

Exploring the world of

DYING ART FORMS

United Kingdom & Ireland



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Research Scope



Identification of global art forms that are considered dying or near extinction



Historical origins and cultural significance of these dying art forms



Evolution of the dying art forms



Factors that contribute to the decline of these art forms

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Focus Geography

United Kingdom & Ireland

ART FORM

Traditional Lace Making



Image Source: Wikipedia



Image Source:
<https://athomewithstyle.com/lace-and-macrame/>



Image Source: <https://trc-leiden.nl/trc-needles/regional-traditions/europe-and-north-america/lace-types/bedfordshire-lace>

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Traditional Lace Making

The traditional lacemaking of England originated in Nottinghamshire, influenced by earlier practices from Calais (*a part of the Kingdom of England in the middle ages; currently part of France*).

Lacemaking emerged as a highly valued and skilled craft in the late 16th century, driven by demand for delicate textiles in fashion and home decor. It flourished until the mid-19th century, becoming a popular form of art and craftsmanship.

Traditional English lacemaking is characterized by intricate patterns created by twisting and crossing threads around pins on a lace pillow.

Key applications of the craft include bespoke bridal wear made from fine cotton or linen threads, luxurious silk table linens, decorative edgings, and exclusive fashion accessories designed for wedding haute couture.

How has this art form evolved over time?

Rooted in the later middle age, this textile design art form has a long history in decorative art for the English nobility. Initially influenced by Italian and Flemish styles in the 16th century, techniques like bobbin lace and needle lace emerged, characterized by intricate patterns created on lace pillows.

The 17th and 18th centuries saw refinement in these methods, with the regional variations developing over time. As the Industrial era brought in mechanization, impacting traditional practices. In response, artisans adapted techniques, blending previous and contemporary influences, leading to a focus on bespoke pieces while preserving traditional craftsmanship.

Image Source: <https://www.theedkins.co.uk/fo/lace/patmidlandintro.htm>

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Traditional Lace Making



What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- Severe decline in number of skilled lacemakers impacts production capacity and knowledge transfer.
- Challenges in adapting traditional designs to contemporary tastes, directly affect market relevance.
- High costs of handmade lace compared to machine-made options highly limit market accessibility. Time-intensive production processes restrict supply and increase costs, making handmade lace less competitive. Growing competition from machine-made cheaper lace poses a threat to market sustainability.
- Limited awareness of the craft among younger generations have reduced interest and appreciation. Since it is a high-end product, it has maintained demand but with niche market segments only.

Image Source: <https://cowperandnewtonmuseum.org.uk/lacemaking/>

ART FORM

Strawback Chair Making



Image Source: <https://xponorth.co.uk/conference-programme/eve-eunson-fair-isle-chairs>



Image Source:
<https://www.lorfor dsantiques.com/>

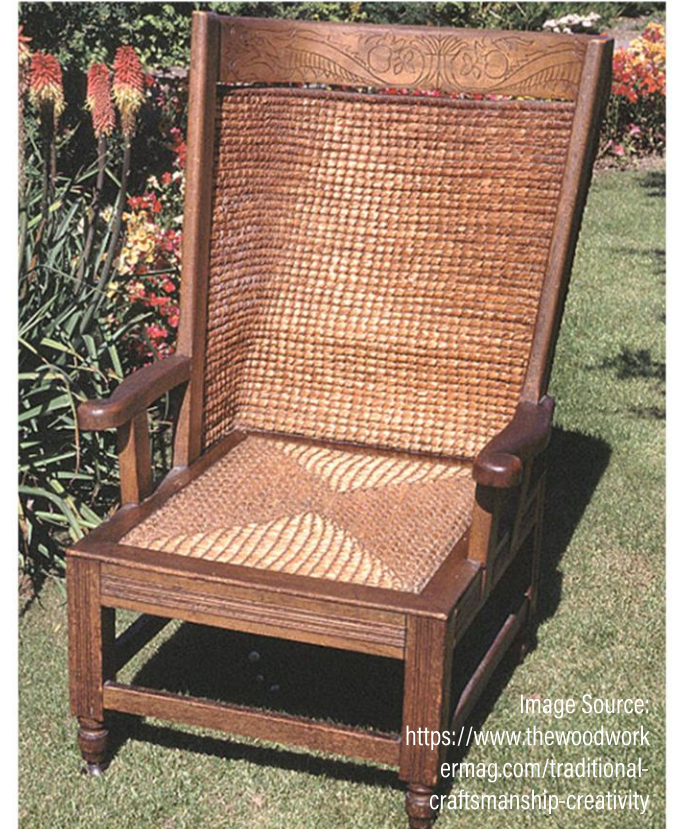


Image Source:
<https://www.thewoodworkermag.com/traditional-craftsmanship-creativity>

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ART FORM

Strawback Chair Making

Strawback chairs are a type of traditional Scottish vernacular furniture known for their rustic charm and durability. Originating in the Highlands, these chairs date back to the 18th century and were crafted using readily available materials like wood and straw.

The distinctive feature of these chairs is the back, woven from straw, which provided comfort and warmth in the cold Scottish climate. They were typically used in rural homes and crofts, offering a practical and functional design suited to the lifestyle of Scottish farmers and craftspeople.

Strawback chairs, crafted by skilled artisans, are assembled by hand, with each piece individually fitted. The wooden frame, carved first, is made of local timbers like ash or oak. The seat and back are then woven from dried straw, traditionally sourced from local farms. The straw is soaked and softened, making it pliable enough for weaving. Herringbone or basket-weave patterns are traditionally used to create the back and seat, to ensure durability.

How has this art form evolved over time?

Originally, strawback chairs were purely functional household items made by highland farmers during the off-season. Over time, however, their aesthetic appeal became more recognized, as vernacular furniture gained popularity across Scotland.

In the 19th century, as industrial production of furniture increased, strawback chairs became less common due to intensity of labour and lack of manpower. However, their handcrafted nature made them sought-after items for collectors of rustic and traditional furniture. Today, they are appreciated for their historical significance and are often used as decorative pieces in homes, hotels, and museums that celebrate Scottish heritage.



Image Source: <https://www.visitscotland.com/info/shopping/scapa-crafts-orkney-chairs-p614161>

ART FORM

Strawback Chair Making



What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- The shift towards industrial furniture production in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have reduced demand for handmade chairs.
- The time-intensive nature of the craft, particularly the straw weaving process, makes it less economically viable compared to mass-produced alternatives.
- The availability of skilled artisans capable of working with straw and wood has diminished, as younger generations pursue other professions.
- The change in contemporary tastes and the shift from rustic, traditional furniture styles have also contributed to its decline.

Image Source: <https://www.thewoodworkermag.com/traditional-craftsmanship-creativity>

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Sporran Making



Image Source: <https://www.southunionmills.com/>



Image Source:
<https://www.montylewis.co.uk/dress-sporrans>



Image Source:
<https://www.thekiltexperience.com/bespoke-kilt-outfitters/handmade-leather-sporrans-kilt-belts/>

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Sporran Making

The sporran is a traditional Scottish pouch, often made of leather or fur and adorned with intricate metalwork, worn with a kilt. Originating in the 16th century, the sporran served a practical purpose, since kilts do not have pockets. Over time, the sporran evolved into a symbol of Scottish pride and heritage, often worn at formal ceremonies and clan events, along with Tartan kilts.

Sporran making, a respected craft even today, combining multiple craft forms like leatherworking, metalwork, and textile skills, faces difficulty in production at a larger scale within Scotland due to its need for mastery over multiple skills.

The production process begins with the selection of high-quality leather or fur, which is cut and shaped into the desired form. Sporrans are typically adorned with Celtic knotwork or other traditional Gaelic patterns, embossed into the leather. Fur sporrans may feature decorative tassels or metal elements, which are added by hand. The final product is sewn together, and a strap is attached for wearing. Some sporrans are also lined with silk or velvet to add a luxurious touch.

How has this art form evolved over time?

Rooted in the highland culture of medieval era Scotland, this craft has a long history in decorative art of Scottish clans.

While the basic structure of the sporran has remained consistent, its design and purpose have evolved. In the past, sporrans were primarily functional items used to carry money and other small personal belongings, whereas today, they are largely decorative, worn as part of traditional Scottish attire for weddings, Highland games, and other formal events. Modern sporran makers have introduced new materials, such as synthetic furs and metals, to appeal to contemporary tastes, while still preserving traditional craftsmanship.

Image Source: <https://www.scotsman.com/heritage-and-retro/heritage/scottish-highland-sporrans-endangered-foreign-import-spike-edinburgh-william-e-scott-and-son-4790084>

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Sporran Making



Image Source:
<https://www.scotsman.com/>

What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- Not many craftspeople today possess the specialized knowledge, impacting production capacity and succession of artisan skills. Extensive training in enamel cooling and artistic techniques is essential for high-quality and unique finished goods. The intricate metal and leatherworking skills required for high-quality sporran making are also not widely taught, leading to a decline in skilled artisans.
- The shift from traditional Highland dress in everyday life has reduced the demand for sporrans. Changes in fashion trends have also played a role, as fewer people wear sporrans outside of formal or ceremonial occasions.
- Mass production of lower-cost sporrans has made it difficult for traditional makers to compete, with mass orders from the military and police being outsourced to USA and other countries within the UK.

ART FORM Welsh Clog Making



Image Source: Wikipedia



Image Source: <https://www.dutch-clogs.com/global-information/history-wooden-shoes/>

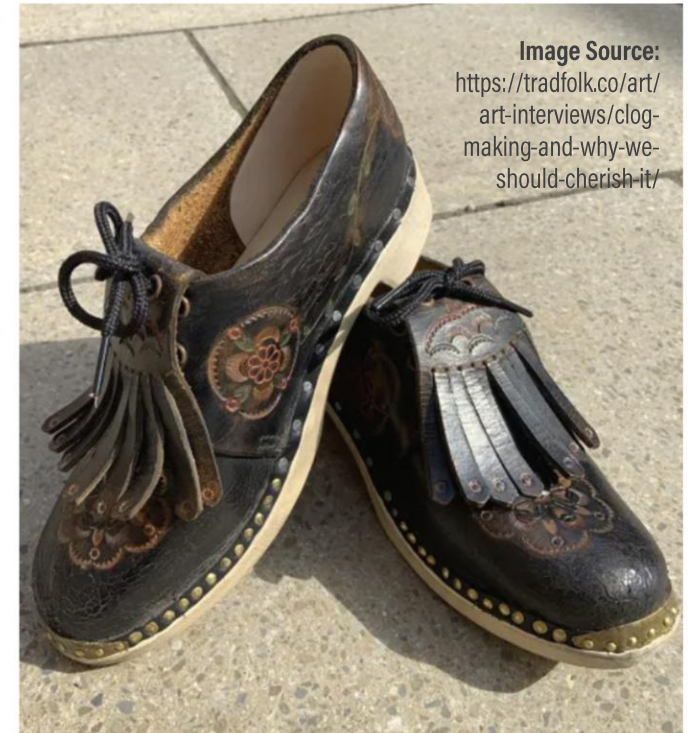


Image Source:
<https://tradfolk.co/art/art-interviews/clog-making-and-why-we-should-cherish-it/>

ART FORM

Welsh Clog Making

Welsh clog-making has been an essential craft in Wales since the 18th century, reflecting the region's rural and industrial working-class heritage. These footwear were primarily worn by miners, farmers, and factory workers due to their durability, affordability, and protective qualities.

The distinctive wooden soles, often combined with leather uppers, made clogs ideal for harsh working environments. Over time, Welsh clog-making evolved into an intricate craft, with clogs becoming a symbol of Welsh identity and resilience.

Clog-making involves carving the soles from wood, typically alder, willow, or sycamore, known for their durability and ability to absorb moisture. The soles are shaped to fit the foot, often with a raised toe or heel for added comfort. Leather uppers, often hand-stitched, are attached to the wooden base.

The design of the uppers can vary, with some incorporating intricate stitching patterns or decorative metal buckles. The final stage involves attaching iron or brass cleats to the soles for durability. The whole process requires a high degree of craftsmanship and attention to detail.

How has this art form evolved over time?

Originally a purely functional item worn by workers, Welsh clogs have evolved into a cultural icon and a fashion statement. While industrialization and the advent of mass-produced footwear in the 20th century led to a decline in everyday clog use, there has been a resurgence of interest in clog-making as a heritage craft.

Modern artisans have introduced contemporary design elements and materials, such as brightly colored leather uppers and lightweight soles, to make clogs more appealing to modern consumers. Clog dancing, a traditional Welsh folk activity, has also contributed to the cultural revival of this craft.



Image Source: <https://www.mylearning.org/stories/clogs-and-the-people-who-made-them-and-wore-them/1147>

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Welsh Clog Making

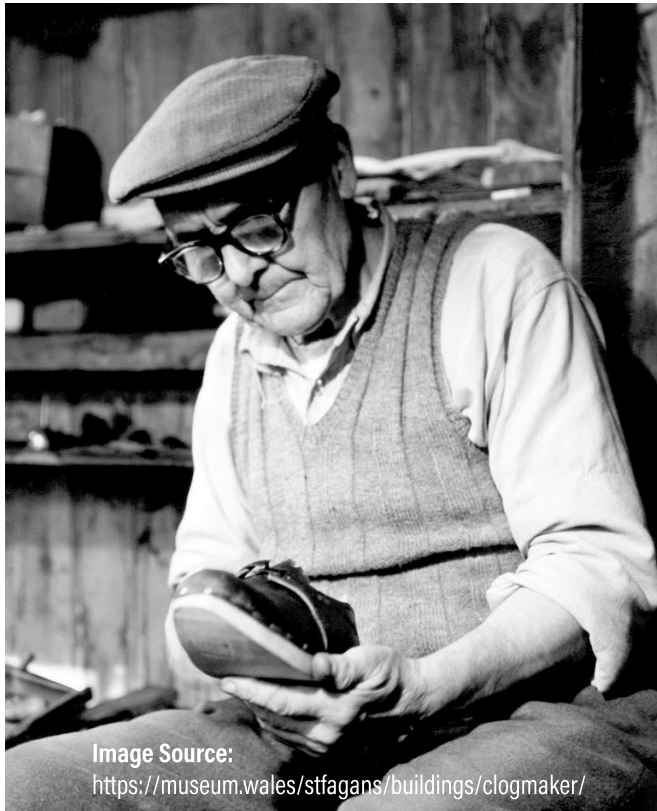


Image Source:
<https://museum.wales/stfagans/buildings/clogmaker/>

What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- The labor-intensive nature of clog-making, requiring skilled artisans to carve and shape each piece by hand, has made it less viable in the modern market. Younger generations do not pursue clog-making as a profession due to the challenges involved in gaining sufficient training and experience, further reducing the number of skilled artisans.
- Few craftspeople possess the specialized knowledge, impacting production capacity and succession.
- Mass production, and the rise of fast fashion footwear have reduced the demand for handmade clogs. Younger generations do not recognize the value of traditional craftsmanship, as Clogs are often seen as old-fashioned, with the shift of modern aesthetics to comfort footwear in the 21st century playing a role in the decline.
- The shift away from traditional occupations such as mining and farming, where clogs were commonly worn, has further reduced the need for this footwear.

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Linen Weaving



Image Source:
<https://irishlinen.co.uk/members/irish-linen-fabric-weavers/>



Image Source:
<https://www.linenbeauty.com/blog/how-to-weave-linen-fabric>

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Image Source:
<https://www.croftmill.co.uk/irish-linen-white-furnishing-fabric>

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Linen Weaving

Linen weaving has been a significant craft in Northern Ireland for centuries, dating back to the 17th century when Scottish Protestant settlers introduced cultivation of a Flax variety, favorable for linens, to the Ulster region.

The linen industry quickly became central to Northern Ireland's economy by the 18th century, fueled by high-quality flax grown in the region producing some of the finest linen in the world.

By the 19th century, Belfast was known as the "Linenpolis" due to its worldwide prominence in linen production. Linen was used for a variety of purposes, including clothing, household textiles, and industrial products. Today, Northern Irish linen remains highly regarded for its quality and craftsmanship.

The weaving process requires precise attention to tension and thread placement to ensure a smooth, even fabric. Once woven, the linen fabric is washed, bleached, and pressed to achieve its characteristic crisp, smooth texture. The finished product is often embellished with embroidery or lacework for decorative purposes.

How has this art form evolved over time?

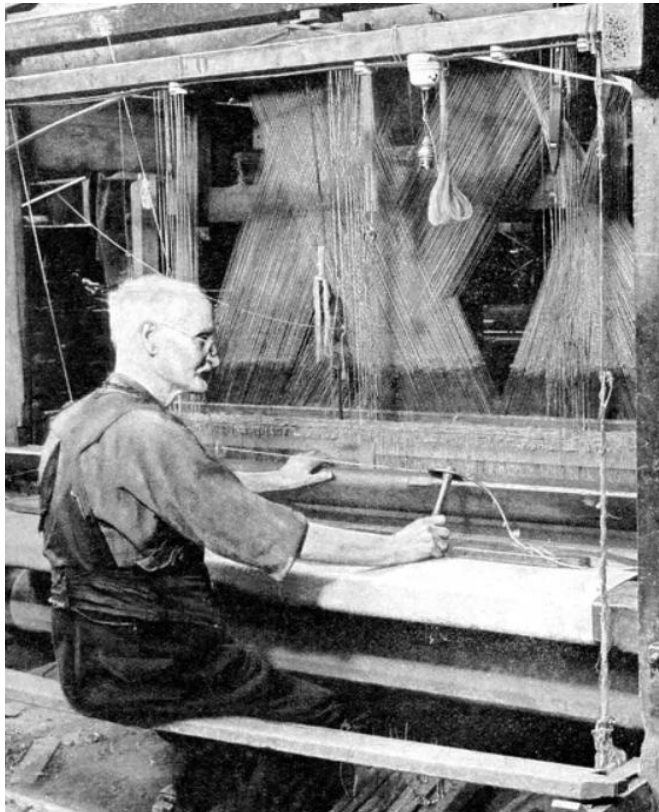
Linen weaving in Northern Ireland has evolved significantly since its origins from the immigration of Scottish settlers. This craft has a long history in household usage and in the late medieval era economy of Ireland, particularly around Ulster.

As the Industrial Revolution arrived in Ireland, mechanical looms were introduced, allowing for mass production of linen and increasing the global demand for Northern Irish linen. In the 20th century, the Northern Irish linen industry faced challenges due to competition from synthetic fibers and the decline of flax cultivation.



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Linen Weaving



What factors have contributed to the decline of this art form?

- The introduction of synthetic fibers such as polyester and nylon in the 20th century led to a decline in demand for linen products.
- Labor-intensive nature of flax cultivation and linen weaving, combined with the decline of flax farming, has made it difficult for artisans to compete with mass-produced textiles.
- The loss of traditional knowledge and skills, as fewer young people enter the linen industry, has further contributed to the decline of this craft. Younger generation of artisans do not favor traditional crafts, leading to decreased interest in linen weaving.
- Only veteran craftspeople possess the specialized knowledge, impacting production capacity and skill succession.
- Economic pressures, including the cost of labor and raw materials, have made it challenging for small-scale weavers to sustain their businesses.

Image Source: <https://www.mediastorehouse.com/heritage-images/weaving-irish-linen-lurgan-armagh-14936470.html>



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