Unit 7: Arts and Crafts

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Introduction

In this unit you will consider the use of Scots language in the study of the Art and Crafts of Scotland. Scottish art is generally agreed to be the body of visual art made in what is now Scotland, or about Scottish subjects, since prehistoric times. The earliest examples come from the Neolithic period, then from the Bronze Age where there are examples of carvings with the first representations of objects, cup and ring marks. Elaborately carved Pictish stones and impressive metalwork then emerged in Scotland in the early Middle Ages.

In the 18th century Scotland began producing artists who became significant internationally. The Royal Scottish Academy of Art was created in 1826, and portrait painters of this period include Andrew Geddes and David Wilkie. William Dyce emerged as one of the most significant figures in art education. The late 19th century art scene was dominated by the work of the Glasgow Boys and The Four, a group which included Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Both groups gained international reputation for the combination of Celtic revival, Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau in their work.

The Glasgow Girls is the name nowadays used for a group of female designers and artists including Margaret and Frances MacDonald, both of whom were members of The Four. Women were able to flourish in Glasgow in this “period of enlightenment” taking place between 1885 and 1920, where they were actively pursuing art careers and the Glasgow School of Art had a significant period of international visibility.

Important details to take notes on throughout this unit:

- The role of Glasgow-based female Scottish artists
- How Scots language can appear in formal correspondence when there is jest implied or informality sought
- Craftwork and other trades in Scotland and their influence on Scottish surnames
- How employment areas such as weaving or basketry carry a wealth of Scots vocabulary.

Activity 1

Before commencing your study of this unit, you may wish to jot down some thoughts on the four important details we suggest you take notes on throughout this unit. You could write down what you already know about each of these four points, as well as any assumption or question you might

Provide your answer...

7. Introductory handsel

A Scots word and example sentence to learn:
Hind
Definition: A farm-servant, a ploughman, a married skilled farm worker who occupies a cottage on the farm and is granted perquisites in addition to wages.

○ Example sentence: “The smell o’ neeps is i’ the wund; Hinds roond the doors are crackin’.”
○ English translation: “The smell of turnips is in the wind: Farm workers round the doors are cracking’.”

Activity 2
Click to hear the sentence above read by a Scots speaker.
You can then make your own recording and play it back to check your pronunciation.
Voice Recorder is not available in this format.
Go to the Dictionary of the Scots Language for a full definition of the word.

James Guthrie – A Hind’s Daughter (1883)
Guthrie’s painting

The picture ‘A Hind’s Daughter’ is a famous Scottish painting by Sir James Guthrie (1859 – 1930). Guthrie became one of the leading painters in the group of artists called The Glasgow Boys. This painting is one of the artist’s most distinguished and well-known works. Apart from the skill exhibited in the painting, the content of the work is notable.

Here is a girl in the middle of a cabbage or kail patch. She stares confidently out despite the fact that her standing in society will be from the poorer farm workers; a group of workers more likely not to meet the ‘camera’ eyes rather than gaze back. She grips her knife solidly and seems to have been disturbed at her job, seeming as though, after ‘we’ have looked, she’ll get back to work.

She is not posing for the artist, she stops naturally without any artifice. You may wonder: Is this painting making a statement about Scottish confidence?

“The small girl has just straightened up after cutting a cabbage and looks directly at the viewer. Girl and landscape seem inextricably merged in this essentially Scottish scene. A hind was a skilled farm labourer, and cabbage (or kail) a staple diet of Scottish hinds and their families.

Guthrie painted the picture in the Berwickshire village of Cockburnspath, where he opted to stay during the winter, unlike his Glasgow friends who returned to the city at the end of the summer. The warm earth colours and distinctive square brush strokes confirm the profound impact Bastien-Lepage’s painting made on Guthrie.”

(National Gallery Scotland, A Hind’s Daughter)

Related word:

Blade

Definition: broad, flat leaf, as the outer leaves of cabbage or lettuce, the leaves of rhubarb, tobacco, etc.

○ Example sentence: The bairns geed tae scuil wi only a cauld kale blade ta aet fir thir piece.

Go to the Dictionary of the Scots Language for a full definition of the word.
Activity 3

Part 1

First of all, translate the example sentence into English, as this time we have not provided a translation for you. The sentence contains a number of words you have already come across in the previous units of the course, so you might not even need the DSL to help you decipher its meaning.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Our translation of the sentence is the following:

The children went to school with a cold leaf of cabbage in their pockets as a snack for lunch.

Please note:

- kail and piece are words you came across in the Food and Drink unit
- bearms and scuil were mentioned in the Education unit.
Part 2
Now click to hear the example sentence read by a Scots speaker. You can then make your own recording and play it back to check your pronunciation.
Voice Recorder is not available in this format.

Part 3
And finally, you will learn about a probably surprising link between *kail* and literature, although, *kail* features heavily in older Scottish literature. This link most likely stems from even before the 18th century when *kail* was the staple diet of the Scots cottagers and *hinds* or farm labourers. The term can be found in many proverbs and sayings, for example this one which was published as early as 1597:

‘They that suppe keile with the deuill haue neede of long spoones.’
(Daemonologie. James VI of Scotland; Waldegraue, Edinburgh, 1597)

Read through the definitions of *kail* in the Dictionary of the Scots Language and find out how this word has been linked to a form of literature in Scotland.

Provide your answer...

Answer
This is what the DSL section on *kail* states in relation to its link with literature:

‘III. 18.; (b) a name applied to a type of fiction, popular in Scotland from about 1880, dealing mainly with rural domestic life, containing a good deal of dialect speech and written in a heavily sentimental vein. The main exponents were “I. Maclaren” (John Watson), S. R. Crockett and J. M. Barrie and the name was apparently coined by W. E. Henley or J. H. Millar, suggested by the line from the Jacobite song “There grows a bonny brier bush in our kailyard”, which gave “Ian Maclaren” the title of his first work, Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush (1894), a typical specimen of the class
(Blake, G., *Barrie and the Kailyard School*, 1951, p. 16–17.)

There is also a *kail*-related term in modern literary criticism, *kailyardism*, which symbolises sentimentality; *kailyardish* writing then stands for a literary text using a sentimental tone (see the DSL).

Language links
The Scots word *blade* has a close connection with the German language, in which a broad leaf is a *blatt*. The word for leaf in old Norse was *blad*, old high German *blada* and old Dutch *blad*. The word evolved in the German language and in medieval times, the word for leaf was *blat*, yet in some areas it remained *blad*. In the Dutch language to this day a leaf is a *blad*. 
7.1. Glasgow and famous female artists

Glasgow School of Art by Wojtek Gurak

In the 1960s there began an attempt to balance the degree of plentiful discussion awarded to the group of the Glasgow Boys, whom Guthrie was a member of, by giving due attention to the work of the city’s women artists. It is thought that William Buchanan, then Head of the Scottish Arts Council, who was the first to use the name Glasgow Girls in the catalogue for the 1968 Glasgow Boys Exhibition.

The term was given further emphasis by Jude Burkhauser in 1990 when organising the major exhibition Glasgow Girls: Women in Art and Design 1880-1920. According to the exhibition, the group of female artists consisted of Jessie Marion King, Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, Frances Macdonald MacNair, Helen Paxton Brown, Bessie MacNicol, Norah Neilson Gray.

“Two of the most prominent Glasgow Girls were also members of The Glasgow Four – the sisters Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh and Frances Macdonald MacNair, who formed a coalition with their husbands Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Herbert MacNair.

Together they were instrumental in the Celtic Revival, the development of the Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau’s distinctive Scottish brand, a style which is instantly recognisable today. Artists Annie French and Bessie MacNicol are also widely recognised today for their contributions to drawing, printing and painting.”

(National Gallery Scotland, Glasgow Girls)
Joan Eardley

Joan Eardley was a major figure in 20th century Scottish Art. She died in 1963, aged 42, ending her artistic career tragically soon. During her time she concentrated on two major themes and her career can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase began when she enrolled at Glasgow School of Art in 1940 through to 1949 when she successfully exhibited paintings created when travelling across Italy.

Then from 1950 to 1957 she painted the city of Glasgow, in particular the children of Townhead which was a distressingly deprived area. These scenes and portraits of urban poverty are then contrasted sharply in her third phase in Eardley’s depiction of Catterline, a fishing village south of Aberdeen where she moved permanently in 1961.

From then until the end of her life the rural landscapes and seascapes she saw around her, and which ‘Boats on the shore’ is an example, dominated her output.

A major exhibition of her work took place in 2017 in Edinburgh’s Scottish National Gallery. Entitled A Sense of Place, it included the two themes of her work with many previously unseen drawings and sketches. Often painting out of doors, her depictions of the wild seas and overcast skies in the north east of Scotland contrasted sharply with her tenement scenes with Glasgow weans.

These central objects of Eardley’s paintings also feature in a review of the ‘A Sense of Place’ exhibition in the Scottish National Gallery in the Financial Times.

Activity 4

Part 1

In a first step, watch the video provided by the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art to accompany the exhibition.

a. You will hear Joan Eardly talk about how she works early on in the video. Thinking back to the titles of the 5 sections of unit 1, Mooth, Lugs, Een, Hert and Heid, which of the body parts mentioned there were the most influential for Eardley when it comes to painting?

b. Fiona Pearson, one of the contributors in the video, explains that Eardley’s paintings have touched so many people because she is ‘tapping into three universal themes’ in her paintings. Can you name these?

Provide your answer...

Answer

a. The een and the hert. Eardley states that she paints what her eyes show her and how she feels about this in her heart. She says that she does not think but just wants to paint.

b. These universal themes are childhood, life and nature.
Part 2
In this part of the activity you will work with one of Eardley’s most famous Glasgow paintings, ‘Two Glasgow Lassies’ (1962–63).

*Before actually looking at the painting, listen to a description of this painting in Scots.*
*While listening, you might want to have a go at sketching this painting according to the description. Then look at the painting which is featured in the Wullschlager article.*

Part 3
Again, here is an opportunity to practise your spoken Scots by reading out the description of Eardley’s painting. As always in this type of activity, compare your recording with our model and repeat the process until you are happy with your own Scots pronunciation.

Voice Recorder is not available in this format.

And if you have not understood all words in the description, here is our translation of the short text into English.

**Answer**

*This picture shows two girls sitting together and looking out at the painter. One has her arms folded, the other has her hands on her dress. The one with black hair and a red type of scarf around her head does not look very happy. The one with brown hair looks as if she is in a day-dream as she gazes fixedly out (at the observer).*
7.2 The Monarch of the Glen

Monarch of the Glen goes on tour around Scotland by Scottish Government

Completed in 1851 by the English painter Sir Edwin Landseer, The Monarch of the Glen is an oil-on-canvas painting of a red deer stag. It had been commissioned as part of a series of three panels to hang in the Palace of Westminster in London. The image became one of the most popular paintings throughout the 19th century. Reproductions in steel engraving sold very widely and the painting itself was then bought by companies to use in advertising.

By the mid-20th century the painting had become quite the cliché, described by the Sunday Herald as "...the ultimate biscuit tin image of Scotland: a bulky stag set against the violet hills and watery skies of an isolated wilderness." (Jeffrey, 2005)

Language Links

The stag in the painting has twelve points on his antlers, which in deer terminology makes him a "royal stag" but not a "monarch stag", for which sixteen points are needed. The DSL definition of glen is a valley between hills or mountains. Early examples in place-names are Rutherglen (c 1160) or le Glen (1292).

Often, Scots, being a Germanic language, has close links to Scandinavian and European languages. In this case, the word glen has its roots in a Celtic language - Gaelic. It comes from the Scottish Gaelic and Irish gleann (earlier glenn).
In 2017 the National Gallery of Scotland launched a successful campaign to buy the painting, finally achieving the acquisition for £4 million. The painting is now part of the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh, on display in Room 12.

With that £4m in mind, now read the lovely tale of Orla Macdonald and The Monarch of the Glen, 'A Painted Stag and Skooshy Cream: A Tale of Tough Negotiation Unfolds...’ as published on the website of the Scottish National Gallery. The 13 year old Orla painted her own version of this painting and her father, Gary, wrote to the National Gallery – as a reaction to the difficult negotiations around the acquisition of the original by the Edinburgh gallery - offering it for sale to them for just £2 million.

Activity 5

In this activity you will take a closer look at the communication between Orla’s father, Gary, and the Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland.

Part 1

Read the letters by Gary Macdonald and Sir John Leighton.

- While reading, highlight the examples of Scots language used in the letters by Gary Macdonald.
- Translate into English the Scots words you identified.

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Answer

b. These are the translations of the Scots words used by Orla’s father.
   - folk (people)
   - wee (little)
   - gon yerself (go on yourself)
   - awfy (awfully)
   - skooshy (squirty)

Part 2

Why do you think Gary Macdonald uses a smatter of Scots in his letters to the National Galleries?

What effect does his use of Scots have on you as a reader?

Answer

This is a model answer. Your thoughts might be different.

I think that by using Scots, Gary makes the letter sound less formal and underlines that Orla’s proposition to the National Galleries should not be taken too seriously. His use of Scots in otherwise English language contexts underlines what was mentioned in other units of this course, that Scots is often called upon to contribute an element of humour to communication.
7.3 Scottish Crafts

Scottish indigenous crafts are crafts that have their origins in the cultures of Scotland. Other terms often used to describe them include heritage, traditional and folk art. The Scottish Indigenous Crafts website, run by the Really Interesting Objects initiative, offers useful definitions of these terms, which are added to by Scottish Indigenous Craft practitioners or initiative members themselves.

“What are Scottish Indigenous Crafts?

Scottish indigenous crafts are those which represent skills and trades originally acquired and practiced out of necessity. They are a product of functional life with an identifiable style specific to Scotland. Historically they reflect locally available materials and resources and are part of Scottish regional and national cultural identity. They can be expressive and innovative. They are sometimes described as folk art, rural craft, traditional craft and heritage craft.”

(Indigenous Crafts in Scotland, 2016)

Activity 6

Part 1

With the definition from the Scottish Indigenous Crafts website in mind, take a note of the Scottish crafts you might have come across. Then compare your list with that provided by the website.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Here is the list of indigenous Scottish crafts presented on the Scottish Indigenous Crafts website. How many of these crafts were on your list? Are there any items in the list below which you did not expect to find there?

1. Textile Crafts:
   i. spinning
   ii. handloom weaving: tweed (Harris, Borders & Shetland), tartan, damask
   iii. hand knitting: Fair Isle, Sanquhar, Kilthose, Eastcoast ganseys, Eriskay ganseys, Shetland knitted lace, Ayrshire needlework, New Pitsligo Bobbin Lace
   iv. quilting, traditional clootie rugs, Shetland taatit rugs
   v. highland dress (kiltmaking, sporrans, kilt sockmaking).
2. hornwork
3. shepherds crook and stick making, golf clubs, shinty stick/camam
4. curling stones
5. leathers/balls
6. Orkney chairs, Shetland chairs
7. spinning wheels
8. traditional boat building, model boats
9. Galloway clogs, Orkney bride’s cogs
10. wood turning - traditional Scottish domestic utensils
11. basketwork (creels, sculls, kishies)
12. musical instrument makers (highland bagpipe, small pipe, the harp or clarsach, stringed instruments (fiddles, guitarmaking))
13. staved vessels, barrelmaking (coopering), staved bucketmaking, saltboxes
14. lettercutting, silversmithing, quaichs, jewellery
15. bookbinding
16. ironwork
17. ropework
18. leatherwork
19. stonemasonry
20. tanning sheepskins

(Indigenous Crafts in Scotland, 2016)

Part 2
Taking a closer look at the items in the list from Part 1 of this activity, which do you think are Scots words? Highlight these now.

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Discussion
Please note: The term taatit is not listed in the DSL, although it is a Scots term. It is a specific term used in Shetland in connection with ‘rug’. Taatit rugs are the pile bedcovers traditionally used in Shetland. The Shetland heritage website provides information on a taatit rug exhibition in 2015.

Part 3
Now use the DSL to look up the words you highlighted in Part 2 and add these to your own glossary of Scots vocabulary and phrases.

Clearly craft industries of Scotland cover an impressive range of products and areas, and they make up an important component of the Scottish economy and contribute in a major way to the development of the Scottish tourist industry. A survey carried out on behalf of Craft Scotland and other craft agencies in the UK revealed that Scottish craft contributes over £70 million to the economy, from an estimated 3,350 Scottish craft makers. The summary of the survey provides an interesting insight into who the people are that consider themselves crafts people of Scotland today:
• Craft careerists: who committed to the idea of craft as a career and started their businesses shortly after finishing their first (or second) degrees in a craft-related subject. (38.8%)
• Artisans: who do not have academic degrees in the subject but nevertheless have made craft their first career. (12.2%)
• Career changers: who began their working lives in other careers before taking up craft as a profession, often in mid-life. (31.6%)
• Returners: who trained in art, craft or design, but followed another career path before ‘returning’ to craft later on. (17.5%)

When it comes to the materials used in Scottish crafts, it is interesting to compare the findings of the Creative Scotland study as opposed to the list of Scottish crafts posted on the Scottish Indigenous Crafts website from Activity 6.

Below is the ranking of the most commonly used materials cited in the *Crafts in an age of change: Summary report*:

**The five most commonly used materials in current Scottish crafts**

1. Metal and mixed materials in Jewellery – 23.0%
2. Textiles (exc. weaving) – 21.1%
3. Ceramics – 18.3%
4. Wood (exc. furniture) – 12.2%
5. Glass 11.1%
(2012, p. 24.)

You see that there are some materials that are not mentioned at all in the Scottish Indigenous Crafts website list, such as ceramics and glass. On the other hand, the range of materials in the Scottish Indigenous Crafts website list is much wider and includes more unusual materials such as horn or ropes which are made from hemp.

Why do you think there might be such a difference?

Might this be an issue of perceptions?

Can this have something to do with what some might consider ‘real crafts’ versus more creative or ‘arty’ crafts?

Do you think the items listed as indigenous crafts might be considered ‘every day/traditional goods’ as opposed to more innovative and in some cases ‘luxury’ products mentioned by the makers in the Creative Scotland study?

Could there be other reasons, i.e. the contributors to the Scottish Indigenous Crafts website list do not engage with crafts as a career?

If you want to find out more about makers, materials, crafts and interesting items, do explore the Craft Directory on the [Craft Scotland](http://www.craftscotland.org.uk) website, which makes for a compelling read.
7.4 Scottish surnames and crafts

In addition to the impact crafts have today, the historical importance of craft and trades is even reflected in the very names of Scotland’s people, although they may individually no longer be involved in the activities their surnames attest. Permanent surnames began to be used in Scotland around the 12th century, but were initially mainly the preserve of the upper echelons of Scottish society.

However, it gradually became necessary to distinguish ordinary people from one another by more than just the given name and the use of Scottish surnames spread. In some Highland areas, though, fixed surnames did not become the norm until the 18th century and in parts of the Northern Isles until the 19th century.

The influences on the development of Scottish surnames are many and varied and often more than one has resulted in the surname that we know today. Surnames today are used to indicate family relationships; however this has not always been the case. Surnames in the past have been based on many factors such as occupation, location, the patronymic (the adding of 'son' or 'Mac' to the father's first name), physical characteristics, localised spelling conventions and employer's names.

In many cases, similar, or in some cases identical, surnames have been derived from entirely different sources and different areas of Scotland. Thus the modern 'consistency' in naming conventions has been based on a possibly 'inconsistent' starting point.

It was only in 1855 that the compulsory registration of births, deaths and marriages started in Scotland and registrars started to insist that individuals should use the same surname as their father. The first surname survey, covering registrations during the years 1855, 1856 and 1858, was published by the Registrar General in 1860. Some common Scottish last names come from the occupational bynames based on the occupation, or job, of their owner. Such as: Webster (a weaver).

A well-known literary example that features a Wabster is Burns' humorous song, 'Sic a wife as Willie had' of 1792.

“*It is comic song telling the tale of a weaver and his 'not so comely' wife. According to tradition, Linkumdoddie was the name of a small cottage situated at the point where the River Tweed and Logan Water converge. During the latter days of the eighteenth century, it is known to have been inhabited by a weaver and his wife.*

*It is said that whilst travelling between Edinburgh and Dumfries, Burns stayed near Linkumdoddie on a number of occasions. Perhaps he sought inspiration for this song from the weaver and his wife!*”

(Scots Musical Museum, n.d.)
Activity 7

In this activity you will focus on the surname Webster and its various forms that were in common use in Scots: Webster or the variants Wobster, Webster, etc.

Here is a sample sentence from the Dictionary of the Scots Language which is a quote from a publication from 1721.

Sc. 1721 Ramsay Poems (S.T.S.) I. 189:

- Scots Language: He catch'd a crishy Webster Loun At runkling o' his Deary's Gown.
- English translation: He caught a greasy weaver boy ruffling his sweetheart's dress.

Part 1

Practise speaking this sentence, try not to read if of the page but speak it from memory as this will improve your pronunciation and intonation.

Voice Recorder is not available in this format.

Part 2

You will now study part of Burns’ song about the Webster of Linkumdoddie.

a. Listen to the first verse of the poem/song and work out what it is about.

| Audio content is not available in this format. |

b. Translate the song using the transcript and if needed the [DSL](https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=2705). Please note: the phrase *stown a clue* - ‘to stow a clew’ means to ‘pack a ball of thread’.
Here is our translation of the poem. Yours might be different.

*Willie Wastle lived on the banks of the Tweed,*
*At the spot they called Linkumdoddie;*
*Willie was a good weaver,*
*He could have packed a ball of thread with anyone:*
*He had a wife who was sullen and had a dull complexion,*
*Tinkler (Gypsy) Maidgie was her mother;*
*Such a wife did Willie have,*
*I would not give a button for her!*

**Please note:** The phrase ‘*He could have packed a ball of thread with anyone*’ in this context means ‘he could have married anyone’.

Burns’ description of Willie Wastle’s wife, which was used for comic effect at the time the song was written, would nowadays - rather than being seen as funny - be deemed an insult not just towards women but also towards people of different ethnic origin.

Burn’s poem clearly highlights that attitudes have changed considerably since 1792 and that we need to consider literature from different eras within the context of their time.

**Part 3**

And finally, practise your spoken Scots again by reading out loud the first verse of Burns’ song.

Voice Recorder is not available in this format.
7.5 Weavers

In this section you will take a closer look at weaving and the weaving industry in Scotland.

Activity 8

To start with, you will learn some Scots words which are specific to the weaving industry. When you look up these words in the DSL, you will not always find them or a direct translation. In some cases you would need to work with the example sentences to understand how they are used in the weaving context.

*Use the DSL, or the example sentence from the DSL, to derive a translation into English of these weaving terms.*

a. **Shifter**
   Per. 2000 Betty Stewart in Ian Macdougall's *Voices from Work and Home* 388: *When ah began in the mill ah wis a shifter, and that wis takin’ the bobbins off the machines before they were automatic.*

b. **Bobbin**

c. **Pass**

d. **Spinnin**

e. **Warp**

f. **Weft**

Provide your answer...

Answer

a. **Shifter** - a person who takes the full spools of thread off the spinning frames and replaces them with empty ones

b. **Bobbin** – A spool (of or for thread)

c. **Pass** – a passage between looms in a weaving shop

d. **Spinnin** – spinning / to do with spinning thread

e. **Warp** – to move to and fro, to zig-zag, to flurry or whirl about

f. **Weft** – the woof or cross-threads of a web of cloth, to make a web
Weavers used the threads created by spinners to make a variety of fabrics and materials. Originally weavers worked from home - women and children worked in their own cottages - until the Industrial Revolution when big weaving sheds were set up with power looms. Weavers in Scotland produced: quality tweeds in the Borders, cottons in the west, damask in Dunfermline, patterned shawls in Paisley and jute in Dundee.

After a famous visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822, tartan was produced commercially as it enjoyed a big jump in demand. Spinners and weavers often fell out, as weavers thought they were superior. The Weaving Industry was one where workers recited many songs, including many which feature an abundance of Scots language.
Eagle Mills, Victoria Street, Dundee by Robert Cutts

The songs of the millworkers of Scotland are perhaps best embodied by Dundonian Mary Brooksbank's song, *Oh Dear Me*, also known as *The Jute Mill Song*.

"Of all the poems and songs that are associated with Mary Brooksbank, the 'Jute Mill Song' or 'Oh Dear Me' is probably the best known. Based on a single traditional verse which she adapted as the chorus, she managed to capture a lot more about life than just the hardships of the jute mill lassies. [...] Mary Brooksbank worked all her working life in the jute mills of Dundee and the song tells of the hard life. Mary was a member of the communist party and a social activist. She self-published a book of her poems and an autobiography.

Shiftins, piecing and spinning were three of the jobs on the 'flett' (i.e. flat - the floor on which the spinning machinery stood). [...] Ten and nine was the weekly wage of the mill lassies at the turn of the century - ten shillings (paid as a gold half sovereign) and nine pence."

(Huband & Reid, 1990)

Activity 9 📚

You may want to take notes about the weaving industry and the lives of people who worked in this industry as you work through this activity.

Provide your answer...
Part 1

In order to develop a more accurate impression of life in Dundee and working in the mills at the time when Mary Brooksbank was composing her song, watch this video Jute Mill Chanters & Shifters.

Part 2

Now read the three verses of the Jute Mill song and try to understand the lyrics. As you have looked up the key words to do with weaving in the previous activity, you might even be able to understand the song without looking up words in the DSL.

Please note: piecing in this context means tying together threads on the machines.

Oh dear me, the mill’s gaen fast,
The puir wee shifters canna get their rest,
Shiftin bobbins, coarse and fine,
They fairly mak ye work for your ten and nine.

Oh dear me, I wish the day was done,
Rinnin up and doon the pass is nae fun.
Shiftin, piecin, spinnin, warp, weft and twine,
Tae feed and cleed my bairnies affen ten and nine.

Oh dear me, the world’s ill-divided
Them that work the hardest are the least provided,
But I maun bide contented, dark days or fine.
There’s no much pleasure living affen ten and nine.

(Scottish Country Dancing Dictionary, The Jute Mill Song)

Part 3

And finally, listen to Mary Brooksbank herself sing and describe how she composed the song in a recording provided on the website of the Kist o Riches project.
7.6 Basketry or Basket Weaving

In this section you will learn more about one of the oldest traditional crafts in Scotland: Basketry, also known as basket weaving, is one of the oldest traditional crafts in Scotland. As you have seen with other crafts, there are many words in the Scots language that derive from these activities.

Activity 10

Part 1

Why do you think basketry might be one of the oldest traditional crafts in Scotland? Research online for this information and take some notes. Then compare these with our model answer.

Provide your answer...

Answer

This is a model answer but it provides the key points. Your answer might be different. Basketry is not just the oldest craft in Scotland but in the world, according to the Heritage Crafts Association. Baskets are made with twigs and other parts of plants, a resource that is widely available and does not have to be treated in a complex process before being used to make baskets.

Part 2

Read this brief historical account of basketry in Scotland and highlight at least 5 facts you want to remember from this history. Then compare your highlights with our model answer.
Basketry or Basket Weaving

Interactive content is not available in this format.
7.7 Basketry and Scots language

Largely because of its long history and its geographical universality, basket weaving has a hugely rich and diverse association with Scots language. The aforementioned website Woven Communities gives a tremendous insight through its glossary of the importance and complexity of basketry throughout Scotland.

The site details the change in language used as basketry travels across Scotland, particularly up to the Northern Isles where a basket called a *kishie* in Shetland, or *caisie* in Orkney, "is used in a similar way that the back creel is used by crofters in the Highlands and Islands off the west coast of Scotland." (Dawn, 2013).

Woven Communities also has a detailed step-by-step set of instructions by Ewan Balfour, a Shetlander, whose skill in making a *kishie* features numerous words such as *dockans*, *simmens*, *hjogs* and *gloy*.

Activity 11

Part 1

In this penultimate activity you will work some more with the Scots vocabulary linked to basketry using the knowledge you have gained studying this section.

Match the words below to the correct definitions.

- *dockan*
- *hjog*
- *simmens*
- *gloy*
- *kishie*
- *cassie/caissie*
- *creel*
Match each of the items above to an item below.

- A coarse weed of temperate regions, with inconspicuous greenish or reddish flowers. The leaves are used to relieve nettle stings
- The loops of straw of which a basket is made
- A rope made of heather, grass, rushes, or esp. straw
- Straw; cleaned, unbroken carefully selected and “bound up in little sheaves four or five inches in diameter”, used for making baskets, straw-ropes, bee-hives, thatching, etc.
- A straw basket
- A basket made of straw, or of woven heather, coarse grass, reeds, “or dried dockstalks”
- A deep wicker basket carried on the back by means of a strap passing round the breast or (more rarely) the forehead, used for carrying fish, peats, potatoes

Part 2

You can explore the impressive variety of baskets produced in Scotland on the Woven Communities website, which features information about basketmaking communities in Scotland. When exploring the Basket types section, pay attention to the names of baskets, which often are Scots words, such as creel or cassie.
7.8 What I have learned

The final activity of this section is designed to help you review, consolidate and reflect on what you have learned in this unit. You will revisit the key learning points of the unit and the initial thoughts you noted down before commencing your study of it.

Activity 12
Before finishing your work on this unit, please revisit what you worked on in Activity 1, where we asked you to take some notes on what you already knew in relation to the key learning points of the unit.

Display of content entered previously

Compare your notes from before you studied this unit with what you have learned here and add to these notes as you see fit to produce a record of your learning.

Here are the key learning points again for you as a reminder:

- The role of Glasgow-based female Scottish artists
- How Scots language can appear in formal correspondence when there is jest implied or informality sought
- Craftwork and other trades in Scotland and their influence on Scottish surnames
- How employment areas such as weaving or basketry carry a wealth of Scots vocabulary
Further research

Find out more about crafts and Scottish surnames in the ‘Guide to Scottish Surnames, [https://www.scottish-at-heart.com/scottish-surnames.html](https://www.scottish-at-heart.com/scottish-surnames.html)

There has been an upsurge of interest in learning basketry skills in recent years and there are courses held across Scotland.

Find out more about basketry:

- The [Scottish Basketmakers’ Circle](https://www.scottish-at-heart.com/scottish-surnames.html) is a membership organisation that promotes Scottish basket making and allied crafts through exhibitions, courses, demonstrations and lectures. Their Facebook page has lots of [photographs of traditional and modern baskets](https://www.scottish-at-heart.com/scottish-surnames.html) in a variety of materials.

- They have also developed a sister site [www.wovencommunities.org](http://www.wovencommunities.org) which traces Scottish vernacular basketry from the perspective of the communities who made and used them as well as the different basket types.

- The [Scottish Fishing Museum](http://www.wovencommunities.org) in Fife has a number of original and replica baskets used in the fishing industry.

- The [Am Baile](http://www.wovencommunities.org) website gives more information on highland history and culture. You can also watch a basketry workshop on these videos which are split into [part one](http://www.wovencommunities.org), [part two](http://www.wovencommunities.org), and [part three](http://www.wovencommunities.org). You need Adobe Flash Player installed on your device to watch these videos.

Basketry as an art form

- Find out about the [Scottish basketmaker Lizzie Farey](http://www.wovencommunities.org), who is based in Galloway and has been exhibiting her art based on traditional basket weaving techniques all over the world.

- You can also [watch Lizzie weaving](http://www.wovencommunities.org) in her studio.

Now go on to Unit 8: Sport.

References


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