



ALPACA MONTHLY NEWS

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EDITORIAL

THREE BRITONS WHO HELPED CHANGE THE WORLD OF FASHION

Today's multi-billion dollar fashion industry can thank three notable, but not widely known, Britons for how it got to be where it is now:

Paris may be considered the home of haute couture, but it was a Briton, Lincolnshire-born **Charles Frederick Worth** who taught the French all about it and who is widely regarded as the "father of haute couture".

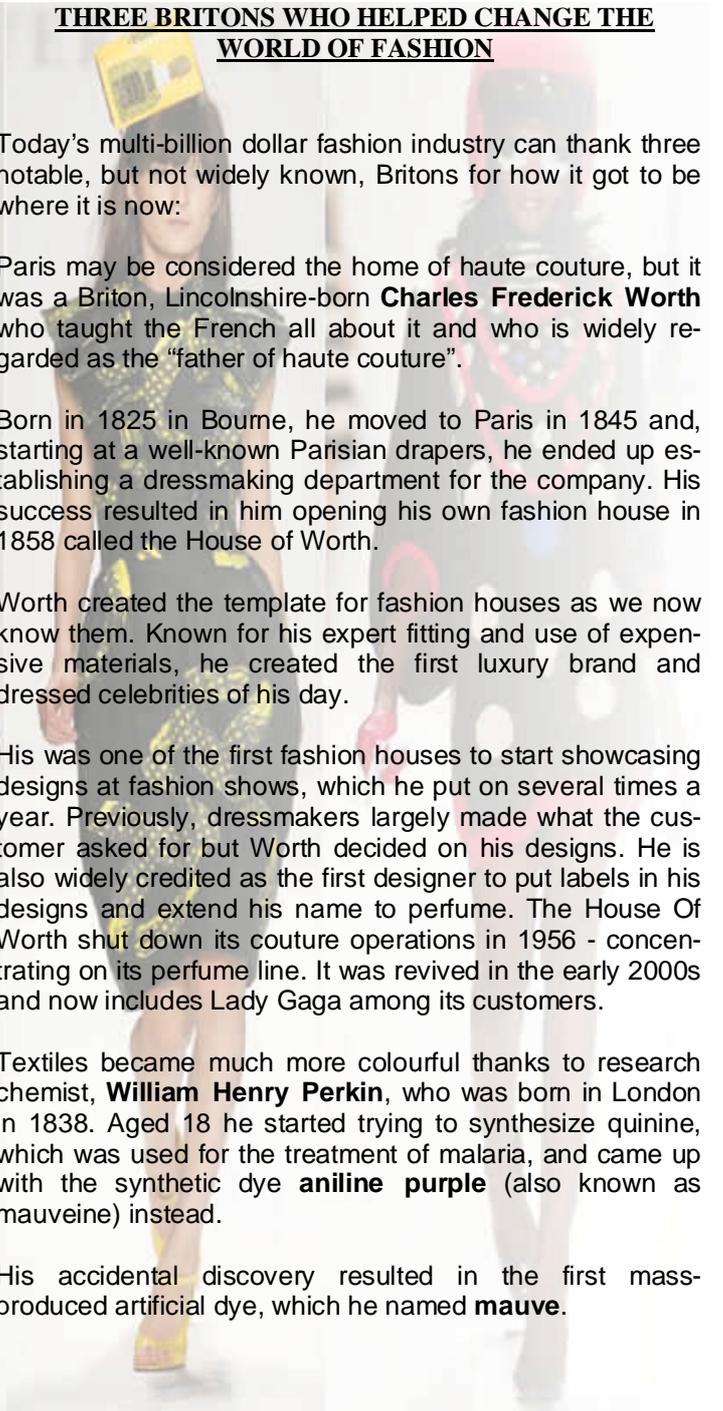
Born in 1825 in Boume, he moved to Paris in 1845 and, starting at a well-known Parisian drapers, he ended up establishing a dressmaking department for the company. His success resulted in him opening his own fashion house in 1858 called the House of Worth.

Worth created the template for fashion houses as we now know them. Known for his expert fitting and use of expensive materials, he created the first luxury brand and dressed celebrities of his day.

His was one of the first fashion houses to start showcasing designs at fashion shows, which he put on several times a year. Previously, dressmakers largely made what the customer asked for but Worth decided on his designs. He is also widely credited as the first designer to put labels in his designs and extend his name to perfume. The House Of Worth shut down its couture operations in 1956 - concentrating on its perfume line. It was revived in the early 2000s and now includes Lady Gaga among its customers.

Textiles became much more colourful thanks to research chemist, **William Henry Perkin**, who was born in London in 1838. Aged 18 he started trying to synthesize quinine, which was used for the treatment of malaria, and came up with the synthetic dye **aniline purple** (also known as mauveine) instead.

His accidental discovery resulted in the first mass-produced artificial dye, which he named **mauve**.



The fact that you could make colour in a factory from chemicals rather than insects, plants or other natural substances was a revelation because, previously, this shade could only be obtained from Mediterranean shellfish.

In 1857 he obtained a patent and set up a business manufacturing aniline purple. Mauve became all the rage with the fashion industry and Perkin became the acknowledged expert on artificial dyes.

One of the first people to champion individualism in fashion was **Lady Lucy Duff-Gordon**. Born in London in 1863, she became a leading fashion designer in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Known as **Lucile**, she was adept at shocking society with her radical outfits - particularly her lingerie.

Rather than following trends that are applicable to

everyone, her manner of design was to first assess your character and your dress was designed accordingly. Using this principle she dressed Edwardian high society and developed a following of glamorous and influential women wanting a bespoke "personality dress" designed for them.

Along with Worth, she was among the first designers to train professional fashion models and stage catwalk-style shows. The House of Lucile became one of the first global fashion brands with boutiques in Paris, New York, Chicago and London.

Her designs shocked, but also intrigued. They were creations that had never been seen before. They were all about the individual - something that is sacrosanct to today's celebrities when they wish to be seen by their adoring public.

CAMELID CLIPS



Coopercan members shearing an alpaca

The Cooperativa de Produccion y Servicios Especiales de los Productores de Camelidos Andinos (Coopercan) recently shipped its first export of alpaca tops and noils to Switzerland.

The shipment, a container of 6,000 kgs of baby alpaca tops and 2,200 kgs of baby alpaca noils, is Coopercan's second despatch to Europe - a similar shipment was made previously to Italy.

Alfredo Velasquez, President of the Peruvian government's Sierra Exportadora said, "This export, with a value of around US\$ 100,000.00, demonstrates the initiative of a group of alpaca fibre producers in alli-

ance with the government."

Coopercan was formed five years ago and is a cooperative made up of 17 alpaca farming organisations that represents more than 1,200 families from the regions of Cusco, Arequipa, Apurimac and Ayacucho.

The Sierra Exportadora programme has been working with Coopercan since 2011, supporting its storage facilities, helping establish good shearing practices and monitoring the quality control of the classification of fibre in Coopercan's processing plant. It also helps in the promotion of the final products and search for sources of financing.

More recently, the combing of the alpaca tops has been subcontracted to other, more established, alpaca fibre processors. In 2011, Coopercan sold a total of alpaca tops valued at US\$ 224,800.00 and, in 2012, the total was US\$ 1.3 million.

Renan Alfaro, a livestock specialist working for Sierra Exportadora, said, "Our technical support in the field, applying Peru's technical shearing norms has added value to the farmers' fibre and improved their income."

Coopercan continues to make advances up the alpaca fibre production chain and has plans to convert its tops into yarns to be knitted into garments for showing at a future "Peru Moda" textile fair where foreign buyers come to Peru to source suppliers.

Following our publication of Part I of Joaquin B Alolio's article last month, we are pleased to publish its concluding Part II:

Guanacos - is their production sustainable nowadays ? (Chronicle of a disillusion) - PART II

In Chile and, in particular in Tierra del Fuego, S.A.G. Servicio Agrícola Ganadero has authorised annually, with appropriate controls, specified quantities of "raleo" or "saca" from the species whose fiber is exports to a private company.

In both Argentina and Chile experiments have been made with the consumption of the animal's meat in exotic dishes in restaurants connected with regional tourism and it has proven to be a tender meat that is more fit for such use.

Without any formal protocols being established the method of capturing and shearing the animals has been perfected and later releasing them back into the wild.

Possibly, for lack of initial information and for bureaucratic delays, some experiments carried out by well-known ranches failed such as trying to capture and shear guanacos in the summer and not the winter when the species is relatively weaker and more docile making the animals easier to manage.

When writing that article in 2001, I mentioned a price of US\$ 110.00/kg to US\$ 150.00/kg for guanaco fleece taking as a comparison the US\$ 500.00/kg that was being paid then in Peru and Bolivia for dehaired vicuña fibre. But in spite of the similarity of both species where the guanaco chulengos resemble their smaller highland cousins, there is a very important difference between their fibres. Not so much the fineness but rather the scarcity of length and small amount of solidity.

The vicuña is shorn every 2 years and its fibre is then long and strong. It has a fineness of between 12.5 to 13.5 microns with a length of 25 to 30 mms (0.98 to 1.18 ins).

The average data of guanaco fibre confirmed by the laboratories of INTA in Bariloche and Rawson, are :

Fineness range: 14.5 to 16.5 microns
Average fleece fibre length: 28 mm (1.10 ins)
External guard fibre length of up to 140 mm (5.51 ins) but with a fineness of 22 to 35 microns.

To compare with cashmere of an average 16.5 mi-



A guanaco being shorn in Argentina

crons it has a better fibre length of over 40 mms (1.58 ins).

The problem in general in Patagonia is that there is a lot of fibre that averages barely 20 mm (0.79 ins) for fleeces in one year, and also with an important percentage of weak and brittle fibre. This can only be woollen spun, which has a lower value than worsted spun yarns, and has more restricted market outlets in the best of cases to sell the type of garments that can be made using this fibre.

Santa Cruz Province's Consejo Agrario Provincial (CAP) is to conduct a guanaco census using funds originally destined for the Sociedad Rural de Río Gallegos.

Of course this is a very good initiative, but I worry when I listen to important farmers there observing that the government's prime interest at the moment is exclusively for the meat, ignoring the fibre.

It is crucial that the guanaco business accepts the same concept of "charging per sheep", that is to say, adding both the production of wool and lambs. In the case of guanacos this would be the fibre and the meat. This is the only way to valorise the production properly for it to end up being profitable and sustainable.

Another good idea that I hear from the same farmers is to promote the equipment used by the animal capture team and to adopt specialised shearing methods for guanacos, adapting the rules laid down by PRO-LANA in order to allow a rational crop of both products.

Returning to the value of the fibre, some time ago several commercial operators told me that, to give a comparative value to guanaco fibre, it was not realistic to look at the value of the vicuña, but rather those of cashmere.

Nowadays reliable data indicates the following values per kilogramme:

- Dehaired vicuña descerda can be worth U\$S 900.00/kg

- Some operators in Peru and Bolivia offer the original product at a price between U\$S 360.00/kg and U\$S 400.00/kg.
- Mongolian cashmere of 16.5 microns and 45 mm (1.77 ins) length, U\$S 108.00/kg.

Those of us in the wool trade know that something said in the 2003 IWTO Congress in Buenos Aires by its President Juan Casanovas (from the distinguished textile manufacturer, Catalán) continues to be valid today:

"The value chain for wool begins with the final product that is delivered to the consumer."

This same concept is the one that should prevail among those who want to give an appropriate value to the production of guanaco: **fibre + meat**



Europe's biggest alpaca show, the British Alpaca Futurity & Fibre Festival 2013, will take place in Hall 3A of the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, Eng-

land from 15th to 16th March.

More than 400 alpacas are expected to be judged in the Halter Classes for Suris and Huacayas by renowned international judges Amanda Vandenbosch and Jill MacLeod.

Futurity 2013 will host a much expanded Fibre Festival this year where hand spinners, weavers, feltmakers, knitters, dyers and crochet makers will demonstrate their craft and invite visitors to have a go.

The Futurity is a non-profit organisation and is focused primarily on promoting British breeding with developing alpaca ownership and related services.

Further information can be found by visiting: www.britishalpaca-futurity.com



IAA ALPACA MONTHLY BULLETIN

The IAA Alpaca Monthly Bulletin is aimed at keeping members informed of news from the IAA. We encourage any member to supply articles of interest to update members about developments in the Camelid world. Articles with a human interest angle are particularly welcome.

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