

Threads

Pieces from the Scottish Fisheries Museum's Costume Collection and the stories woven into them

The Scottish Fisheries Museum has, as part of its extensive holdings (which have been formally recognised as being of national significance), a collection of costume which represents the traditional Work Wear, Sunday Best and Gala Dress of the Scottish fishing community.

It is a unique collection in that it represents most aspects of the clothing of an entire distinct community as found around the coast of the northern British Isles, dating largely to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but illustrating much older concepts, traditions and styles.

In our 2016 exhibition we featured examples of each of the categories mentioned above. Some of the pieces are of particular interest because we know who wore them and sometimes even when, where and why.

Two of our volunteers used this information as a starting point for their research to uncover more about the people who wore these items of clothing. This article summarises their findings which brought to life with 'yarns' of the people the 'threads' on display.

Although the costume featured here is not on permanent show in the museum, it is carefully stored for future exhibition or research. A book on the costume collection *Threads* by Jennifer Gordon, is also available from the Museum shop.

Women's Clothing

Shawl ANSFM 1972.88

Wool; knitted central panel with crochet edging; handmade by Mary Murray.



Mary Murray was a volunteer at the museum who contributed a huge amount to our early educational programmes and in particular to our body of research on the local fishing industry.

Mary had a rare perspective on the ways of the fishing community being born into it (her father was local drifter skipper Peter Murray) yet having the ability to interpret it from an observer's point of view, having left the East Neuk to study, teach and travel. She eventually became a lecturer in Primary Education at Dundee University.

The design feature of the wavy lines symbolises the wavy lines that the sea makes on the sand as it retreats from the shore.

Paisley Shawl ANSFM: 2013.126



On its arrival in Great Britain in the mid eighteenth century (courtesy of the East India Company) the 'Kashmir shawl' was an expensive item, fashionable in high society. As the eighteenth century progressed however, British textile manufacturers produced affordable 'imitation Indian shawls' and by the turn of the nineteenth century production intensified in the Scottish town of Paisley.

Cheaper (made of printed rather than woven fabric) 'Paisley shawls', as they came to be known, were popular throughout the country and in all communities (i.e. not specific to fisher folk) between 1820 and 1875 but from the 1840s Newhaven fishwives began to adopt Paisley shawls as part of their 'Sunday Best' costume worn during gals and choir performances .

This shawl was worn by Christina Geddes, a member of the Newhaven fishwives choir.

Coat

ANSFM: 2013.103

Velvet, shell buttons, features both machine and hand-stitching, metal collar clasps and quilted lining. The jacket is hand-made and is notable, as it has a peplum (a short flared, gathered strip of fabric attached at the waist). Though associated with 1940s, 1980s and current fashions, peplums first appeared as a design feature in the 1800s.



This Wedding Jacket was worn by Elizabeth (Leebie) Hughes on the occasion of her marriage to Charles Hughes on the 30th October, 1891. Both were born in Pittenweem. The place of Marriage is simply recorded as West Shore, Pittenweem.

Leebie was born on 22nd November 1873 and died on 3rd April 1965, aged 92. Charles was born on 24th March 1868 and died on 11th February 1960, aged 91 years. They had 12 children: 6 boys and 6 girls.

For a time, they lived at 3 Still Park, then moved to 1 West Shore. Thereafter, they lived with family members, first at 58 High Street, then at 1 St Abbs Crescent, where the jacket was stored until January 2013.

To date, the family has been traced back as far as 1696 in Pittenweem. Charles was a fisherman and Leebie a wife, mother and home-maker. In the context of the local fishing industry in the early 1900's, that also involved the preparation of the Great Lines (Gartlins) for each day's fishing. The tasks were redding (cleaning the lines from the previous day's use), shieling the mussels, baiting the lines and layering them, ready to be cast without becoming a tangled mess. Each layer was separated by handfuls of grass, usually gathered by the children in the family, after school.

The photograph shows Leebie & Charlie, taken outside 1 West Shore sometime after 1914 (when they are known to have still been living in Still Park). They lived at 1 West Shore until around 1947/8.



French Dress with Diamond Inserts ANSMF: 1998.57

French label, beaded borders, small concealed pocket.



We think it likely that the dress shown belonged to a member of one of the French families that settled in Cellardyke in the 19th century.

Brothers Jean Baptiste and Jean Pierre Montador arrived in Cellardyke around 1840 from Boulogne-Sur-Mer in the French district of Pays de Calais, a place long associated with fishing and sea-faring. From the early 1100s the town had been involved in the whaling industry and herring fishing, and it is still a major fishing port. The brothers came from a long line of sailors and fisher folk, indeed their grandfather, Pierre, was a licenced privateer, and other members of the family were known to smuggle brandy over the Channel.

By 1850, they had settled and started families with sisters Christian and Barbara Robertson. Christian died in France in 1851 leaving four young children and in 1852, her widower Jean Baptiste returned from France on the ship *Albia* and married Jacobina Scott, with whom he had a further three sons. From this point onwards, Jean Baptiste seemed content to stay in Cellardyke, became skipper of his own boat and, following the rescue of the crew of an Inverness fishing boat during a storm in July 1880, *John* Montador (as he was commonly known) was awarded a medal for bravery.

Meanwhile, it was not until 1859 that Jean Pierre and Barbara married in Boulogne and on the same day registered the births of six of their children. Jean Pierre and Barbara spent most of their lives moving between Cellardyke, Boulogne and possibly Wales.

According to the 1891 census, sharing a house at 32 West Forth Street were Robert Montador, his wife Mary and their three children, Helen, Robert and Andrew, his father Jean Baptiste, wife Jacobina and grandson John. The address also housed Isabella Gin and her children Charles (*Chairlie the Frenchman*), Joseph and Genevieve. The latter were French nationals; however the Gin and Montador families had long been connected by friendship and marriage.

Pouch ANSMF : 1997.190.7



Worn under the apron or 'brat'. Pouches were originally functional (for holding the money you made from selling your fish) but became a feature of the ceremonial/ gala/ choir costume of fishwives on the south of the Firth of Forth. This pouch belonged to Jean Miller of Musselburgh.

Petticoat ANSMF : 1994.670

Features a drawstring waist, feather stitching and a rare example of a deep band of hand-made crocheting.



A lot of work has been put into producing this "unseen" crochet feature – perhaps in case a glimpse was caught of it underneath outer wear?

The double layering would add shape to the dress worn over it. It's clearly a special piece made and worn by a local woman (who we think was a Janet Gardner of James Street Cellardyke) as part of her 'Sunday Best' outfit.

Petticoat ANSMF: 1996.95



This striped cotton petticoat belonged to Isabella Mathers born in St. Monans in 1890. Isabella reputedly was a fish gutter from 1898 to 1902. Although this would have made her only a child, it is not outwith the customs of the time for her to have earned extra money for the family like this.

Isabella was born into a fishing family whose forebears had been fishermen for many generations. She was the daughter of Alexander Wood Mathers born in St. Monans in 1857 and his wife Isabella Sutherland born in Cellardyke in 1859.

On her paternal side, Isabella could trace her lineage back to sailor Thomas Watson born in Cellardyke in 1765 and his wife Mary Buick. After Thomas was taken by the Press Gang in 1798, Mary contrived to get herself onboard his ship as a nurse. Both were serving on His Majesty's warship *Ardent* when their daughter Mary was born during the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801.

Their daughter Grace, born about 1803, married Alexander Wood known as "*Briton Sandy*". Their daughter Jacobina Wood married Chapman Mathers of St. Monance and they became the grandparents of Isabella Mathers.

On her maternal side, Isabella was the great-grand daughter of the old sea dog David Wilson born at Brownhills, St. Andrews who ran away to sea at the age of 12. David became a whaler, when his ship the *Advice of Dundee* was returning from a whaling voyage she was intercepted by *HMS Pickle* on the lookout for new recruits. David Wilson was clapped in irons and charged with mutiny for attempting resistance, although found innocent of the charge he had to join the crew of *HMS Pickle*. He served on this ship until captured by French privateers and imprisoned until the victory of Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo.

Petticoat ANSMF: 1976.9



Quilted black satin with velvet hem binding and fitted cotton waist with buttons.

Worn by Marjorie "Madge" Smith when she married William Keay circa 1870.

Apron worn by 'Aggie Kinnie' ANSMF: 1998.312

Black velvet with lace and bead trimmings and buckram lining.



Agnes Smith Cunningham was born in Cellardyke on the 6th of January 1865, the second of four children of James Cunningham b. 1839 and Margaret née Doig b.1831, of 20 George Street, Cellardyke. Agnes, known as Aggie, worked as a sewing machinist until her marriage on the 21st December 1888 to fisherman Henry Gardner of 44 James Street. The wedding took place four months after the death of Aggie's mother Margaret.

Henry, who was born in Cellardyke in 1862, was the second son of Martin Gardner, fisherman b.1834 and Elizabeth (Leebie) née Bett.

In November 1889, Aggie emigrated with her husband, her father and other members of her family to Victoria, Australia. In 1890 Aggie and Henry's daughter, Margaret Doig Gardner, was born in North Geelong. Their son Martin was born in Toorak, Melbourne in 1893. Aggie and the family returned to Cellardyke where she died of pneumonia on 25th March 1895 aged just 30.

The velvet apron in the collection almost certainly made the exciting journey to Australia and back. Lovingly preserved by her family as a memento of their loss, the apron was donated to the Scottish Fisheries Museum in 1998.

Aggie Kinnie's links to Cellardyke and Australia

The East Fife Record of 8th November 1889 states that James Cunningham, fisherman of Cellardyke, left with his family and son-in-law Henry Gardner for Victoria, Australia. His nineteen-year-old son Thomas was a member of the party. He settled in Victoria and in 1897 married Jessie Stephens b.1869 in Ballarat, Victoria. James Cunningham died in Geelong in 1912 and his son Thomas died in Melbourne in 1932

James Cunningham's sister Agnes Hamilton Cunningham and her husband James Birrell were living in North Geelong in 1889; he was a grocer and postmaster. James and Agnes's other brother, the Reverend Thomas Cunningham, was a minister in Launceston, Tasmania. His descendants still live in Tasmania. Several more distant relatives from Cellardyke had emigrated to the state of Victoria as early as the 1850s to the gold diggings at Bendigo Creek.

The name of Bendigo dates to the Victorian Gold Rush as a shortened form of "Bendigo Creek", the name originally given to the goldfields in November 1851 and also the name of the first post office which opened on 1 July 1852. Nowadays Bendigo still has a large operating gold mine system which also functions as a tourist attraction.

Henry did not remarry but he and the children stayed on at 44 James Street, where they were brought up in the home of their paternal grandparents, Martin and Leebie. Henry died suddenly on the pier at Anstruther in 1924.

Of Aggie's children, Margaret married David Carstairs and died in Dunfermline in 1957. Young Martin eventually went to sea as a fisherman and became skipper of the steam drifter 'Acorn' known to many by his 'byname' *Acorn Mairt*, this identified him from the other Martin Gardeners of Cellardyke including *Mace Mairt*, another named for his boat. *Acorn Mairt* married Agnes Ann Thomson and they had Agnes, Betty and Henry. Betty became Mrs Lumsden, wife of the Commodore of the Shell tanker fleet. Henry married Ethel Strachan parents of Edward Gardner who drowned in October 2006 in the *Meridian* disaster.

Acorn Mairt served during World War I on the Flagship *Queen Elizabeth* in the Dardanelles and at the end of the war on a minesweeper. He was coxswain of the Anstruther lifeboat something of a family tradition as was his grandfather Martin, his uncle Martin Gardner b. 1869 and his cousin Mace Mairt

There are still numerous descendants of Henry and Aggie living in the East Neuk and there is at least one Martin Gardner in every generation.

Children's Clothing

Christening Robe

ANSFM: 1981.36.2



White lawn with ornate tucks, embroidery, lace covering, 2 linen-covered buttons and 2 ties at the back.

This belonged to the Barbour family. Mr Barbour was the first headmaster of Cellardyke School in the 1870s.

Dresses

ANSFM: 2009.58 & 59



These dresses were made by Kate Gourlay (originally of Cellardyke, see photograph) for her twin daughters Mary and Phemie Dougal who were born in Eyemouth in 1929. The girls lost their fisherman father John Dougal in 1944 off the *Spes Bona*. His body wasn't found for 3 weeks.

Mary and Phemie have both passed away in recent years.

The twins' younger sister Kathleen was crowned the Eyemouth Herring Queen in 1953. Like most girls in fishing families, she learned to knit at an early age and still puts her talents to good use knitting for relatives.

Child's Shoes

ANSFM : 2006.66.2



Leather uppers with wooden soles.

These came from the house of Mr Thomson, a fisherman of John Street, Cellardyke. Shoes with wooden soles were cheaper to buy than those with leather soles. When the sole wore out, the more expensive upper could be fixed onto a new sole.

Men's Clothing

Victorian Gentlemen's Frockcoat worn by James Lindsay ANSFM: 1994. 710

Double-breasted, skirted frockcoat of black pilot cloth with partly quilted silk lining; sleeves lined with blue and pink striped white cotton; one inner pocket, back vent and silk trim to the collar and sleeves.



This frockcoat has a label on the neck which reads Jas. Lindsay St. Monance. The coat was either made or owned (or perhaps both), by Mr James Dickson Lindsay, clothier and tailor of St. Monance, now called St. Monans, Fife.

James D. Lindsay, born on 9 April 1829 in St. Monans, was the son of Robert Lindsay, clothier and tailor born in St. Monans in 1797 and Barbara Dickson born in 1793.

James D. Lindsay married Elizabeth Adam born 1827 in St. Monans in 1852, they had four sons: Robert born 1852, James born 1854, Thomas born 1856 and John born 1859. Sons Robert and Thomas were both employed in the family business. James D. Lindsay died at Victoria Cottage, Station Road, St. Monans in 1896; his son Robert died two years later.

Clothier Thomas Lindsay married Beatrice Craig Phillips at St. Monans in 1878; their family consisted of eight sons and two daughters. Eldest son Thomas born in 1880 ran a drapery business until about 1960 in the Backgate, St Monans the family also had a workshop on East Shore, which eventually became the Clydesdale Bank, and is now a private house. Their fifth son Frederick, was a supervisor at Watson's oilskin factory in Cellardyke. Frederick Lindsay married Preston Horsburgh of Pittenweem and in 1924 they became parents to triplet daughters Beatrice, Ena and Preston who all grew up to become science teachers at Waid Academy, Anstruther.

Several of the extended Lindsay family became teachers and clergymen. Adam Lindsay born 1885, son of James born 1854, became a banker. Adam Lindsay 2nd Lieutenant, 10th Battalion the Royal Scots died in France in 1918. Descendants of James D. Lindsay live in St. Monans today.

Wedding waistcoat ANSFM : 1969.351

Blue embroidered silk



This fine blue, embroidered waistcoat was donated to the museum by Mrs Elizabeth Collin. She had found it in the attic of her home at St Ann's, 3 Fowler Street, Cellardyke, and indeed this was Elizabeth's family home where she had been raised with her brothers and sisters.

Elizabeth's father Henry Bett was a well-known skipper owning the *Breadwinner* KY253. Henry was a native of Cellardyke, but her mother Annie's family, the Powers, came from Ireland, via Dundee. Henry and Annie were married at St Andrews in 1883 and began their married life in Cellardyke.

Elizabeth was the youngest of seven children. Aged 45 she married Richard Collin a fisherman from Eyemouth, but they had no children. Her older sister Alexandrina also married late in life for the times, being 33 when she married widower Thomas Fowler. They had two children together: Harry Fowler went on to run his father's grocery shop in Toll Road, Cellardyke and later owned a china shop in Roger Street where the book shop is now; their daughter Catherine married a doctor, James Proudfoot, and they emigrated to Canada. Robert, Thomas's son from his first marriage was lost in WW2 and is interned at Medjez-El-Bas, Tunisia.



Another sister, Agnes Bett, married George Anderson in Kilrenny in 1912, and they had children Annie and Henry. We believe that the second eldest son John Bett died at Great Yarmouth in 1918 of influenza, while the eldest son Thomas Bett was a fisherman who married Catherine Brown. They had children Annie and Thomasina, who was a dressmaker.

Coat from the Doig Family

ANSFM: 2012.651



Handstitched

Found in the Doig Family home in West Forth Street, it possibly belonged to the donor's great grandfather who had the first diesel boat in town (dating it to the 1930s) but is probably older. The house, *Viewforth*, has been in the family since the 1880s.

Gansey worn by Tam Easson

ANSFM: 2007.9



This gansey was made for Tam Easson by his mother, Robina Jack, for when he left Cellardyke to serve in the Royal Navy at the outbreak of the Second World War, patrolling the Arctic Circle aboard HMS *Solena*. She knitted him a blue one to wear on board and a white one for "going ashore".

On deck, the men would wear balaclavas, big gloves, and reefer jackets to keep out the severe cold. They also went to bed in their rubber boots so if there was an emergency, they'd be "up like a bullet."

After the war, Tam was offered a job in a steelworks in Leven. Many of the men who had previously worked there had been in the Territorial Army and had been killed out in the Mediterranean. Tam took the job, as he was concerned it might be the only one he could get since many fishing boats had been lost. As Tam concluded, "you were lucky to come oot o' it. There wis'nae muckle tae come oot o' it, pit it that way."

On retiring, Tam came to work here at the museum and continued to provide loyal service until his early nineties!

Boots

ANSFM 2002.444.1



Rubber Dunlop Boots

Purchased from Gerrard of Pittwenweem in 1958 to wear aboard *Bluebell II* (built by Smith and Hutton of Anstruther in 1957) for the mackerel season that year.

Bluebell II sailed out of Largo harbour with a crew of three – Bill Hutton, Bob Hutton and Joe Ritchie of St. Monance.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Scottish Fisheries Museum volunteers Elizabeth Stormonth and Eileen Montador for their research into the human stories behind the collected items of clothing.

If we've got anything wrong or if you can add anything to the information we have here, do let us know.

The new book *Threads: a guide to the clothing of Scottish Fisherfolk* explores the topic in more detail and is now available from the Museum shop.

Jen Gordon, Assistant Curator