscent of a country life, and in simple terms for example as

aprons and scarves and later as clothing. There was a concentration on small motifs on the printed fabrics for clothes or furnishings, which are taken to express modesty and a lack of material concern.

The first garment marketed in 1961 by Laura Ashley was 'a smock intended for gardening but used by customers for much else besides' (Baines 1981, Pg 97). The idea of choosing a smock to market a country lifestyle shows that it was an aspect of the past which they felt embodied British heritage and country living, especially with the smock originating as a practical work garment for a workman in the fields. Its reminiscent of a time when the material concerns were basic and the stitching of the smock came out of necessity and not for the concern for pastime which is associated with a more aristocratic lifestyle.

The company 'Laura Ashley has a policy to place its factory facilities in the country so as to aid the continuance of village life. The article in Past Times reads 'ours makes a very pretty overgarment'. Pretty has become a characteristic of smocks for today's wear. The decorative embroidery, which was worn by workmen, was an indicator of status and trade. There is a frivolity related to decorative embroidery today. This is found primarily on women's and young girl's smocks.

What is ironic about this smock is the few similarities from its forefather of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. This "beautifully worked smock" is worked with an embroidery stitch, which was not common to a smock. This



known and accepted and later as clothing. There was a concentration on small  
agents on the printed matter for the sale of the goods, which are taken to  
express modesty and a lack of material excess.

The first garment marketed in 1910 for the same reason was a smock  
intended for gardening but used by craftsmen for much else besides. (Haines  
1981, pg 97). The idea of choosing a smock to market a country lifestyle  
shows that it was an aspect of the past which they felt embodied British  
heritage and country living, especially with the smock originating as a  
practical work garment for a workman in the fields. Its resemblance to a nun  
when the material colours were plain and the fitting of the smock came  
out of necessity and not for the concept for pastime which is associated with a  
more aristocratic lifestyle.

The company, Laura Ashley has a policy to place its factory facilities  
in the country as to the importance of village life. The smock in 1981  
Laura Ashley has made a very plain, overgarment. (Haines has become a  
characteristic of smocks for today's wear. The decorative embroidery which  
was once the workman was an indicator of status and trade. There is a  
tendency to regard the decorative embroidery as a sign of status and trade. This is found primarily in  
women's and young girl's smocks.

What is more, since this smock is the 19th century garment from its  
beginning of the 18th and 19th century. This 'historically worked smock' is  
worked with a contrasting stitch, which was not common to a smock. This

machine executed pattern is made up of flowers to reminisce idyll countryside but the flowers are not similar to the original motifs applied to smocks.

The rural overtures of 'Laura Ashley and 'Past Times' are those of the past. At the present time the once picturesque farm workers present a different image. There are no more hiring fairs and if dress is anything specifically occupational it would most likely be a boiler suit, hygienic dairy overalls or earmuffs to deafen the noise of the tractor they drive. When it comes to dress, the modern farmer takes more from industry than its own past.

The nostalgic and romantic use of smocking was first expressed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century at a time when the technique was still in use serving it's original utilitarian function. During the 1880 and 1890s smocking was used by a small group of people as an alternative 'aesthetic' mode of dress. It reflected their dislike of industrial manufacture and expressed their admiration for simple traditional crafts.

...just as it was dying out in the countryside it began-around 1875-to be used on women's tennis costumes, later on tea gowns and blouses, and particularly, as Mrs Lloyd remembered, on children's clothes. According to a magazine of the period, *The Women's World* 'artistic modistes had to send their delicate Liberty silk down to humble cottages in Sussex and Dorsetshire where a few conservative rustics still adhere to the old smock frock'. (Taylor & Wilson pg. 64)

Environmental and ecological concerns since the 1960's onwards would also have increased the return to the natural and have speeded up the conservation and preservation of old traditions. There was a revival of interest in traditional decorative techniques in the 1970's and 1980's, which

that the 'sweated' pattern is made up of flowers to resemble 19th century  
for the flowers are not similar to the original motifs applied to smocks.  
The great overalls of 'Lancashire' and 'Yorkshire' are those of the  
past. At the present time the most picturesque workmen are not  
different image. There are no more Lancashire and Yorkshire men.  
specifically occupational it would most likely be a boiler suit, in fact it is  
overalls or overalls to denote the name of the nation they drive. When it  
comes to dress, the modern farmer takes more from industry than his own past.  
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late 19th century at a time when the technique was still in use, serving its  
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reflected their dislike of industrial manufacture and expressed their yearning  
for simple traditional crafts.

... just as it was dying out in the countryside it began around 1875  
to be used on women's fancy costumes, but on very rare occasions  
and particularly as Mr. J. J. L. (London) on English studies.  
According to a magazine of the period, the flowers were  
artistic models and as such they were found to be  
cottage in Essex and Yorkshire where a few women still  
traces still follow in the old ways (London, 1875).

Environmental and ecological concerns since the 1960's onwards  
would also have increased the return to the natural and have speeded up the  
conservation and preservation of old traditions. There was a revival of  
interest in traditional decorative techniques in the 1930's and 1940's which



was given expression by a continuing growth of 'Do-it-yourself' as a leisure activity.

Techniques such as smocking were often featured in popular homemaking magazines, with advice notes aimed at the general public. Figure 37 shows smocks available to buy through mail order. The drawings show an idealistic countryside image of geese and meadows with young girls wearing smocks and holding wild flowers they have just picked. The article opens by saying "Shepherds once wore smocks and artists still do, gardeners love them, housewives adore them and children are made to wear them" Setting a nostalgia mood of a lifestyle of old wholesome values. This article appeared in 'Country Life' in 1982. This magazine is still sold specifically aimed at a market with a desire for the glamorous ideals of country living.

The article mentions how 'on a wave of nostalgia' smocks returned to fashion. The word 'shepherd' is used to create a picturesque quiet setting of a man looking after his sheep on a green hill and 'artist' introduces the idea of the craft of the smock and so the values associated with craft. The making of these smocks is carried out by "a group of local women" as has always been the way with smocks. The woman in charge of supplying these smocks talks about her 'love of the job' and of doing similar jobs like cooking. Embroidery and cookery are two domestic duties, which have symbolized a feminine ideal for centuries.

Similarly the drawing of the women wearing the smocks holds the notion of flowy lightness and gentleness. The smock has in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

# COSTUME FOR ALL AGES

By ANNE PRICE

**S**HEPHERDS once wore smocks and artists still do. Gardeners love them, housewives adore them and children are made to wear them. As the world and his wife go on using smocks, every now and then they push their way to the front of the fashion scene on a wave of nostalgia for old-world charm.

This week we introduce some delightful new smocks made of unbleached calico. Each one is handmade and has an individual smocking design, so no two are alike. They are made in three sizes for adults, two sizes for children between 4 and 12 years of age and also in a tiny size for infants of two to three years.

All the smocks are made in two different lengths. The heavier-weight calico falls to 4in-5in below the knee, and the finer-quality calico reaches to 2in to 4in above the knee. They are fastened down the front by wooden buttons, and the embroidery threads used are brown and pale cream, the colour of the unbleached calico.

These tough, attractive garments are produced in Sussex by Mrs Julian Akers-Douglas. They are made locally by a small band of expert workers, and are available only by mail order.

I wondered what motivated a married woman, living in the country and with a 24-year-old child to care for, to undertake this very specialised business. The answer is an enterprising love of the job.

"I love doing things I like," Julian told me, "such as cooking a good dinner or making smocks." At the same time she produced a splendid idea—another use for these calico clothes: she is currently making a big, long smock for her 6ft 6in father to wear as a dressing gown.

It is said the smock originated in Anglo-Saxon times, and has had a varied history, clothing woodmen, shepherds, milkmaids and gravediggers through the years. But in 1880 an anonymous fashion scribe reported on the appearance of the smock in society. "No artistic dresser," ran the message, "would be without a smock cut exactly like a farm labourer's, with square, turned-down collar and gatherings front and back, gathered full sleeves, worn over a habit shirt and looped up over an under-skirt with a belt at the waist."

So there you have it. Wear a smock where, when and how you like. Write for full information and order forms to Mrs Julian Akers-Douglas, Barham Farmhouse, East Hoathly, Lewes, Sussex BN8 6QL. Please allow 28 days for delivery. If you are in the district, Julian Akers-Douglas will welcome a visit.

*Drawings by Elizabeth Suter*



Unbleached calico smocks for children between 4 and 12 years, £35 each. By Mrs Julian Akers-Douglas

Fig.37.Smocks available to buy through mail order.  
Country Life.July 22th 1982.



Calico smocks for adults, in two lengths, and in small, medium and large sizes (30in-42in bust), £55





Fig.38.A girl's handmade dress, smocked and trimmed with lace



become stylized to create a fashionable garment but with an unreal nostalgia sewn into it. The smock is now an 'icon' of femininity despite being based on a masculine garment, which we know from earlier chapters had a humble beginning as man's worker. Throughout time the smock has changed status dramatically through its transition from male to female dress.

Smocking in this country has continued to be carried out by women but the difference in its production is that children now wear smocks rather than men (Fig.38). Now smocking applied to clothing embodies all that is feminine beauty. The elaborate decoration of smocking is disassociated with male clothing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has been reapplied instead to the clothes of women and young girls. This raises the question of the change in status from one gender to another.

When men wore smocks they symbolized a status in the community and indicated the wearer had a trade and also that he was a provider. The change in gender has lost this 'wearing with pride' and found a new identity as soft and frivolous.

Through the industrialization of machinery in this century craft became undermined and unfashionable. Male society was exposed to these advancements in technology. By the 1960's people had become aware of the imbalance that industrialization and mass production was creating and became nostalgic for the past and the values it holds. While men looked to crafts like pottery and woodwork women looked at crafts of the past like smocking and embroidery for these values. Smocking continued to be a form of expressing



Fig.39.A centre panel of smocking on a baby's pillow.



'love'. Figure 39 shows a centre panel of smocking on a baby's pillow surrounded by ribbon trimming. This is hours and hours of intricate work done by hand. It's function is purely aesthetic, as that amount of stitch would be uncomfortable for a baby's head, This pillow would be used as decoration in a baby's cot or pram and is representative of the soft, frivolousness which is characteristic of smocking .The colours chosen are soft blues and pinks which are traditionally associated with children's clothing.

The following pages , Figures 40-44 are downloaded from the internet. Grannies, aunts and mothers all exchange images of there smocking creations the images are personalised using first names and the use of bracelets for example: "Kathy (Luv 2 smock)'s Cheerleader", "Jean's (sewguilty)"Fig.45. These show an intimacy between the maker's and wearer and the smocking as an expression of affection for the person.

The fact that smocking is such a skill based technique that requires a large degree of care and patience, would reason why anybody would 'need' to smock in this commercial world unlike in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when clothes were scare and domestic sewing was nessesery. The need is clearly to express themselves.

These photos express as nostalgia reminiscent of childhood innocence and good values. They portray a preferred image of the daughter and mother or grandmother relationship with an intentional tranquil soft image.

Home images like these encourage the continuance of mutual appreciation of smocking. 'I simply love the craft enough to want to share my

love. Figure 39 shows a century piece of smoking on a baby's pillow surrounded by ribbon trimming. This is hours and hours of intricate work done by hand. It's function is purely aesthetic as that amount of stitch would be uncomfortable for a baby's head. This pillow would be used as decoration in a baby's cot or pram and is representative of the soft femininity which is characteristic of smoking. The colours chosen are soft blues and pinks which are traditionally associated with children's clothing.

The following pages, figures 40-44 are downloaded from the

internet. (Grandmothers, aunts and mothers all exchange images of their smoking creations the images are personalised using first names and the use of packets for example: "Kathy's 1st smock" or "Christine's smock"). These show an intimacy between the maker's and wearer and the smoking as an expression of affection for the person.

The fact that smoking is such a skill based technique that requires a large degree of care and patience would mean why anybody would need to smock in this commercial world until the 18<sup>th</sup> century when clothes were scarce and domestic sewing was necessary. The need is clearly to express

themselves.

These photos express as nostalgia reminiscent of childhood innocence and good values. They portray a preferred image of the daughter and mother or grandmother relationship with an intentional tranquil soft image.

Home images like these encourage the continuance of mutual application of smoking. I simply love the craft enough to want to share my

## Smocking and Heirloom Sewing Links

The dresses featured on this page were made for my two daughters, Katrina and Sarah-Jean. The pattern used for the bishops was Cherry Williams Basic Bishops pattern. The white heirloom dress on this page and the pink dress featured on my [More About Me](#) page were both made using Martha Pullen's Heirloom Party Dress pattern from her book "French Hand Sewing By Machine".



[Aunccia's Homepage](#) with Free Pattern for a Premie Bishop and Bonnet

[Cheshire Crafts](#) •English Smocking •Regular Smocking •Lattice Smocking •Smocking on Gingham •Honeycomb Smocking Stitch on Gingham

[Creative Smocking](#)

[C V Heirlooms Web Page](#)

[Garden Fairies](#)

[Grace L. Knott Smocking Supplies Ltd](#) A new site!

Includes a free monthly smocking plate for your personal use.

[Julie's Sewing Room](#)

[Keepsake Kollection](#)

Smocking and Heirloom Sewing Designs Smocking Tips and Techniques , Heirloom Sewing Feature of the Week

[Lydia's Heirloom Sewing Center](#)

[Martha Pullen Company](#)...Heirloom Sewing, Sew Beautiful Magazine and Martha's Sewing Room

[Mimi's Fabrication Home Page](#)

[Needlearts Network](#)

[Sarah Howard Stone, Inc.](#) Author of wonderful books on French handsewing



**Click on the links below to see a larger photo and read the details!!**

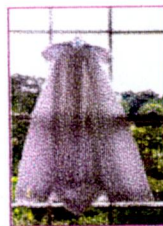
**Michele's Le Petite Enfant daygown**



**Anne's DD's Dress**



**Michele's gown**



**Brenda's DGD**



**Mdntsmockr"'s DD Annelise**



**Josie's bishop dress**

**Fig.41.**



**Kathy (Luv2smock)'s Cheerleader**



**Jean's (sewguilty) DD's Easter Dress**



**Kay's Bonnet**

**Natalie and Jacob**



**Sally's DGD's**

**Fig.42.**



**Brenda's DGD's Dresses**



**Brenda's dress**



**Chloe**



Click to go back and find out how to send me your photos!!

**Fig.43.**



Please mention my site!



Oh! And one last thing... I am *not* affiliated in any way with Margie Bauer or her Company *Country Bumpkin* ©. I simply believe in giving credit where credit is due.

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### 1. Before You Begin

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- [Tension](#)
- [Needle position](#)
- [Starting and Ending](#)
- [Joining a new thread in the middle of a row](#)

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- [Cable Stitch](#)
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- [Large Flowerette](#)

### 3. More straight Stitches

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### 4. Zigzag Stitches

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- [Baby Wave Diamonds](#)

### 5. Trellis Stitches

- [Two Step Trellis](#)
- [Four Step Trellis](#)
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### 6. Combinations of Straight and Zigzag Stitches

- [One Cable...Baby Wave...Five Cable Combination](#)
- [Three Cable...Wave...Three Cable Combination](#)



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## Smocking:- My Introduction

I don't profess to be an expert on smocking - I simply love the craft enough to want to share my passion with others.

I did a search for smocking related sites and guess what? No matter which Search Engine I used, the results were always the same:- One or two links about "smocking marijuana", one with something to do with fonts and even one on adult "baby wear." But, for anything non-commercial on a beautiful embroidery technique that has been around for generations?..... Well, you probably all know about that! :-))

.....So, here I am.

The illustrations used in these pages have been taken from:-

*Australian Smocking*  
by Margie Bauer and Lib Rayner  
published by Thomas Nelson  
480 La Trobe Street Melbourne Victoria 3000  
Australia  
first edition printed 1985



This book was my "bible" when I first started smocking and I feel very honored that Margie Bauer, one of it's co-authors, has give me permission to use them. Margie Bauer is a very talented and motivated lady who must be allocated a great deal of the credit due for the popularity of smocking and heirloom sewing in Australia today. Her story is one that deserves to be told and I hope that one day she will put up her own web page and do just that. She is, amongst other things, the Publisher and Editor-in-chief of "*Australian Smocking and Embroidery*" and of "*Inspirations*" (two incredible magazines that I'm sure you have all heard of).

..... and *lucky you!!!* Margie has also given me permission to reproduce some of the smocking plates from "*Australian Smocking and Embroidery*" on these pages. So... (small plug here) if you like the plates, I assure everyone, you will adore the magazines!!!

[Want more information on the magazines?](#)

Fig.45. A home page on smocking.



passion with others' Figure 45 shows us again the opportunity for the exchange of patterns and 'helpful hints' from one woman to another out of love. It encourages the continuance of this 'Australian Smocking' magazine. (Fig.45.) This woman sitting on stacks of hay has little concern with fashion but creates nostalgia for country living.

Smocking remains primarily a domestic craft although industrialization picked up on the popularity of its image and created quick and cheerful imitations. This popularity is in quick decline through the marketing of a new image in children's clothing. This new image is based largely on the 'Girl Power' phenomena, a popular style which took affect on the younger female teenager and has filtered through to the very young under ten-year olds.

Cooneen manufacturers, based in Northern Ireland and supplies to leading children and ladies clothes suppliers for example Dunnes Stores, Mothercare and Boots informed me that their industrial smocking machine has had no purpose in their manufacturing of children's or women's clothing in over a year (September 1998).

Another example of domestic smocking still carried out by a woman in Cambridge is Fig.46. June Brown, shown here modeling smocks she made herself. She copies workwear smocks from eighteenth an nineteenth century examples in museums such as Cambridge Folk Museum Fig47. She spends over forty hours of needlework time on each smock and sells them for approximately fifty-six pounds (article not dated).





Fig.46.June Brown wearing smocks she made herself.







Fig.47.A smock from Cambridge Folk Museum.

Fig.48.A smock made by June Brown.







Fig.49.Smocking used for self expression.



The consistency of the stitch in June's smock in figure 48 is not as good as with the original smocks and the fabric used is very coarse. The stitchwork is tighter than the older smocks. The photos of June wearing her smocks are taken in the countryside to show their heritage.

Women didn't wear smocks of this style and these particular smocks are a longer length than the original men's smock. This is probably to make them more modest and stylish to encourage women to wear them.

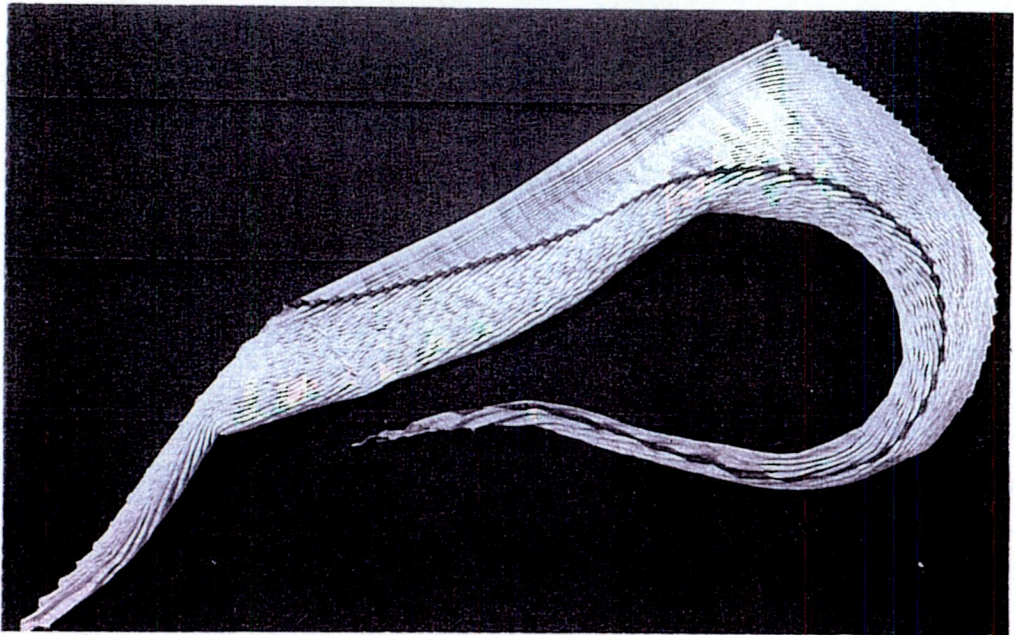
In the 1970's and 80's a general dissatisfaction with society and the continuing growth of an industrial environment led to a search for alternative ways of life, through the return of crafts like smocking. The idea of craft as a way of life became popular through movements like folk revivals, hippies and back to nature. The principle function of the craft movement in this industrial society has been to provide an alternative aesthetic to that of mainstream mass-produced goods. This alternative pulls from the past for its wholesome qualities.

Figure 49 shows how smocking was used as a means of self-expression. The silk in this image has been random dyed, smocked and then cut and manipulated to create wave shapes and then applied to a surface embroidered background. This contemporary use of smocking is carried out self-consciously to create a piece of work, which is self-expressive. Similarly fig.50 is a work of self-expression by Beverley Clark, who has used smocking to create this contemplational piece. It has been contemplated in the process

The consistency of the stick in the smoke is not as good as with the original smoke and the taste is very strong. This consistency is higher than the other smoke. The flavor of the smoke is not as thick in the smoke as the other two are. When I tried to smoke of this stick and the taste was not as good as a foreigner than the original smoke. This is probably to make them more modest and slight in the smoke as to be in the. In the 1950's and 60's a general observation with society and the economy growth of an industrial economy led to a period for the first time of the return of the smoke. The idea of a smoke was of the first and popular through many years like the tobacco industry. The principle function of the stick in the smoke is to provide an alternative product to the tobacco industry. The alternative is to provide the first's whole smoke.

Figure 10 shows how smoking was used as a means of self-expression. The stick in the smoke has been made of wood and then cut and shaped to create a shape and then applied to a surface. This contemporary use of smoking is called the "stick-smoking" or "stick-smoking". The stick is a piece of wood which is self-expressing. The stick is a work of self-expression for the stick-smoker who has used smoking to create the contemporary piece. It has been emphasized in the process.

Fig.50.A fine art piece by Beverley Clark.







of making and its main purpose is to evoke contemplation in the viewer of this fine art piece.

This skill-based technique of smocking indicates the degree of care involved and speaks through the work in this way. The use of smocking in fine art raises the issue of whether smocking should be valued as 'domestic art' rather than fine art since it is traditionally done at home as a fulfillment of a domestic duty. This questions many preconceptions of textiles as the domain of the homemaker and of what women's embroidery should be about.

The straight forward use of smocking was still in existence when the technique was first claimed by a nostalgic group of aesthetics looking for a more beautiful pre-industrial world. It was this nostalgic profile of smocking that has been exploited throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is being turned on it's head in this (figure 51) post modern use of the technique in an entirely 'unsuitable' position across the bottom.

of making and its main purpose is to provide information in the form of a

line and piece

This skill-based language is often used in the design of a

series of small groups through the world in the form of a

that we make the sense of which is not only about the world as a

and rather than this the sense it is possible to see it as a

domestic duty. The question is whether it is a

element of the language and if so, what is the

The same idea has been used in the form of a

language which is a language of the world and

more beautiful pre-linguistic world. It is a

that has been explained throughout the

and in the form of a

in the form of a





Fig.51.Jumpsuit called “Ryppypeppu”(Wrinkled Behind).  
By Annika Rimala.Finnish Modern Design.1998.

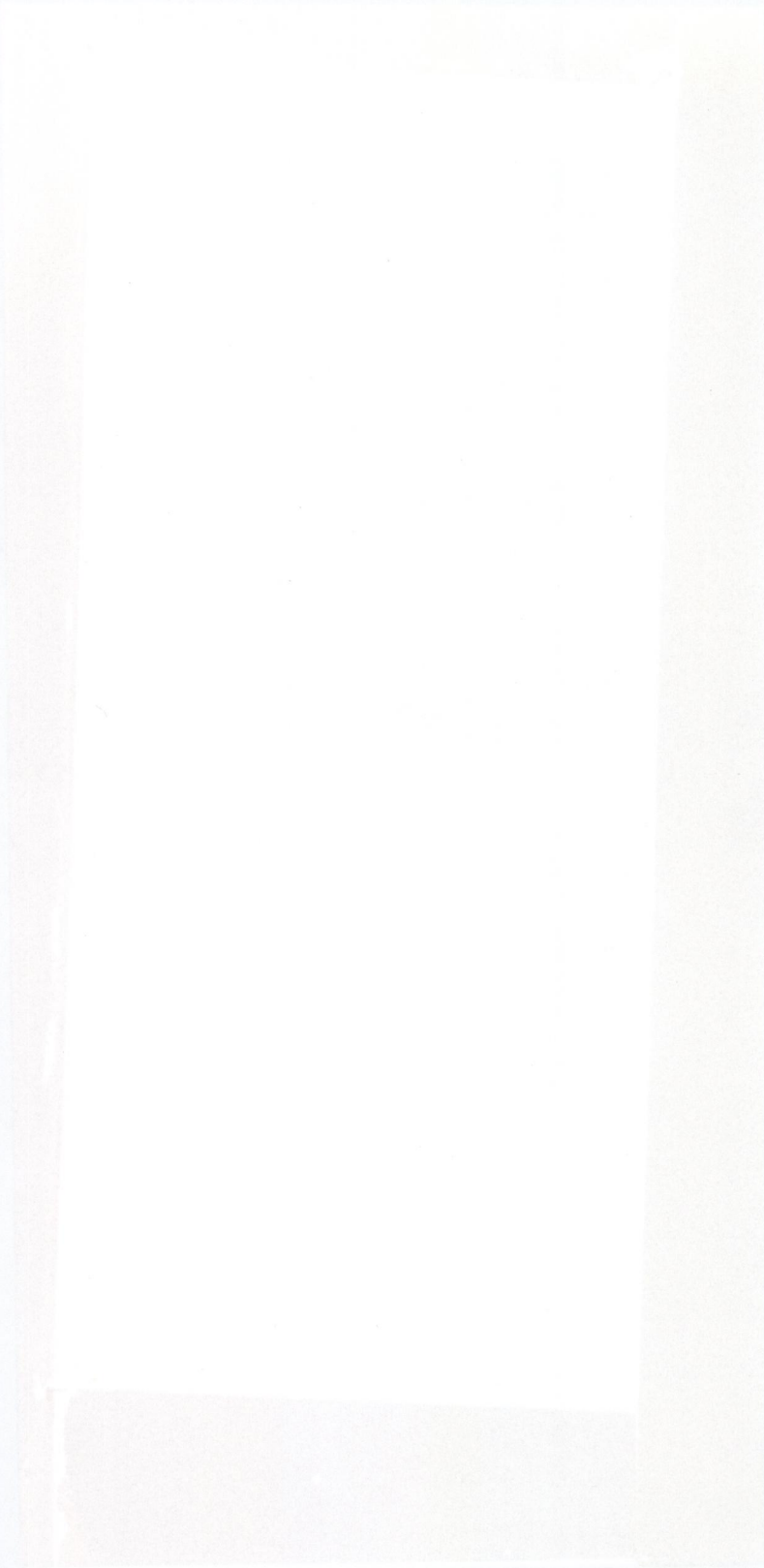


Fig. 51. Jumpsuit called "Kypypöppu" (Wrinkled Behind).  
By Annika Rönkä. Finnish Modern Design 1998.



## CONCLUSION

The smock, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is produced by women with time on their hands as an expression of their womanly skills. It is usually produced for a little girl to create an image of an innocent and cherished, not to say indulged, child.

The original smock of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century was produced by a woman whose every moment was spent catering for the feeding and clothing of her family. She made the smock as an essential contribution to her man's work, the man whose work also directly provided for the family's food and clothing needs.

The smock was needed for his work and the quality of the embroidery and stitching would be a matter of pride to both the maker and the wearer as a direct expression of their skills as providers for a family.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century expression of smocking is at a remove from the provision for a family. It implies an earner in the background who provides sufficiently well for the family to allow time on the part of the woman of the house to sit sewing a decorative and time consuming garment that is anything but directly related to the provision of food and shelter.



## CONCLUSION

The trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are profound and significant.

These trends are an expression of the social and economic changes.

Modernization is a kind of revolution in the social and economic structure.

not to say undisciplined child.

The original intent of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was

provided by a woman whose every movement was spent working for the

reduction and clearing of her family. She made the house as a woman's

contribution to her man's work. The man, whose work was directed

provided for the family's food and clothing needs.

The woman was required to be a good mother and the father of the

children, but the woman would be a mother of good and bad children.

and the woman as a direct expression of their skills as mothers for a

family.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century expression of womanhood is a woman's role in the

provision of the family. It implies an active role in the background of the

provision of the family well for the family to allow time on the part of the

woman of the house to sit sewing a decorative and time consuming

garment that is nothing but directly related to the provision of food and

clothing.

The smock therefore, has changed position from being the essential work wear of a skilled labouring man in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century to bring the embodiment of femininity and expression of frivolity and idealness in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This change in the meaning of smocking in terms of gender, class and age is a fascinating reflection of changing social and cultural values regarding the role of skilled hand work in a pre and post-industrial world.

The smoke structure has changed from being the essential

work force of a skilled laborer, now to the 18th and 19th century in being

the embodiment of a permanent and expensive labor force and a source of

the 20th century, the change in the way of working in terms of

gender, class and age is a fundamental reflection of a changing - world and

cultural values regarding the role of different work in a post-industrial

industrial world.



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