

# Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

Volume 6 – Issue 3 March 2014

## From The Editor –

I trust all of you have be busy sewing, since the weatherman has so graciously provided such good opportunities this winter! Personally, I made a lovely nightgown for myself in anticipation of warm spring and summer nights. (Dreaming!) I used Bear Threads Swiss voile in combination with a small Liberty print scrap from long ago, and it really turned out well. I was reminded of what a joy the Swiss voile is on which to sew. If any of you would like samples of the voile, just give us a call.

We welcome Londa Rohlfing as our guest this month. As a seasoned professional, she knows all of the ‘dos and don’ts’ of the trade. I found her article of great interest, as I think you will, too. Be sure to click on her links to learn more about her business. She is a wonderful and knowledgeable teacher, so shop owners, take note! And just a hint – she will be back next month!

In the second part of *A Study of Lace* we continue our brief historical journey. As we continue for the next several months with the series, I strongly urge you to print these issues to use as references. It will be so much easier to refer to previous articles than finding old E-mails. But do note that all back issues of *Bear in Mind* are found on our website [www.bearthreadsltd.com](http://www.bearthreadsltd.com).

And that being all for this month, enjoy and beware of lurking leprechauns –

Happy Stitching –

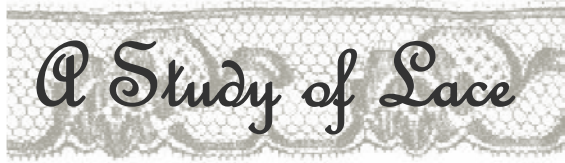
Sheila

## *SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT*

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## A Study of Lace

Fashion Dictates - Last month we talked about the change in the neck decoration styles that lead to the rise in popularity of bobbin lace as opposed to needlepoint laces. During the first quarter of the seventeenth century the stiffly starched linen of the ruff gave way to flat collars of soft pliable bobbin lace, mainly Dutch and Flemish. These were made of exceptionally fine flax thread of northern Europe. That particular thread did not survive past 1800, probably due to changing climate conditions.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the simple Flemish laces developed into the bobbin laces of Binche - the predecessors of Valenciennes, Mechlin and a type of guipure sometimes confusingly called Point d'Angleterre. (Note: This is NOT to be confused with the guipures we use today in Heirloom Sewing that are Swiss Embroideries.) These laces of the 1700's were not bold and as ostentatiously beautiful, but rather of a gossamer quality and quite intricate. It was during William III's reign, in 1685, that Louis XIV's persecution of the Huguenots caused lace workers to flee from France to England. Thus English laces improved considerably during the eighteenth century, with needlepoint and bobbin laces both flourishing. George II (1727-60) encouraged British production, but toward the end of his reign, with the prohibiting of importing of foreign laces, smuggling was rampant. George III's reign saw this continued prohibition with homes and milliners searched. Seizures were burned, but the smuggling of French lace continued, with lace hidden in bread loaves, turbans, books, around babies and even in coffins. Because it was the custom for bodies to be buried in their finest clothing, much exquisite irreplaceable lace was also lost by burial.

Industrial Revolution - The glorious era of lace ended with the French Revolution of 1789. Styles changed to utter simplicity as lace was clearly no longer in vogue. Large collections were cast out by

families to their waiting maids as if they were garbage, thus demonstrating how absurdly fashion can triumph over artistic appreciation! Lace revivals were attempted, not only to save it as an art form, but to give employment to needy women and children. These attempts were noteworthy, but with not enough success in producing quality and economically viable goods on a commercial scale.

Now we enter the age of the industrial revolution and the first machine net was made on the Stocking Frame in 1764. This was closely followed with other inventions and finally the Bobbin Net machine of John Heathcoat in 1808 (Note: see the articles on Tulle in the October and November 2012 issues of *Bear In Mind*) The Levers machine, which is now in use in Calais today, was first invented in 1813. When Mr. Heathcoat's patent expired in 1823, Nottingham became the scene of a fury of invention and net production.

Pattern - The next step was to make patterned laces. The early nets were often embroidered by hand in darning stitch or chain stitch (known as tambour). However, a major breakthrough came between 1825 and 1831 as various machines came upon the scene that made 'bullet' holes or circular combs, leading to some good imitations of many of the once popular handmade laces. In France the invention of the Jacquard system brought almost perfect imitations of the earlier Valenciennes, Mechlin and Bucks. With much support from the aristocracy and government, and enormous prizes offered by Prince Albert, the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the International Exhibition of 1867 were great stimulants to machine design and manufacture with the following results:

- 1) Handmade lace was no longer a status symbol as the machine imitations were so accurate that they were difficult to distinguish from handmade.
- 2) Lace was no longer a prestigious adornment as production multiplied, it became quite cheap and within everyone's' budget.

- 3) It was no longer possible for handmade lace to be produced economically, so that only the rich or royal could finance the many hands and hours of work needed to produce a garment of quality.
- 4) The more quickly a lace could be made, the more commercially viable it was. Thus, Irish crochet, knitted lace, embroidered net, filet and tape laces prospered at the expense of the more beautiful but more laborious bobbin and needlepoint laces.

In the 1880's came the invention of chemical lace in Switzerland and Germany. (Note: See April 2012 issue of *Bear In Mind*) These chemical laces are today the Swiss guipures. They began as a derivative of machine embroidery whereby the background material, which was usually silk, was dissolved away by chlorine or caustic soda, leaving only the cotton embroidery itself. These designs were ingenious and could appear from a short distance strikingly similar to reticella, punto in aria, Venetian Point, Irish crochet, Brussels or Honiton.

Lace remained popular into the twentieth century but by the 1920's a decline began that lasted until the 1970's when lace was coming back into fashion. For some, the collection of lace is back in fashion, but much knowledge has been lost of its' identity.

Our Series will continue in April when we will begin studying the 4 main types of lace.

Sheila T. Nicol



**A Four Leaf Clover** is actually a mutation of the shamrock (a three-leaf clover), it can only happen in approximately 1 in 10,000 shamrocks.

## FYI

Did you know that Bear Threads, Ltd has one of the largest collections of ribbon in the United States? Our ribbon collection includes both new and vintage ribbons from Germany, France and the US. We have double faced satins, floral and patterned jacquards, velvets and a fabulous collection of trapuntos that can no longer be made. We invite you to inquire for your personal or shop use.





At seven months Prince George, like our Theodore, is quite ready for spring and a stroll in the park with lovely daffodils blooming. Prince George would look so dapper in this spring yellow romper. It is Swiss Silky Cotton and is trimmed with forest green Mini Micro Check piping and our E-715 tassel trim.

However, unlike Theodore, I don't think Prince George will be doing any leprechaun dances or dashing down mugs of beer! I am quite sure Duchess Catherine will keep a tighter rein on Prince George's partying.



# ANSWERS TO SHARP QUESTIONS

by Londa Rohlfing

*When I first started offering Kai scissors, I was privileged to meet David Wolff, a gentleman who owns a wonderful scissors manufacturing and importing business here in the U.S. He taught me SEW much, and I've compiled it into this 'tutorial' that I hope you will find informative as well. David was kind enough to review this information in Feb of 2014 to verify that its current accuracy.*



## English lesson...

Scissors is one of those unusual nouns that is both singular and plural in the same form: scissors. Another example is deer. You have one deer or several deer. You can have one scissors or a bunch of scissors.

Scissor (without an s) is a verb. Like you 'scissor' your legs across each other as an exercise.

## Is it a Scissors or a Shear?

A Scissors can only take one finger in each finger ring.

A shears will allow more than one finger into the finger ring. A beauty or grooming shears is called a shears because it has a finger rest or 'tang' extending out that allows one to use 2 fingers in cutting.

*Personally, I think the word 'scissors' is used collectively for this type of cutting instrument, but I will try to be 'correct' on this website...*

Scissors are normally used to refer to cutting implements not more than 6 inches in length and the two finger loops are equal in size. Designed for lighter cutting tasks, they usually have one sharp point and one blunt point to prevent snagging fabrics.

Needlepoint scissors have two extra-sharp pointed blades.



Shears are normally 6" or longer and the rings are sized differently - usually one round and one oval. Offered bent or straight with the bent format making it easier to cut material on a tabletop - hence the term "dressmaker" scissors. The straight format is more general purpose, and known as "household" scissors.

## What about handles???

A painted handle (most always black) is called "Japanning" because the Japanese were the first to paint the handles of scissors and shears.

## Plastic handles are NOT all created equal!

Kai® and Wolff® USA shears all have a chemical bonder between the handle and metal to prevent bacterial contamination. Good plastics include the Santoprene (Kai®) and Sarlink (Wolff® USA) - which are chemically the same), and ABS plastic. ABS plastic is the name for the plastic on most scissors like Fiskars. These handles can break with heavy usage.

Both the Kai® and Wolff® USA products are made of FDA approved pigments so that these shears can be used in the kitchen. These shears also have an ergonomically designed handle to fit the hand and the thumb in the correct alignment for cutting. Ambidextrous shears are designed to fit either hand, but do not put the hand in the correct alignment for proper cutting.

## 'Leftie' Scissors Facts

Some basic understanding:

On a right-handed scissors, the upper blade is the one on the right hand side as you are looking down on the scissors as you hold them in your hand. You can see where you are cutting, as the upper blade is to the back - or right hand side as you are working.

So - for a genuine Left-handed scissors, it is the opposite - when holding the scissors and looking down on the blades, the upper cutting one is on the left. You would be able to see where you are cutting because the upper blade is the back - or left hand side as you are working.



The placement of the blades (as above) is one factor. The handles are another factor. Handles are either right-handed or left-handed - obviously for the comfort of which 'handedness' you are.

Understanding that ...

The k-5210-L is a genuine left handed scissors with left handed blades - and will not work if a left-handed person is used to working with right handed scissors, as they will actually be pulling the blades away from each other - preventing the cutting action from taking place properly. Look for the term "True or Genuine Left Handed Scissors/Shears" on this website to identify other models that are left bladed and left handled.

The k-5220-L then is a left handled shears (the handles themselves fit in the left hand) with right-handed blades. These scissors have been designed to work for a left-handed person who has learned to cut with right-handed scissors - (and actually sell faster than the true left handed scissors the k-5210-L). HOWEVER: this style - with right-handed blades, will continue to block the eye path.

If a 'Leftie' can retrain their hand to cut properly with a genuine left handed and handled shears (k-5210-L), they will be better off as they will be able to see where they are cutting.

To order any of the above scissors, click on this link

<http://www.londas-sewing.com/shop/product/kaia-5220-dressmaker-shears-and-left-handled-option/>

Please select carefully from the drop down menu. Explanations as above are in **RED** at the product description.

## Who makes What Brand?

Gingher used to be made in Brazil & Germany

Gingers are now made in Mexico and the quality is not the same - in my humble opinion. Gingher is now owned by Fiskars - purchased early in 2005.

Mundial scissors and shears are now made in the same Brazil plant that used to make the Gingers and Marks.

KAI makes the rotary blades for Clover.

A company called Silky makes Clover's scissors. They are more expensive than the Kai, though they do 'feel good'.

The blue Dritz pressure-sensitive Rotary Cutter is actually a KAI cutter and blade!

## Serrated Scissors Facts

At the American Sewing Guild Conference in Nashville July 2005, an instructor must have told her class that serrated scissors were best on sheers and that Kai® had a great serrated scissors. When they came in droves to my booth asking for these, I told them that I really didn't know of a Kai® Serrated Shears - and now I've checked with the President of the company that imports them and this is what I've learned....

"Kai doesn't make a corrugated (serrated) scissors. Corrugate' is a US term, 'Serrate' is European. The only reason to corrugate is to prevent the material from sliding. (I know this to be the case, as I've used the Gingher G-8Z, a serrated scissors on sheers in the past - it being recommended to me by one of our sewing 'celebrities'). This (sliding) is not a problem when the shears are sharpened correctly for the material being cut. An educated sharpening craftsman will sharpen both blades, and only hone the finger blade (top blade), when the material to be cut is slippery like silk, rayon, etc. If the customer is going to slide cut (NOT open/close motion, but as if two knives are running through the fabric), then both blades should be honed (polished). Corrugations are only necessary for hard to cut materials that are used in bullet proof vests like Kevlar or fiberglass. Because these are so abrasive and in the case of Kevlar they must be kept spread out to cut. The only place we sell corrugated scissors is in industry cutting these

materials. These materials dull scissors extremely quickly and have to be re-sharpened often. Lower price barber and grooming shears have corrugations to hold the hair in place. When a scissors is sharpened correctly, it will last much longer without these corrugations. Corrugations on the blade actually chew into the other blade and reduce its life. (How true - I went through 3 pair of G-8Z Ginghers). Corrugations only help a poorly sharpened scissors except for reasons stated above."

I can now get the Kai 5220 modified with serrated edges because my supplier adds this feature if you want it. Click

<http://www.londas-sewing.com/shop/product/kaia-5220-dressmaker-serrated-shears-and-left-handled-option/>

to order. Note that a left handled version is available.

Silky (see above under **Who Makes What Brand?** section above) is laser cutting the blades (like the KAI 7000 series), then they forge the outside shape in these blades. They are not as high a quality of steel as the KAI scissors.



## What is the difference between Stamped and Forged blades?

**Forged scissors and shears** are made using a hot dropped forged method (also knives). A bar of steel is heated red hot, then placed in the forging hammer (a press with 50 - 200 tons weights on it). The press is dropped onto the heated steel that is in a die and formed into the shape. A forged scissors almost always has a metal handle.

**Stamped scissors and shears** are less expensive to produce - but not necessarily lower quality. The steel comes to the factory on a coil. The blades are

stamped out. Handles molded out of a plastic are joined to the blades. The best scissors and shears from both Kai® and Wolff® USA are made in this manner. The issue is the quality and thickness of the steel used. Only the Kai® 7000 series of shears has full metal handles on a stamped scissors. This is extraordinary quality - well worth the investment.

## How is the blade hardness measured?

The Rockwell C scale (HRC) is what is used to measure the strength of steel. The higher the number, the stronger is the metal.

Cheap Chinese and Pakistani scissors are approximately 48HRC.

Fiskars USA, Gingher, Mundial and Taiwanese scissors are approximately 50-54 HRC.

Kai® and Wolff® USA are approximately 56-60 HRC.

I state 'Approximately 'because each production run changes a little, Paki (made in Pakistan) shears vary greatly, and have been seen by my expert source as low as the 40's to middle 50's. They are not consistent.

Above 60 HRC, blades become too brittle and could shatter if dropped to the floor.

## What does "Ice" mean?

Ice is not a brand, but rather part of the heat-treating process to make scissors hard. After heating the stainless steel in a 1950 - 1975 degree furnace, scissors are put in -100 (that's minus 100 degrees very, very cold!). This process is called ice tempering and changes the molecular structure of the steel making it more durable. All high quality scissors and shears are ice tempered - even if they are not marked as such on the blades.

## Does a KAI need to be sharpened?

All cutting tools dull with time, some just dull faster because of poor materials (steel and heat treating). We usually find that KAI will stay sharper 2-6 times longer than the competition because of the quality of the steel. The exception is a nick, like cutting a pin. That will damage any scissors.

## ALL IN THE FAMILY

Londa Rohlring is a 'seasoned' seamstress, having sewn for 50 years with 40 of that as a professional. She has owned her own dressmaking service business, a retail storefront offering machines and fine fabrics, and now she designs patterns and travels the country teaching her love: creative sewing at both shops and guilds. Londa's website featuring her own books, Talking Patterns™, and DVDs as well as wonderful personal service or many hard-to-find notions at great prices is:

Londa's Creative Threads

<http://www.londas-sewing.com>

We would like to introduce you to *LINABA* our featured bear this month. She has been with us since 1982, and so will soon be 32 years old. She was the inspiration for our company logo and still basks in the notoriety. Just ask her! She was photographed during our February storm, more concerned about her honey and cookies than the snow and ice. But she did keep her tea light nearby just in case the lights went out and she need a refill of tea and honey. She did survive and is now back in hibernation until SPRING!

### St. Patrick's Day Facts

St. Patrick's Day marks the Roman Catholic feast day for Ireland's patron saint, who died in the 5th century. St. Patrick (Patricius in Latin) was not born in Ireland, but in Britain.

Many myths surround St. Patrick. One of the best known—and most inaccurate—is that Patrick drove all the snakes from Ireland into the Irish Sea, where the serpents drowned. (Some still say that is why the sea is so rough.) But snakes have never been native to the Emerald Isle. The serpents were likely a metaphor for druidic religions, which steadily disappeared from Ireland in the centuries after St. Patrick planted the seeds of Christianity on the island.

In the United States, it's customary to wear green on St. Patrick's Day. But in Ireland the color was long considered to be unlucky, says Bridget Haggerty, author of *The Traditional Irish Wedding* and the Irish Culture and Customs Web site. As Haggerty explains, Irish folklore holds that green is the favorite color of the Good People (the proper name for faeries). They are likely to steal people, especially children, who wear too much of the color.

Today New York's St. Patrick's Day parade is the longest running civilian parade in the world. This year nearly three million spectators are expected to watch the spectacle and some 150,000 participants plan to march.



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