

The Gansey

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You've read the article in the Journal and you're all fired up to make a gansey?

The body of a gansey and the sleeves are knitted 'in the round', which simply means that there are no side seams. This is achieved by using five double-pointed needles (the traditional way) or by using a circular needle.

If you are unfamiliar with these techniques, you can see them in action on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/285qmvk> (double-pointed needles) and at <http://tinyurl.com/cqxwh9y> (circular needle).

Excellent instructions on making each part of a gansey (including the underarm gussets and neck shaping) can be found at www.ganseys.com. Just select the menu item 'How to Knit a Gansey'.

Two books on the subject which are recommended on knitting forums are *Cornish Guernseys and Knit-Frocks* by Mary Wright and *Patterns for Guernseys, Jerseys and Arans* by Gladys Thompson, both obtainable from Amazon.

If you want inspiration to design your own authentic gansey, there are many images of Whitby fishermen in the Frank Sutcliffe Collection at <http://tinyurl.com/cpgk5jw>

Five-ply weight Jacob guernsey yarn is obtainable from Gawmless End Jacobs at www.farcourt.co.uk/ge/wool.html who also do a range of self-stripping double-knitting weight which is similar to random hand-spun, as well as standard cream, grey and brown solid colours.

Fisher Girls

A 1902 'Fish Quay Scenes' archive film of Great Yarmouth can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/bv88xy6>. This two minute film shows a group of women knitting as they walk along the quay and the fisher girls gutting and packing the herring. The caption says that the girl has gutted 65 herrings in a minute, which seems a prodigious number – more than one a second.

Moving forward to 1957, the film clip 'That Little Fishing Village' at <http://tinyurl.com/c26jqzo> shows Great Yarmouth in glorious colour. This clip is twenty five minutes long so, unless you're keen on seeing numerous fishing boats (or the same boat numerous times), advance the play to 8:16 where you will see a large group of women busily knitting on the quayside. Pay particular attention to the chap with the ball of wool in the centre of the group – whatever is he doing?

In 1938, the Glasgow Herald reported under the headline *Possible Rival for Fisher Girls* that 'at the request of Scottish curing interests' a delegation was to travel to Germany to inspect a herring-gutting machine. The reason was that the Scottish fisher girls had shown a tendency to 'disregard their agreements' and the machine was to be an antidote to this.

Although mechanical gutting was introduced in Scotland in the late 1940s, at 12:29 the film of Great Yarmouth shows 1957 fisher girls using exactly the same techniques as in 1902 with not a herring-gutting machine in sight. This was probably because of the peripatetic nature of the east coast catch – or maybe English fisher girls were not as troublesome as their Scottish cousins?

At <http://tinyurl.com/c6a64ed> there is a short clip of the current equivalent to a fisher girl – a herring-gutting machine. It looks far slower than the fisher girls but, in these more enlightened times, the Health and Safety Executive would not look favourably on a process that involved workers wrapping their hands in strips of flour sack to protect them from a sharp blade.