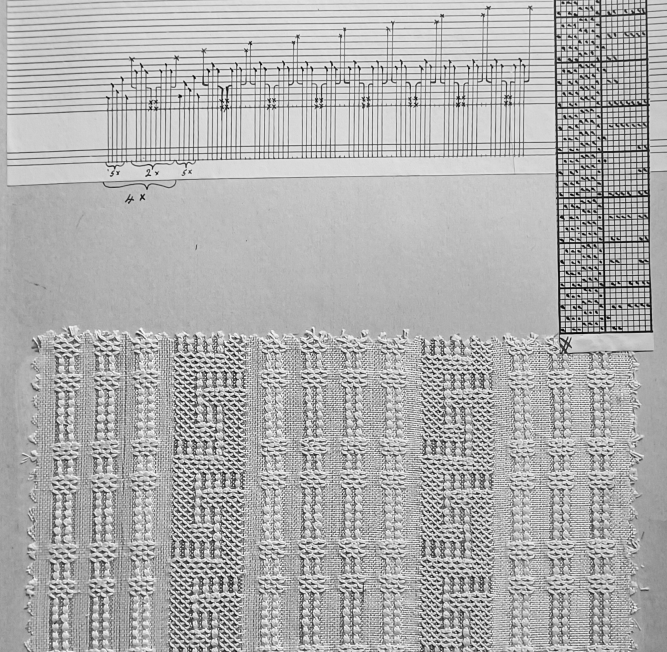


	PARTICULARS	WARP PATTERN	WEFT PATTERN	PEG PLAN
Sample No. <u>10</u>	Width .....	<i>1/2</i> <i>2x</i>	<i>Hand Silk</i>	
Group <u>8</u>	Length .....	<i>1/2</i> <i>2x</i>		
Style <u>Leno</u>	Ends .....	<i>1/2</i> <i>2x</i>		
Remarks	Picks .....	<i>1/2</i> <i>2x</i>		
	Twist <u>2/80 2/60</u>	<i>1/2</i> <i>2x</i>		
	Wet <u>2.500000</u>	<i>1/2</i> <i>2x</i>		
	Width in Reed .....	<i>1/2</i> <i>2x</i>		
Reed <u>60</u>	Reed .....			
Car .....	Car .....			

DRAFT AND DENTING.



## *About the project*

**Langholm Made** sought to explore and celebrate ‘making’ past and present in Langholm — a town with a rich textile history that remains vibrant in craft and making today. For Langholm Made, artist and filmmaker Emma Dove collected stories and memories of the weaving industry, whilst maker Deirdre Nelson explored ‘making’ in Langholm in its widest sense.

## *Making Connections*

Langholm Made formed part of a wider project entitled Making Connections, initiated by Upland with local partner organisations, The Langholm Initiative and OutPost Arts, to enable artists and makers to explore and highlight Langholm’s rich history and heritage in textile manufacture. Making Connections consisted of two artist residencies, undertaken by Dumfries & Galloway based artist Emma Dove and Glasgow based maker Deirdre Nelson, and a schools project led by Kirkcudbright-based textile artist Morag Macpherson.

## *About these booklets*

For Langholm Made, Emma Dove recorded conversations with a number of local people who contributed stories and memories relating to the textile heritage of Langholm. This booklet is one of a set of seven, each containing a printed conversation transcript, existing as a way to capture and share the personal reflections and memories which celebrate a unique heritage, deeply embedded in people and place.

## *About the text*

The conversations in these booklets have been transcribed using the ‘clean transcript’ standard, whereby ‘fillers’ (such as ‘um’) and repetitions are mostly edited out so as not to distract from the main content. However an effort has been made to try and keep as much of the natural flow of conversation as possible within the text. Any spelling or formatting relating to dialect has been transcribed as true to the spoken word as possible. Use of dialect words vary throughout each conversation (so for example the word ‘you’ might be spelled ‘you’, ‘ee’ or ‘yow’ at different points within one transcript). Spelling and formatting choices have been made at the discretion of the transcriber in each instance.

The start and end of some transcripts — as well as some short sections within the conversations — have been edited out when considered to be informal pre-amble, post-amble, or an unrelated tangent to the main conversation. In a very small number of instances, a word, phrase or sentence has also been retracted from a transcript if considered that it could cause unnecessary offence.

## *Glossary of Langholm dialect*

a — I	ken — know	deef — deaf	faither / fither — father
mie — me	ee ken — you know	auld — old	freen — friend
ee / yow — you	ken't — knew	cald — cold	mucker — pal
hie — he	tell't — told	sair — sore	fook — folk
oor — our	ca' / caw — call	deid — dead	weemin — women
yir — your	ca'd / cawd — called	yince — once	booyee — boy
oo — we / us	ta'en — taken	ony — any	lassie — girl
ain — own	siee — see	nane — none	naebody — nobody
whee — who	gie — give	maest — most	thegither — together
yin — one	git — get	mair — more	maitter — matter
twee — two	mind / min' — remember	aw / a' — all	toon — town
thrice — three	cairry — carry	ae — always	heed — head
fower — four	hing — hang	wie — wee	hair — heart
twal — twelve	scoorin' — scouring	sic — such	han' — hand
hunners — hundreds	skelped — hit	stert — start	mooth — mouth
thoosand — thousand	dae / div — do	afore / afoor — before	moothfa — mouthful
nae — no	dae ken — don't know	after — after	soon — sound
aye — yes	dinna / daen't / divn't — don't	doon — done	threid — thread
an — and	didnae — didn't	lang — long	yairn — yarn
o' — of	disn't — doesn't	a'hint — behind	patren — pattern
eet — it	canna — can't	ower — over	coorse — coarse
tae / 'ae / 'a — to	couldnae — couldn't	wi' — with	claiths — clothes
fra — from	wid — would	forra — forward	dookie — swimsuit
fir — for	widnae — wouldn't	throw — through	caird — card
joost / jist — just	wouldae — would have	roon — round	barra — wheelbarrow
dae — do	wasnae / wan — wasn't	fer — far	reid — red
daein / dain — doing	werena — weren't	aff — off	cairt — cart
ga — go	wunna — won't	oot — out	pert — part
gan — go / going	hadnae — hadn't	doon — down	wa' — wall
hev — have	shaire — sure	affa — awfully / a lot	flair — floor
hed — had	wrang — wrong	oor — hour	hoose — house
teeke — take	feart — afraid	pun' — pound	tiee — tea
meeke — make	weel — well	mam — mum	breid — bread

## *Katrine Eagleson*

*Recorded online, 13 November 2020*

*SPEAKERS*

*Katrine Eagleson, Emma Dove*

Katrine  
Eagleson

My knowledge is possibly mostly about my father's mill, Woolly Mill, which has quite an interesting — I think it's got an interesting history. It hasn't got the cachet, or the... Attraction, of say Reid & Taylor's, or even Arthur Bell's, but in its own way, it's just a quiet, small, little woollen mill. And they had a good steady trade through the years — until my father made a bad decision, but that's another story. Yeah.

Emma  
Dove

Well, I'd love to hear more about that Katrine, you know, if you want — not necessarily about that decision I mean, but you know, just about your father's work and your own work, and your late husband's work as well, if you want to tell me.

KE

Okay, I'm just gonna open this up, because it's the dates. So I'm just going to... This is actually my grandfather's obituary that I'm looking at. Yeah, I'll pop my glasses on. Okay, right. So my father's mill — the one that I know — was started by my grandfather, Jack Armitage. And Jack Armitage was a Yorkshireman, who eventually went to live in Lancashire. And my grandad started at — started in the mill at the age of 16. So he's probably — he's quite unique in Langholm, in that alone, of all the mill owners, he actually started from the bottom and worked his

KE cont.

way up. He was very proud of that. He'd worked for the Lancashire cotton mill industry. And it was The Woolly Mill<sup>1</sup>, produced woollen — a woollen weft on a cotton warp — so it was really cheap. That was started in — that started in 1930. Then eventually the Lancashire cotton mill lost interest, and by that time my grandfather had acquired the major — was the major shareholder — he bought into it. And in 1949, the mill moved up from Blackburn to Langholm. And that in itself is fascinating, because they closed down after production on a Friday afternoon at four o'clock. They packed it up — and I think there were 26 wagons — and it came up to Scotland, to Langholm. And they spent all weekend putting it together, setting it up, and it was weaving on Monday morning.

ED

That's incredible.

KE

Yeah. At that stage, it was just spinning and weaving, there was no finishing involved. But it is a testament to the power of the old looms — they were very portable, they were very simple to put together, because they were just bits of metal and cogs and wheels. It was great.

So fast forward to 1950s, and by then my father had done his national service in the Air Force, and he was doing his Associate of the Textile Industry at Huddersfield Tech. And he worked in the mill when he wasn't doing National Service. And by 1959 the mill actually had its own finishing plant. That was the side that my father was really keen on — the engineering, the processes. He was a good designer, if a little technical. And he didn't have the vision and the colour span that say Bill Johnstone of Neill Johnstone's, or even Scott-Hay of Reid & Taylor's had — they were the designers — and my father was primarily more involved in the production. But he did very well.

Now, my grandfather, funnily enough, talking about design, actually won the gold medal — um, there's no date on this — but my grandfather actually won the gold medal for Design in Fancy Weaving. I hope you are able to look at these at some point — his final piece — because they are beaut — they are absolutely gorgeous. And when you consider that they've all been done with the aid of a slide calculator and they didn't even have calculators — it was all in your head.

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<sup>1</sup> The Woolly Mill Co Ltd — an experimental project by the Lancashire Cotton Corporation.

KE cont.

They had tables of formula and you had costings sheets<sup>2</sup>, and you had wool, and there was no computer. It's absolutely phenomenal. I think it's remarkable.

Fast forward again to Katrine at the age of 10 — I wanted pocket money to go on holiday. My mum and dad were quite traditional, and they said if you want pocket money, you've got to work for it. I thought all right, okay. So I was put to working during the holidays, cleaning the spinning drains. I was quite small and skinny, and it was a really filthy, dirty job. You have a big, big wire brush. And I spent — I think I spent three weeks going along the bottom, just brushing all this fluff off and cleaning them. And it's a horrible, horrible job.

I started work there at the age of 10, and then as I got a little bit older, I was a little bit taller and I could reach to clean out the gunge better. I started working in the warping sheds and in the design pattern offices, and also doing a bit of darning and working in the yarn store. And at this point, I was seriously considering going to Gala Tech to do Textiles. But I had problems in the yarn store trying to find certain shades.

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<sup>2</sup> The cost worked out for how much yarn is required to produce a metre of a particular design. All mills had their in house designs and recording these calculations made it simpler for designers in the days before computers, so they had records to help them.

Took the Ishihara test — and I'm colourblind. I can't tell the difference between greens and blues. So, textiles was out — big no, no.

But I — after I finished University doing American Studies and Sociology, I was looking for a job and I couldn't find one. And it just so happened that Courtaulds had a mill in Carlisle called Gleneden Fabrics. And at Gleneden Fabrics, they wove automotive fabrics, which are used for covering seats and lining inside of aeroplanes. They also did a bit of some soft furnishings as well. And I worked for them for three years as a junior-junior-junior production assistant. And it was really enjoyable, I loved it. But it was absolutely huge — absolutely huge.

And I met my husband in 1986. And at that point, I had drifted back to Langholm to work for my father as a general dog's body doing a bit of this and a bit of that. And Ray and I got married. He at that time was a designer, working for — I'm losing all the names now, do forgive me — working for a company in Galashiels, having sold his own design business. We went to live in Sri Lanka, and work in Sri Lanka for Tootal Fabrics. And that was great fun, because that's when the civil war kicked off — so it was quite exciting. We gave Sri Lanka six months

KE cont.

before it became too dangerous. Then we came back and went to work in Montreal in Quebec, Canada, working for a small design consultancy firm.

Ray was headhunted after, in 1991. And we came back to work for a company called Joseph Hoyle in Huddersfield. We were very happy there for a while. Then headhunted again, and we went up to Brora to work for Hunter's of Brora after Tom Simpson retired. Then in 1998 — came back down to Langholm, because Ray had been offered the role of Managing Director for Reid & Taylor's. Now, at that stage — 1991, 1992 — the company, Reid & Taylor's, had been bought by an Indian company called Kumar — Kumar Brothers, who were very big. And yet — on the surface, everything looked good and promising. They were very interested in profit — too much. And they weren't... The machines at Reid & Taylor's were really just not up to doing the job anymore. And Kumars decided they weren't going to put any more money into Reid & Taylor's, but still wanted the profits. Did a little bit of digging into finances and accounts — and Ray decided that he really did not want to be with Reid & Taylor's anymore if they were going to let the actual fabric, you know, the actual material structure of the business... Wind down. Ron Addison will probably tell you a lot of this. There are

some things which at the moment I don't think I should speak about — there's a lot of that in Langholm, you'll find. So I think when you know where you want to go with this, then maybe we can discuss these again. But it's all wheels and cogs and engines.

ED

Well, it's really fascinating to hear your, you know, your kind of family lineage, and I already have a lot of questions, but I didn't want to interrupt you! But I suppose, thinking about your own memories and, you know, being around the mills and in the mills from very young — I mean, what was that like growing up?

KE

Growing up in the mills? Well, when I was growing up in Langholm, in the heyday of the mills that I remember, which were — the 1960s were big. And then in the — towards the end of the 1970s, well mid-1970s, you start to get the miners' strikes. And of course, Mrs. Thatcher's in control — she wasn't interested in the textile industry. And the Unions were in full flood as well. And things became very, very difficult indeed — for, indeed, all the woollen mills in the UK, particularly in Langholm. But they kept going. You know, there were redundants, people were laid off, people went on short time, but they kept ticking over.

KE cont.

And my father, because he was... He at that stage would be third or fourth generation textiles — not owner, but his great grandparents, and his grandparents, had all worked in the mills. It goes up and it goes down and you just ride with it. But by the 1970s, the good — you know, the big boom days were over. Fabric was starting to be made, just starting to be made in places like China and India. And of course, the trend for wearing wool... Had gone. I can remember — I can remember coming home with a new pair of jeans. I was really, really proud of them — they were Lee Cooper. And my father went absolutely ballistic. Because he said 'If you all bought wool trousers, once or twice a year', he said 'I'd still —' you know, business would be booming. That's the way it was.

But the mills were lovely. It was a real community feeling, particularly in Langholm. And Langholm — the Langholm mills worked... Each — as an individual mill, they were each quite proud of what they produced. But if, say, Arthur Bell's needed a part for a loom, and my father had one, you know, they would lend, they would swap, they would support each other. It... It was lovely. It was lovely. And I think the only animosity ever came between — that happened between the workers — was

usually at the annual cricket, you know, the trades cricket match or the trades football match. But it was a great time. You had entire families working for one mill. That continued actually, until fairly recently. There was a family a couple of streets along by the name of Bell, and Jackie Bell's grandfather had worked for Reid & Taylor's, so of course his family all worked for Reid & Taylor's. You just didn't consider that you'd go and work for somebody else. Yeah.

But the mills themselves were... I remember them as being really quite dirty. And quite noisy — very noisy, extremely noisy. But they were quite happy places to be. And despite the fact that — today you would think, oh it was really dangerous. As a small child, I used to run through these places — but I was very conscious of things. Shuttles — flying shuttles — they were dreadful. They could really, really injure you if they came out. The shuttle is about 30 centimetres long, and they were wooden and they had steel tips on the end. And occasionally one would fly out of the end of the loom. If they hit somebody you really knew about it. But, you didn't — it didn't happen too often.

And of course there were all the fabulous chemicals! Um, something called carbon tetrachloride, which used to sit in a



KE cont. big green bottle. It was an absolutely beautiful bottle, I loved those bottles! And it smelled amazing. Because you'd take the top off and you'd smell it, and you'd just go — *blululup* — it would make you go all faint, but I thought it was just absolutely fascinating! [laughs] Oh, they wouldn't do it now. They really wouldn't do it now.

ED So what was that for Katrine? What was the...?

KE Carbon TC. It was mostly used in finishing — in the finishing departments. And I tend to think of the closest — it's the same, almost the same kind of fluid that they use in dry cleaning, which is quite toxic. And sometimes you get a greasy spot on a piece of fabric, and you'd get a piece of cotton cloth, and we'd dip it in this Carbon TC and just sponge it over, and the grease would come off.

ED Okay, right, right. Wow.

KE Lots of things like that. Some of the... There were a lot of skills and people were very, very proud of what they could do. And now, today, with so much focus as well being on, you know, the inequality in pay. I look back now, and I find it quite shocking that you — we did have some — we did have female weavers and we did

have male weavers — and I find it quite shocking that the women were paid less.

ED Yeah.

KE But that was the legislation at the time and there was nothing they could do about it. It was on piece rate. So in the — it probably balanced out, but some of the women were really good. Seriously, seriously good. Particularly in the darning area. Darners were always women, it went without saying. And the darners were lovely ladies. Judith — Judith I think has actually been in a play called The Darners. And if you — I think she has a film. If you ask her to show you that film, it will give you an idea of what the, you know, what they were like, what they talked about. And they could be quite vicious at times. And they could be quite rude — very rude! Really rude, especially if you had a young lad just starting. So you've come out of school — you're 15 years old, and you're spotty — you're sent up to the darners flat to get something. This is where it's going to get rude. And they would send these young boys up to ask for — Maidenhead Punch, was the popular one, or a tin of tartan paint. Or they would be sent up to Latimers — which is the hardware store in Langholm — to get a bubble for a spirit level. There was a lot of good natured

KE cont.

bantering going on. And there was quite a lot of joshing.

You know, it's very, very difficult to — for me to get my head around it. Because you'd see, you know, you'd see women get a, you know, a smack on the bottom — a gentle smack on the bottom. Or a kiss on the cheeks, or... It never — it never occurred to me that this was harassment. It was all good natured, and the women took it as they found it. That's probably the one issue from those days that I find a bit difficult to handle. You wouldn't — it certainly wasn't evident when I was working as a young adult in Courtaulds. I mean, any of the male tuners<sup>3</sup> would not have dreamt, you know, of giving me a wee smack on the bottom or a wee squeeze. They just wouldn't have done it. So times — times are very, very different.

ED

Yeah. But it, I mean it sounds like it was an incredibly social place, as well as a busy workplace. A real kind of — like almost the social core of the town maybe?

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<sup>3</sup> A cross between a technician and a mechanic. They set up the looms for weaving a new piece of cloth, since widths, shafts and belts would need to be changed for a new design. There are also subdivisions of skills within the tuners.

KE

Well they were like great big families. And sometimes people got on, sometimes people would, you know — somebody would fall out with somebody over something completely stupid. And you'd get this little feud that would just erupt. And it, it became absolutely, utterly ridiculous. My father would have to put his coat on, go in — 'Enough — you stand in that corner, you stand in that corner, we all work together' — you know, sometimes my dad, my grandad, they did have to play the head of the family. But on the whole, these sparks were very, very rare. Very rare indeed.

I think... I think when the millers really came into their own — when the people working there, you know, showed how close they were — was when somebody got married. The husband — the future husband, the future wife — they'd be dressed up with bits of — old bits of cloth, rags, anything they could find. And they'd be put in what they used to call a bogey — a bogey wagon. Now the bogey wagons were horrible. They were used for moving the heavy wet greasy fabric, greasy cloth, from finishing department to finish— so they were quite smelly. And these would be decorated. And the bride, or the groom, put in one and decorated, and they'd be pushed — they'd be pushed around the town! So during the summer

KE cont.

there could be 2 or 3 of these happening at the weekend. And it was great fun! You poked fun at them, and you gave them little baby dolls, and pans and spoons — everything to start a married life together. And the weddings were quite raucous affairs, they really were.

And it was the same if somebody fell on hard times, or if somebody fell sick — they supported each other. And the mill owners, all the mill owners in Langholm, they really looked after the workers. There were summer outings, there were Christmas parties. Men would get maybe a bottle of beer or a quarter bottle of whisky. The women would get — usually a tin of biscuits or a box of chocolates — which I just thought was big rough. Depends on how things have gone during the year, but there was always a bonus. There was always something at Christmas and there was always a Christmas party. And there were summer outings for a while, usually to Blackpool. Oh, they were quite wild as well. Yeah.

ED

I can imagine, yeah! [laughs] One of the things that you've mentioned in our conversation — which I'd also noticed and found quite fascinating when we were in the Reid & Taylor archive. It's something that I suppose is quite obvious when you think about it, but it hadn't occurred to

me — how much international travel and kind of potential there was to actually travel all over the world. Because, you know, I guess you think of it as very much a — as we've been talking about — you know, it's embedded in the town.

KE

Yeah. There was a lot of international travel. But to be quite honest, it wasn't — it wasn't glamorous, it wasn't jet set. You did have people — John Packer, famously, of Reid & Taylor's — who used to make a big thing of his international travelling. And of course, he stayed in the best hotels, and met celeb— not celebrities, well okay, Princess Margaret. He did meet Princess Margaret. But that was just John Packer... And he was more about sales and marketing, and also Reid & Taylor's belonged to Allied Textiles at that time, and it wasn't his company. Whereas, my father, Arthur Bell, Bill Johnstone of Neill Johnstone — those were their companies, so they didn't go around splashing their cash. The design went — usually twice or three times a year — to Pitti Filati<sup>4</sup> in Italy, to Premiere Vision, which was the big one, in Paris.

KE cont

Now, Premiere Vision was top if you like<sup>5</sup>. All the mills from the UK, from Europe, would actually — would showcase their most recent collection — so of course, the designer had to be there. And if you were chosen to go it was such — oh, you know, it was just so fantastic! I only ever went once, with my father's mill. And I thought it was going to be all about nice breakfasts, meeting people, going out for long lunches and having wine. No. No, you were stuck in this big aircraft hangar for five days. I don't think I ever actually saw the restaurant — it was all eaten in hotel rooms. Yeah, so, such is the life of the junior, junior designer.

But for people like my husband who — with Hunter's of Brora, in particular — he travelled to Mongolia, China, Vietnam, extensively through South America. But he wasn't just selling the fabric, he was also looking at suppliers for cashmere, merino wool, silk. You either enjoyed the travel or you didn't, but it was exhausting.

When Ray was working for Reid & Taylor — the two years that we lived in Langholm — when he was working for Reid & Taylor, he would be away for two weeks out of every month. And it's really hard. I couldn't go back to work, I had two small children. And I found it very,

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5 (for UK producers)

very difficult indeed. And when they're away they're just — they're living in hotel rooms all the time, moving on all the time. It's quite stressful. Selling your company, you're dealing with foreign — dealing with a foreign language, foreign food as well.

Some — over the years, you do build up relationships with your suppliers and your customers. And that — when that happens, that's great, because you know them. And when you get to that level, you're invited to go to somebody's house. And you know you've made it then because some of the stress gets taken off. But that only happens when you get to senior designer level — Head of Design, Head of Sales, Managing Director level. But for the junior designers, it's hard, hard work. But I think particularly if you were female and the men there as well — you do get preyed on by... That's the, that's the seedy side. I don't know if you want to know this?

ED

No it's something that, you know...

KE

Yeah it's not glam, it's not glamorous. You're young, you're 20 years old, you're — 'oh, I'm in Paris! I'm in Milan!' — and you... You can get taken advantage of. And it has happened, sadly. But these relationships can — you know, they

KE cont. can really sour a working place. And I have known of quite a few incidences where it's happened. Where everybody knows about the relationship but the unfortunate husband or wife. Then when it all blows up, it's dreadful. And that can totally screw up working.

ED Yeah, yeah.

KE So that's travel. My father, however, looked on it differently, because he... Most of his business was in Europe. And my father ran the mill — he managed the mill. So he always felt that, yes, selling and supply were important, but equally, running the mill — keeping everything running, making sure nothing was going wrong — that's just as important. So my father was never away for weeks at a time. His speciality was, note on the kitchen table: 'Gone to Milan, back on Thursday.' That'd be it. Sometimes he would take my mum as well. But my father liked to drive, you see — my father loved driving — instead of flying. And he could do that — he would drive down to Milan in a day, do the business, drive back up. So it was — it was really, really stressful. And a lot, I think a lot of the senior designers — my husband, for example — their health was damaged as a result. They did have heart attacks, they did have strokes. But... hey, that's life.

ED Yeah, it sounds like an intensive job.

KE I think you can say that about quite a lot of industries now. The days of the expense accounts are now over. Definitely now.

ED Yeah. You've mentioned the, you know, the art of design and the technicality of it and I'm sure that changed — as you said, originally there were no computers involved.

KE I'll just... Here — you might be able to see them, I don't know?

ED It's um, it's something that when we visited the archive as well, we saw these pattern cards.

KE Yes, I mean the Reid & Taylor archives are seriously impressive. And the books are just so big! We had 40 of them up in our attic. And after Ray died, I had to move all this stuff down this terri— narrow, narrow little staircase. They've actually gone up to Herriot-Watt, Galashiels. So you will find quite a bit of stuff up there from Woolly Mill and some stuff from Reid & Taylor's as well — and if you're interested, Hunter's of Brora. But I'll just show you these... Now that — that's my grandfather's design book.

ED Wow, how special to have that.

KE And this is how they drew the design.

ED Amazing. Oh, my goodness.

KE So it's all... I was useless at it. But this is what he worked for, this is what he worked for in the mill. And these are... falling to bits. But I was talking earlier about the medal —

ED Ah, yeah. Wow.

KE That's the design — for that.

ED Wow.

KE You really need to — you need to see them close up to appreciate them. There are a couple in the textile archive that Ron Addison has — I know they're there 'cause I put them there! They've actually just been loaned out and come back from a student who's doing textile marketing at Galashiels. So he found them really, really interesting. And I've got quite a few books as well.

ED Yeah. That's such a special thing to have as well, you know, for you to have.

KE Yes. We were talking about the designing — and you've got two types of designers. My father and my grandfather were technical designers. And they — it was

all about maths, and all about the fibre, you know, the weight of the fibre and the strength. My husband was — he was good, he was a good technical designer, but he was very much into colour, and particularly how fabric felt and handled. And he was very good at it. But by the time my husband was working as a designer, the actual finishing and the dyeing and the weaving process had advanced and machinery processes were much, much more sophisticated. Because you could take an ordinary cheap piece of wool, and you could finish it and raise it in such a way that it actually felt like cashmere. This is what the Chinese are doing — they shouldn't be doing it, they shouldn't be passing it off as cashmere.

I think now that, particularly with COVID, and particularly with the Prince of Wales and his new collection — have you seen that? The Prince of Wales prides himself on wearing a pair of shoes that he bought in nineteen-fifty-something. He prides himself on wearing this manky jacket that has been so patched up, so stitched together, that he's had it for 60 years. Now, he has spearheaded, has put together a project, using Scottish producers — but Italian student designers, which I'm not happy about. And there's a collection of fabrics and garments — buy them once and they will last for 30, 40, 50 years.

KE cont.

To my mind, this is what we should be doing, but not many of us can afford £350 for a cashmere zip-up hoody. But it's going back to what I said to you earlier about me coming home with a pair of denim trousers and my father going absolutely ballistic. My father was still wearing trousers and suits and jackets that he had designed, woven and made in the 1960s. And I think it's — we now have to look towards thinking a little better about what we're buying — not buying cheap garments from China and India — and to support our own industries. It's also very interesting — I was reading a newspaper clipping, a newspaper cutting earlier, and my husband in 1990 had said that we need to be focusing on home-based, small, local producers. Producing small amounts of high quality garments — high quality fabric — buying less, but looking after it a little bit better. So it's, I think it's — the wheel is slowly coming full circle.

ED

Yeah. Yes. I mean, it's quite astounding, isn't it? The sort of fast fashion trend that you might — it's the opposite, isn't it? — that you might buy something just to wear it once, you know, or to wear for a few weeks and then, you know, and then the quality is degraded already in that time.

KE

Well, I know that my niece will go to Primark or Zara before she's going on summer holiday. And she she will buy, say, maybe £80 worth of clothing. And she'll wear them two or three times and then it all goes into landfill. And I think it's totally wrong. It's utterly, absolutely and morally wrong. But on the back of that, you have companies like ReTweed in St Abbs, Eyemouth, who are taking fabric and they're converting this fabric into other garments and other articles. Judith may — I don't know if — has Judith mentioned ReTweed to you? They are seriously good, really impressive.

ED

Yeah. And I suppose as well in a sense — you're a very good example of this — of someone who's grown up in the industry, who has a very strong appreciation for the processes and the quality of the product. And in a sense, it feels as though even though the industry is no longer in Langholm, there's still a very strong kind of pride and embedded knowledge in the town. And if that knowledge can feed into, I suppose smaller scale — you know, it's not the big industry, but it's ways to kind of pass on that appreciation and that passion and that care — that can still feed into new generations and, you know, be a positive.

KE

I think as well it's actually, you know — the small businesses are there, because, I mean, Harris Tweed is the, you know, the big success story. And that's a big success story mostly because the finishing processes have improved enormously. When I was at school, we had to wear Harris Tweed skirts and jackets — they were awful! For the first few years of your school career, you were wearing something that was like barbed wire. And then just before you were due to leave, you know, the jackets and the skirts were — 'ooo, this is nice and soft'. So Harris Tweed is a big success story. And also, I think, tweed has become so fashionable. It's... There's tweed and there's tweed. I mean, it was ingrained into me that, you know, tweed is wool. You can't, there's no — you can't possibly get acrylic tweed. But they do try, they do try to make tweed-type fabric using manmade fibres. There's nothing wrong with that, particularly if you're a vegan and want to be conscious of what you're wearing. But I would like to see more people wearing clothing — garments made in the UK. But sadly, because it's — there's not much of it, or not enough of it, it's still expensive.

ED

Yeah. But it's the shift of mindset, isn't it? It's the spending that £80 on one garment, as opposed to eight garments, you know? But then, yeah — then you're buying it with years in mind, rather than weeks.

KE

Well that's — I'm not good at sewing at all, I'm terrible. But I've actually started sewing again. I haven't tackled a garment for myself recently. But I've been making loads of cushions and upholstering chairs and headboards — but really, really badly. I'm not quite Angel Strawbridge yet, but I'm getting there. She's amazing, do you ever watch the programmes? Escape to the Chateau. This woman is amazing, she's incredible. Not to everybody's taste, but she does prove that — you go online, you go onto YouTube, you want to make rolling blinds, or you want to replace the cover on a chair, or you want to put patches on a jacket — the information's there. There's nothing to stop people, at all. I have seen kids in Langholm wearing jeans that have actually got tweed patches on, that their mothers — who have been to one of Judith's sewing classes — have put tweed patches on their jeans. And they look fantastic! They're really good. Little ducks and cars and tractors! It's coming, slowly, this interest. I don't know why. I don't know. I think it'll — I'd like to see it come back.



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