

SWEDISH TWEED

COULD A LOOM FROM THE OUTER HEBRIDES SERVE AS A STIMULUS
FOR WOOLLEN CLOTH PRODUCTION IN SWEDEN?

HATTY HAS A LIFE OF HER OWN. Glistening in her coat of black varnish, well-oiled, willful. A centenarian, more or less, she prides herself as being the first model of her kind. Having left her native land in the west – the Isle of Harris in the Outer Hebrides – and the shack she lived in, she crossed the North Sea and landed up in a washhouse in Kungsängen, Stockholm. There she was given careful treatment, some broken bits got repaired, non-functioning parts fixed: thread once again hurtles through heddle and dent.

Stefan Moberg's lifelong interest in wool goes back to when he heard stories told by his maternal grandmother, aunt and mother. Tales from their working life at Gästrikland Wool Factory, 1892-1966/67, now Järbo Garn. Fleece and wool. A source of pride and benefit.

A few years ago Stefan Moberg learnt to spin by hand. Won a national spinning competition. Bought a loom. Then more looms. Started researching into tweed weaving. Wanted to do more, quicker. He mentioned what he had been up to while chatting to some friends at *the Sheep Fest* in Kil. And quite spontaneously, 'Maybe one should buy a Hattersley so as to produce more and faster?'

Facebook was where he then found a Hattersley, a mechanical loom operated by foot pedal power, not electricity.

So when we went to visit Stefan, we found

the loom dressed with a warp of grey singles 6/1 woollen yarn from Kampes Spinneriprodukter (spinning products) in Mariestad. These yarns are not spun from Swedish fleece; since it is hard to find wool in large quantities in the same quality.

Stefan has used this yarn for quite a bit of his weaving and in several of the tweeds he has handwoven. It is a quality yarn. But better still had the wool in the yarn come from Swedish sheep. That's when making a really Swedish tweed started to hatch as an idea.

The first step was to create a wool blend which would produce the feel he wanted. His choice fell on a mix of fleece from the Gute, Gotland, Leicester and Värmland sheep, with Gute fleece predominating.

Gute and Gotland sheep both have been bred from the native Gotland short-tailed sheep. Breeding went in two quite different directions. Gute sheep have soft down and long, strong guard hair with kemp mixed in. Gotland sheep have mainly been bred for an even, curly coat suitable in pelts and skins intended for homes and interiors. This fleece is often difficult to card and spin using the Swedish machinery available.

Ullkontoret on Gotland (Sweden's only larger wool scouring mill) delivered 50 kilos of this wool blend for the first batch, spun in 2020 at Wålstedts spinning mill in Dala-Floda,

Dalarna. Wålstedts is a smaller spinning mill, producing yarns such as the variegated Vålberga yarn, for which diverse colour blends are carded together and spun on one and the same carding and spinning machine. Their expertise was one of the reasons why Stefan Moberg turned to the company. However, the wool blend Stefan had created did not work in this machine. It needed to be processed separately and spun with another spinning method.

To compose the optimal wool mix, he first carded and spun samples by hand before putting anything through a machine. Partly so he could arrive at the right feel of the blend, the weight and twist of the yarn; partly because there were only 50 kilos of fleece and he did not want anything to go wrong in the spinning.

The yarn, a high-twist singles, has plenty of lustre. Stefan's own hand dyed yarn had also been incorporated into a few swatches. The cloth is stable, tensile with a strong character, a little too edgy for Stefan. His next blend will contain less Gute fleece with its strong guard hair and kemp and a bit more Leicester with its softer, fine-fibred fleece. The aim is to make the yarn softer and more dye-absorbent. So he has come a bit further towards creating a Swedish tweed. The blend is there. The yarn too. Now it's about making a cloth in larger quantities. Which is where Hatty comes into the picture.

Swedish fleece is very versatile. Different yarns produce a variety of qualities and so much can be done with weave structure and finishing treatments. The fact that we have so many different types of fleece in Sweden spurs me on to make the very most of such a unique resource.

STEFAN MOBERG



Getting everything back in place after the Hattersley had been unpacked was a major challenge. The idea had been for him to travel over to the Outer Hebrides and see the looms and production there, but the Corona pandemic put a stop to that. Connecting up online then became the means: he has been assisted by helpful people on the Outer Hebrides, the facebook group: "Hattersley Loom Weavers" and manuals obtained off the internet. It has been a right puzzle to get all the bits in place on both the loom and the bobbin winder.

Stefan sat himself at the loom. Two pedals are used for the shedding and the shuttle. One bobbinful can weave ca 7 cm in little less than a minute. Add to that changing the bobbins and other stages, a good day's weaving could be 3 metres an hour.

– But, Stefan pointed out, Hatty is temperamental. If you tell her out loud she will be weaving a specific amount that day you can bet your boots the shuttles will start flying all over the place.

That day everything was going nicely. Pick by pick, work was growing. A pleasant, rhythmic sound as the shuttle travelled back and forth. Stefan was looking pleased.

What do you have in mind with Swedish tweed?

– It should be a Swedish production: from sheep grazing in Sweden, yarn spun in Sweden and cloth woven here on my Hattersley. Regarding quality, I am thinking my tweed will be a bit denser. The swatches I

Circular economy

is an expression for economic models that lay the emphasis on business opportunities where cyclic or circular processes predominate over linear.

Hattersley

A loom developed by G. Hattersley and Sons Ltd in Yorkshire, UK, around the mid-19th century. It is operated by foot. Various models of the Hattersley have been used, for example, to weave Harris Tweed in its single width on the Outer Hebrides.

Tailors in Sweden would refer to the woollen cloth as a 'buttercloth'. Compared to cotton or silk, for example, one can pretty well have a free hand when it comes to forming, shrinking, stretching and pressing.

CAROLINA SETTERBERG

have woven to date have 10 ends/cm in the warp, a sett that means the cloth doesn't need fulling so hard. And it gets a special character from the yarn made of Gute sheep wool, with its distinctive characteristics. As to the colour scale, I will take my start-point from Swedish nature. The inherent roughness of Gute sheep fleece of course imparts its own feeling.

The woollen cloths he has handwoven to date have been in smaller quantities and so a washing machine has sufficed for the fulling. This method will not be possible for the amounts he is thinking of producing; other means will have to be found. Stefan has been in contact with the *Sjuhärads district dyeworks*, where they offer a good many different finishing treatments, that can be a solution.

Carolina Setterberg has a journeyman's certificate in women's tailoring. She made two jackets from the tweed fabric Stefan handwove with Kampes yarn. They came in contact when Carolina was looking for cloth for a garment she was making during a distance learning course in circular economy at the Swedish School of Textiles in Borås. An online search took her to Stefan's tweed, admittedly not made of Swedish wool but with yarn spun in Sweden and handwoven in Sweden. "Second best" as she put it. The various parts of the jacket she created are made of purely natural and easily recyclable materials.

– Woollen cloth has luxury status without

us even thinking about it, Armani suits, fine crêpe, tweed, vadmal. If you mention silk, everybody thinks of quality and exclusivity. I would say that this applies to woollen cloth too. When I tell my customers about the properties of woollen cloth: easy care - you only need to hang it out to air; warming as well as regulating warmth - then think of synthetics, they get it immediately. As for status: woollen cloths radiate style and a natural feel of luxury. While garments made totally of wool can always be recycled, benefitting a circular economy. So a tweed made of yarn produced in Sweden cannot be bettered. And if available in quantity, tailors are going to be even more interested. We then know it exists, we can present it to our customers, secure in the knowledge we can use it. It would certainly boost professional pride to be working with a fully Swedish cloth, handwoven no less.

My simple advice is to buy a proper jacket or coat tailored in a fine woollen quality and you will have garments for the rest of your life.

Stefan Moberg's project to produce a Swedish tweed has received support from the National Swedish Handicraft Council. How does he envisage wool production on a larger scale?

– I want to make woollen cloth of Swedish wool so we use more of the fleece produced. If that serves to inspire others to do their thing using this beautiful raw material, that itself is a significant aim for my project.

Outside it was good tweed weather, damp, misty, grey-cold, soft shifts of colour behind sharply silhouetted tree branches. Carolina Setterberg is wearing her beautifully tailored jacket of Stefan Moberg's handwoven herringbone tweed with wide leg black trousers of fine woollen crêpe.

Carolina Setterberg made for VÄVmagasinet a fitted jacket with detailing and a generous collar. Directions for the cloth are on page 20.
Carolina Setterberg, women's tailor:
carolinasetterberg.se

Follow Stefan Moberg and the development of a Swedish tweed: stefanmoberg.com

Knowing of and frustrated about the huge amounts of Swedish fleece being thrown away, combined with the desire to make woollen cloth, led Stefan Moberg to the idea of developing a Swedish tweed.

Left Stefan Moberg built his own warping frame. Hatty, a Hattersley loom used for weaving Harris Tweed and other cloth.

Right Yarn and cloth for a Swedish tweed.

