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Faith, Hope, and Charity: making madras, c.1880-1930

Weft-figured Scotch leno gauze, known as madras, was made in Darvel and other Ayrshire townships that had by 1800 become highly specialized in the production of fine, patterned cotton fabrics. This paper shows how pride in madras-weaving skills and a desire to maintain them not only perpetuated the design and manufacture of these cloths, but also inspired the development of new cloth types. It demonstrates the significance of a passing reference in *Three Generations in a Family Textile Firm* (Jocelyn Morton 1971, p.49) to the response by Alexander Morton - a Darvel madras weaver turned merchant/manufacturer by 1870 - to the introduction in c.1873 of power-driven lace machines:

He conceived the idea of weaving tapestry, and later, chenille goods, which could be done to some extent on the old madras looms, and were of a nature that would easily be taken up by people skilled in madras weaving.

By the mid-1880s power-driven madras machines were also working in local factories, but designs too elaborate or in short demand were still hand woven until about 1904. When the Alexander Morton firm otherwise relocated its mills to Carlisle, England, in 1914, madras weaving (together with its former rival, lace production) was retained in Darvel. Records of 1930 demonstrate the skill levels still necessary to their manufacture.

Surviving designs and samples show the commitment to design development and the physical characteristics of both madras and madras-based tapestry. Both were cloth types widely used in the Arts & Crafts period, although the former is seldom represented in histories or museum collections. Designs by C.F.A. Voysey and Archibald Knox are shown to be for madras weavers.

Mary Schoeser, a consultant curator and archivist, is currently researching the Ayrshire lace and madras industry; among her present clients - and of relevance to this paper - are Liberty of London and Morton, Young & Borland in Ayrshire, the latter the last remaining manufacturer of 100 percent cotton madras.