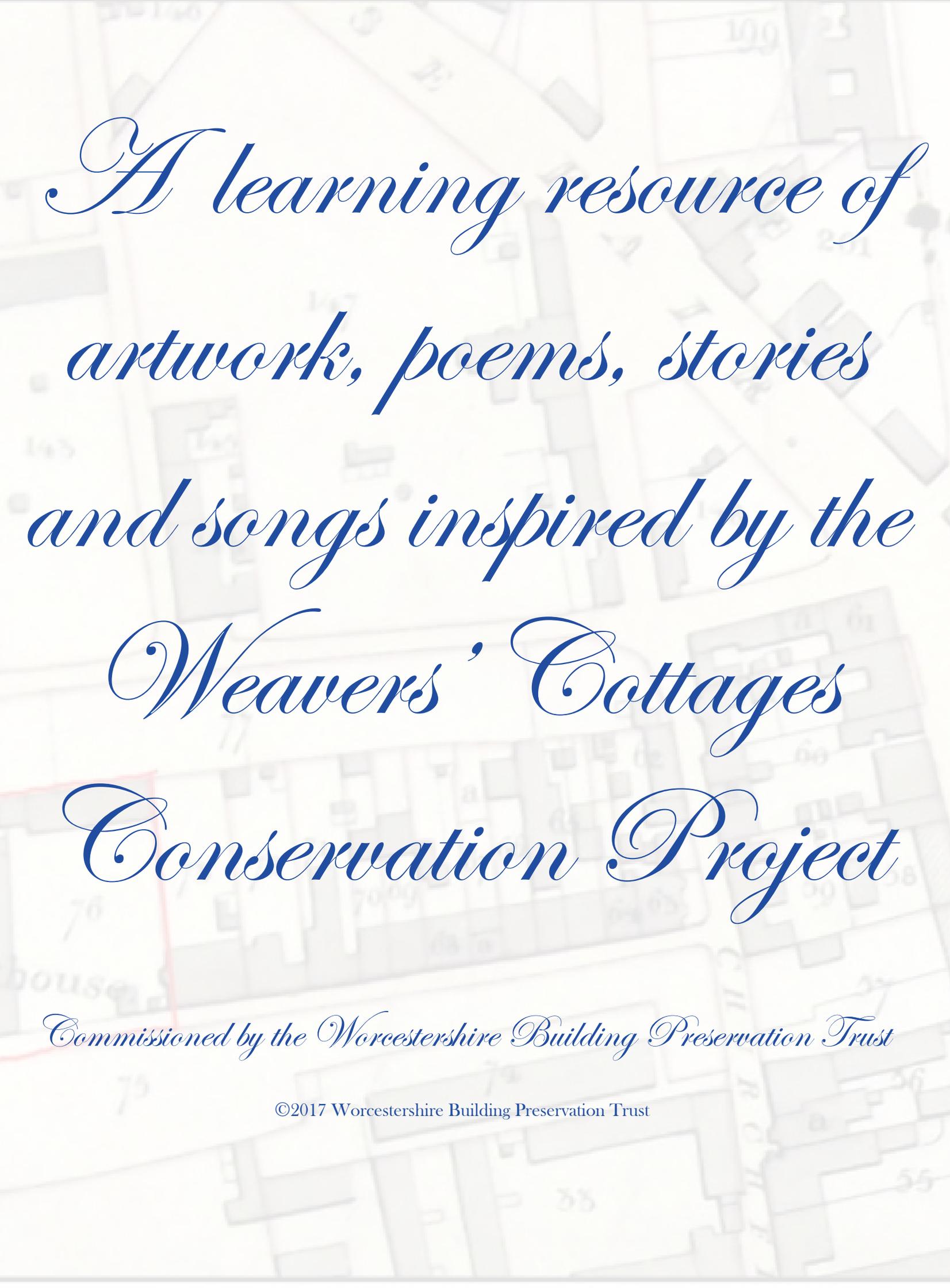




Website: www.wbpt.org.uk

Sales from the
Weavers'
Cottages



*A learning resource of
artwork, poems, stories
and songs inspired by the
Weavers' Cottages
Conservation Project*

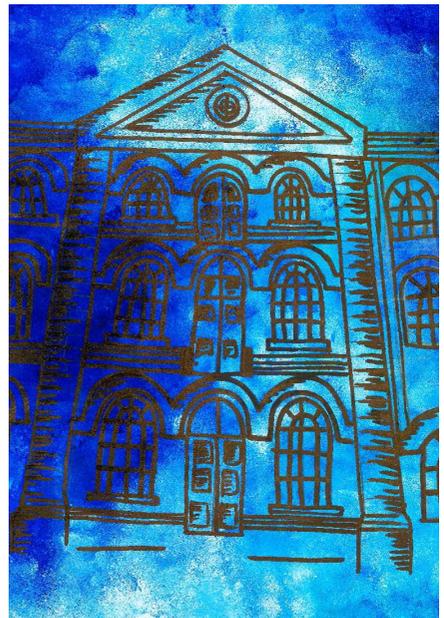
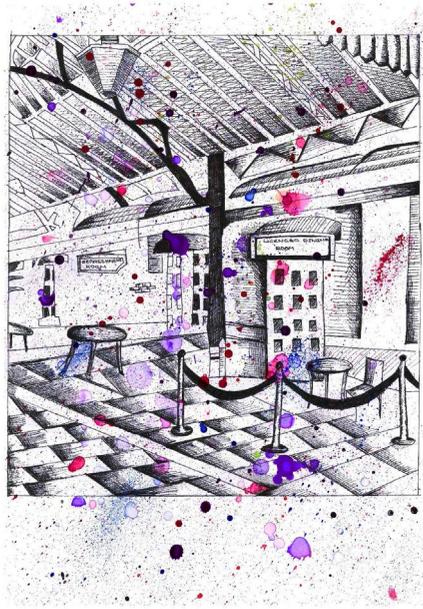
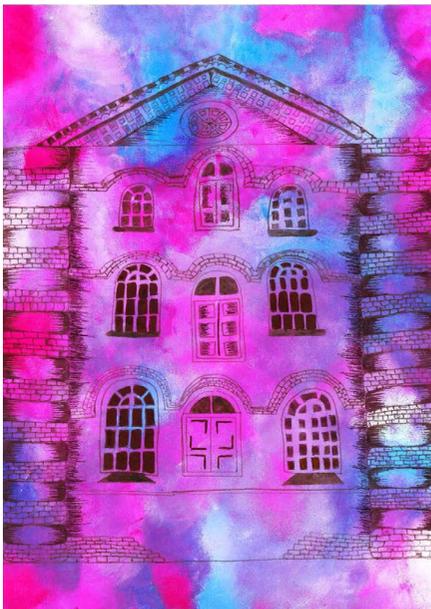
Commissioned by the Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust

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Artwork inspired by Kidderminster's Heritage

Students from Baxter Business and Enterprise College produced artwork in conjunction with the Project's Activity Plan. They are:

Eleanor Rees, Katie Beard, Yasmin Berrow, Erin Lightbody, Neve Saunders and Bethany Owen.



What is Bombazine?

A Brief History of 20-22 Horsefair, Kidderminster

The cottages, at 20-22 Horsefair, are important historical examples of artisan cottages found in the area with possible associations to the weaving industry in Kidderminster. They are listed as “*three houses with attic workshops dating from the mid and late 18th century with later alterations these buildings, which combine domestic and workshop functions are rare survivals from the period associated with the domestic worsted weaving industry in Kidderminster*”.

It is very likely that 22 Horsefair, built before 1753, was originally designed as a dwelling with a handloom workshop above. The other two cottages were built slightly later without the distinctive high loft workshop, but they were certainly homes built for artisans, with trades ranging from confectionery to shoemaking. There is evidence that three members of the Slade family lived in the Horsefair and worked as weavers between 1757 and 1803. Later, 22 was occupied by tailors and carpet weavers.

22 Horsefair seems to be a very rare example of an early weaver’s cottage. For this reason, it is of considerable interest to the nation.

Research has been undertaken and is ongoing to determine who exactly owned the land the cottages were built on and who in fact lived in them. Our findings so far can be found in the [research](#) section of the Weavers’ Cottages website. It is however evident that from 1851 onwards, No.s 20 and 21 Horsefair were occupied by a number of artisans of differing trades: A full list of the trades found operating in the Horsefair area can be found by visiting the [Resource Hub](#) on our website.

Bombazine is derived from the old French word **bombasin** and applied originally to silk but later to tree-silk or cotton. Bombazine originally came from Flanders (Belgium) to Norwich in 1570, where production began in England (and notably for this project in Kidderminster). Bombazine is a fabric woven with a silk warp and worsted weft which is **twilled** or **corded** (later the silk warp was sometimes replaced with cotton and later, wool) and could be created on a relatively small scale domestic loom based in attic rooms of cottages. The resulting fabric was mainly used for dress material and clerical attire.

Twilling or **cording** are the only methods known for making Bombazine. Twilling is a process of weaving where cloth strands are pushed through other cloth strands positioned lengthwise on a weaving machine. The resulting cloth has a characteristic diagonal pattern that is highly resistant to ordinary wear and tear. More modern incarnations of twilled fabric include denim which is used for making jeans.

Princess Charlotte’s death in 1817 provided an unexpected demand for Bombazine dyed black for mourning wear. Local Bombazine manufacturer George Talbot made a very tidy sale on his Bombazine as a result!

Kidderminster town, and the Bombazine trade continued to boom, with London merchants and money calling the tune of what was produced but increasingly, there was more of a specialisation in carpet weaving. Bombazine became less fashionable except with the Spanish speaking areas of the empire and began to be associated with poor female relatives and governesses, thus lessening its appeal.

Throughout the period of and into the early 1800’s the trade of Bombazine weaving was significant in Kidderminster, but by 1859 Benjamin John Gibbons stated that it was “now wholly extinct”. After this period the census returns show unemployed Bombazine weavers living with relatives to get by.

Saved for the Nation – The role of WBPT

As the only remaining physical reminder of the Bombazine weaving trade in Kidderminster's history, the cottages are an important vessel in telling this story to present and future generations. As such, the [Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust](#), after securing funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund; the Pilgrim Trust; the Garfield Weston Foundation; the D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust; and the Architectural Heritage Fund, embarked on a project to repair and conserve the cottages back to their former glory on the outside, and to return to use as houses on the inside. After many years of lying derelict, the cottages have been brought back to life, and once again, provide the opportunity to be used as family homes.

The Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust Ltd
Registered Charity 214258
Company Registration number 837970
Registered Office : Adam House, Birmingham Road,
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Website: www.wbpt.org.uk

Sources:

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Kidderminster Stuff – Roy Lewis 2014

Tales from The Weavers' Cottages – Local History in poetry, stories and songs

Alongside the physical repair of the buildings, several community and education projects have been undertaken in the area. One of these projects included working with poet and musician Heather Wastie, who worked with pupils from St Mary's Primary School in Kidderminster to develop the song cycle included in this brochure. Local residents have also worked with Heather to create the poems and stories featured here whilst others uncovered more about their family tree with the help of genealogist Gay Hill. These outcomes and several more are available to view on the project website: www.weaverscottages.info and form a vital part of the resulting educational resources that are freely available for all schools and education providers.

POEMS inspired by the cottages

THE WEAVER'S DAUGHTER

No fairy stories nor longed-for dreams;
life is exactly as it seems – hard.
More an employee than a daughter
she fetches water, cleans as best she can,
needs to help her tired Mam.
Father's word is law and once the floor
is swept, she climbs the stairs
to the room where the loom dictates
her life. Strife is all she knows; long hours
and the smell of dust. Not for her flowers
on a Spring morning but a day dawning,
filled with intricate detail, back-breaking
movements and aching legs. But there was
food on the table, just, and the knowledge
that she must learn her trade well.
Selling Bombazine their goal.
She is unaware that a different world
exists outside her door, not one where
the poor perish, but where the rich relish
the skills they never see.

Maggie Doyle

inspired by Donna Baker's "*The Weaver's
Daughter*"



TOP TO BOTTOM

Second storey windows.
Light for the making.
Light on rapid fingers,
twilling silk and wool.
Sharp eyes to make
best bombazine
for wealthy widows
wearing crucifixes
weighed with sorrow.

Down the staircase,
shadows sleep together.
Some will die too young
to learn the weaving,
dream of service,
inheriting a widow's
cast-off weeds,
to wear with pride
and tinsplate fairings.



Ground floor – fire
when there are wages,
cold when windows flap
with sacking, darkness
lit by an open door.
In bad times, hardship
haunts the room, leaves
little for their bread,
potatoes, tea and gin.

The women call
on Spanish priests
who buy their cloth,
send whispered prayers
for 'light that shineth
in the darkness'.

Kathy Gee



“What can I get you, lad, today?”
The question asked, but was hard to say.
I lifted up small currency
“Oh, please sir, I don’t mind any!”

Then the confectioner showed his skill
To scoop and weigh and bag to fill.
Swiftly he chose a little of many
I’m sure what he gave was worth more than a penny!

The deed done, exchange was made
Plunder grasped, farewells conveyed.
Right out the door, right at the junction
I ran and I ran I’d brook no interruption



Left at the cobbles and run down the hill
Holding on tight so my treasures won’t spill!
And gasping, I entered through grandad’s back door
My boots making noise on the quarry tiled floor

Grandad’s face broke into his lopsided grin,
“You’ve sweets? In that case you’d better come in!”
I opened the bag, and in words unrehearsed
“Here y’go grandad, you can go first.”

Sharon Cartwright



A Penny’s Worth

A whole penny was what Grandad gave.
Should I spend or should I save?
A penny round, hard and warm,
A bit of love in copper form.

Treasure should be exchanged for treasure
And today, weight is the way to measure-
To Wakefields, then! For luxury!
And choose the best confectionery!

The jangling bell loud as I opened the door
To delicious aromas, and colours galore!
Wide eyed I stare at the wealth that’s there.
At the altar of wood I worshipped sweet goods.

Mr Wakefield’s eyes were kind. He smiled.
Amused to see this child beguiled.
My words to him came out a whisper
(doffed cap, dropped gaze) “good morning, Mister”



Keep your hands where I can see them

We leave their noisy grown-up world
of market hubbub, bang and barter,
tumble through in twos and fives.
A nodding doorbell bounds
the magic, shades where spells are cast
and every breath becomes a fairy tale.

The air is thick, infused by sugar
boiling in the outhouse, sticky-sweet
and warm against our nostrils.
We lift eager eyes to Mrs Wakefield,
stern and aproned, forearms resting
on the red wood counter, framed
by chocolate, aniseed and pear drops,
love hearts, sherbet dabs and wine gums.

We want bags of four-a-penny shrimps,
or gob stoppers that change their colour
as we suck and lick, and check and look.
She likes our pennies, but she'd rather
sell in shillings. Truffles, toffee, gilded boxes.
Mrs Wakefield prides herself on Quality.

Kathy Gee

THE SWEET SHOP

Her children were borrowed.
Each day, after school, the shop bell jangled
and for ten minutes her front room was
filled with laughter. Child after child
pointing chalky fingers at the sight of
glass jars, promising hidden delights,
standing to attention on wooden shelves.
Smells of syrup and strawberries mingled
with dust as boys and girls tingled when
sherbet dips hit lips. Love Hearts and Violets
squashed together in the "tupenny drawer"
fruit salad chews and Bobos in the ha'penny one.
Coconut ice, Spanish Gold, liquorice, were lit
by the sun that streamed through onto
faded carpet where faded dreams of family
became reality for ten minutes every day.

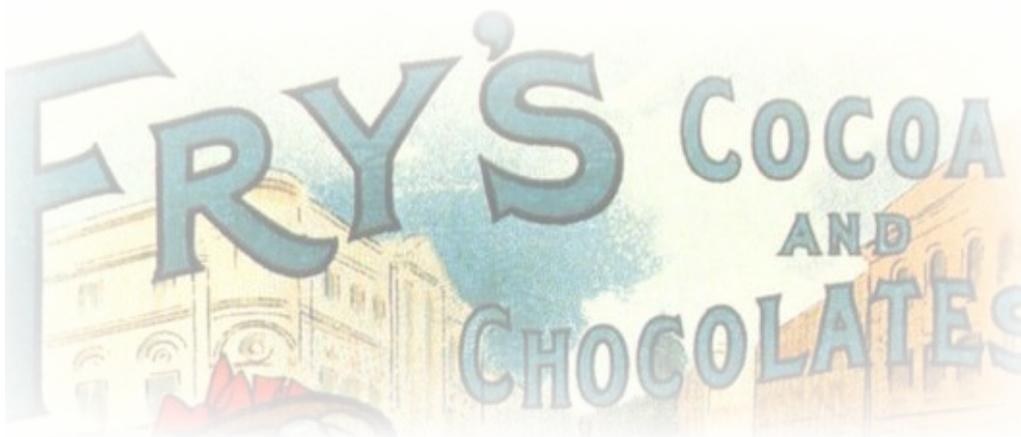
Maggie Doyle



Sweet Excess

Mmmmmmm.....
First some shrimps!
Then, tiny "imps"
Fruit salads, four
Or maybe more!
Some liquorice laces
And sweet necklaces
My favourite! Coconut ice!
Or maybe chocolate mice?
Oooo! I'm never eating sweets again!
The price of pleasure is definitely pain!
I'll fall asleep, forget those sweets
But instead I dream - of peppermint creams!

Sharon Cartwright



The weaver's daughter

To be in **service**; that word was far too much like **servitude** for my liking.

I looked at this woman; keys of **authority** around her waist. She was the head of the upstairs and below stairs; those keys gave her **power**, to hire new staff.

My mother had told me all about this woman, how she had worked her way up to this station in her life. I wondered how many years it had taken her?

I felt like I was exchanging one **tyrant** for another **tyrant**.

What a choice; but choose I must; my father or this **forbidding** woman standing in front of me now, looking me up and down. I avoided her eyes.

My mother too had made a choice. I glanced at my mother now; I was thinking of our small home; the cold **wind** that **roared** down the chimney in winter, causing dirty smoke to fill the room, making me cough.



I looked down at my dress, **shabby**, threadbare; clasping my hands together behind my back, I looked down at the floor.

Did I really have a choice?

Margaret E Green

inspired by Donna Baker's Book
"The Weaver's Daughter"

Upstairs

"Gran? Come on Gran." And heavy eyelids lift over rheumy eyes. They focus on the ten year old with a questioning gaze and a raised spoon of steaming broth. Gran's hand plucked at the fabric on the chair that was hers, night and day.

Where she sat at the fireplace the heat was fierce and gave her face a rosy hue. Her back was always protected from draughts by an old blanket.

Gran's eyes looked to the staircase. "When I was a babby I used to crawl up them stairs When I was 10 like you I ran up em. When I was 16 your grandad tried to carry me up em! What a laff! Then I got old, and I crawled up em again."

"And now you don't go up em at all, Gran."

"No love."

It was quiet then, just Gran supping noisily; her gaze was on the stairs, her thoughts on the past.

Up to the loom.

The highest room

The noisy room

The dusty room

The prison room.

The money room.

But oh, it was The Room with a View.

Gran remembered the stolen glimpses of people scurrying down below when she was supposed to be working. The horses and carts. The buildings. The seasons changing. She would imagine where the people were going. The rich, the poor, all passed along below her. She was Queen of all she surveyed for that moment - she held in her mind the pictures of the people below just as hard as her hands held the broom, the scissors, the cloth. This was her life, the dreams created alongside the dust.

At this great age, she was free of the noise, the dust, the long hours of backbreaking work. But the stairs deny her, her Room with a View.

Sharon Cartwright



SONGS inspired by the cottages

This section is interactive;
encompassing lyrics, chords
and music for you to participate
in. Enjoy! Words and music by
Heather Wastie.

Kidderminster Stuff

CHORUS

*Roll Up! Roll Up! For Kidderminster Stuff
Roll Up! Roll Up! For Kidderminster Stuff
Indestructible, universal
Multi-purpose, will not crease
Roll Up! Roll Up! For Kidderminster Stuff
Roll Up! Roll Up! For Kidderminster Stuff*

Use it as a curtain
Spread it on the floor
Roll it at the bottom
Of an ill-fitting door

Lay it on the table
Hang it on the wall
Throw it on the bed
It's reversible

CHORUS

Stuff can be anything
You want it to be
Use it in the theatre
For your scenery

Feeling rather cold?
You can wear it as a coat
When a chill wind blows
It's the antidote

CHORUS

We slave at the loom
And our lives are hard
Sharing a privy
And a well in the yard

Weaving our cloth
So our children can be fed
We'll make a lovely pelmet
For your 4-poster bed

CHORUS

CHORDS

Kidderminster Stuff

Intro	(D) G D A D
Chorus A7.....	D D G D
	A D A A
	G G D D
	A A A A
	A7.....
	D D G D
	A D G A D
Verses 1 & 2	D D D D
	A A A A
	(x2)
Between Verses	A A A A
Verse 3	Dm Dm Dm Dm
	A A A A
	(x2)



[Click here to listen to this song](#)



Bombazine George

When Charlotte died in 'seventeen
The people cried for bombazine
Not red or yellow, blue or green
Smart and black, that's bombazine
For dresses with a royal sheen
The mourners wanted bombazine

Before the terrible news had spread
Old George lay sleeping in his bed
The night was dark and nothing stirred
Until a horse's hooves were heard

[Sound of horse's hooves]

Then came a knocking at his door
Which George decided to ignore

"Go away!"

When Charlotte died in 'seventeen
The people cried for bombazine
Not red or yellow, blue or green
Smart and black, that's bombazine
For dresses with a royal sheen
Old George had lots of bombazine

Old George was sleeping sound once more
When someone else knocked on his door!
But George refused to leave his bed
No matter what the young men said

"Wakey wakey!"

For George was clever, George was shrewd
And didn't like their attitude

"Wha'eva!"

When Charlotte died in 'seventeen
The people cried for bombazine
Not red or yellow, blue or green
But smart and black, that's bombazine
For dresses with a royal sheen
Demand was up for bombazine

The traders didn't want to tell
But shrewd old George knew very well
These chaps would only be so keen
If there was a rush on bombazine

"I know what you lot are up to!"

He sold it all and named his price
For Kidderminster that was nice!

"Ker-ching! Kerching!"

When Charlotte died in 'seventeen



The people cried for bombazine
Not red or yellow, blue or green
But smart and black, that's bombazine
For dresses with a royal sheen
A fortune made from bombazine

CHORDS

Bombazine George

Intro	G A (x 2)
Chorus	D A G A (x 3)
Between verses	G A (x 2)
Verse	D D C C D D A A (A A) D D C C (D D A A)

Note: This song should include (loudly) spoken bits to add a sense of drama. Suggestions are given, improvisation encouraged!

[Click here to listen to this song](#)



Comb the Wool and Spin it

Wool from the sheep, delivered by the master,
washed in the river, combed in the parlour.

Comb the wool and spin it.

Spool to kate to spool to niddy noddy.

Draw it out, pay it in, don't think about your feet.

Combed with a hackle to open up the fibers,
sacks of fleece to be spun on the wheel.

Comb the wool and spin it.

Spool to kate to spool to niddy noddy.

Draw it out, pay it in, don't think about your feet.

The children are combing, making a roving,
helping the spinster, combing and layering.

Comb the wool and spin it.

Spool to kate to spool to niddy noddy.

Draw it out, pay it in, don't think about your feet.

Spinning by touch, well into the night
while the children sleep, no need for light.

Comb the wool and spin it.

Spool to kate to spool to niddy noddy.

Draw it out, pay it in, don't think about your feet.

Comb the wool and spin it.

Spool to kate to spool to niddy noddy.

Draw it out, pay it in, don't think about your feet.



CHORDS

Comb the Wool and Spin it

F C F C

F C C F

F F C C7

F C F Bflat

F C C F

[Click here to listen to this song](#)



Growing Up

Verse 1

When I was young
my feet were cold
in the Kidderminster winter,
wind whistling through

sacking for bedding,
simple dirt floors
roughest rush matting,
ill-fitting doors

Verse 2

A well in the yard,
a pump in the privy
the clatter of the loom
I was always busy

clay tiles for my roof,
clay bricks for my walls,
my beams hewn from oak,
men made me stand tall

Verse 3

My windows splashed light
on the loom in the loft,
little warmth from the fire
that spluttered and coughed

in the draughty parlour
at the bottom of the stairs
a long spiral spine
weaving up through the layers

Verse 4

As I grew up
I'll tell you in a jiffy
There was no more hand pump,
no more privy

All mod cons
for the tailor and the butcher,
a boot maker too,
making money for the future

Interlude

Till one dark day
they covered me over
For years I waited for
the big bulldozer

But then ... one day, there
were:

Verse 5

Ladders and scaffolding
portacabins
brooms and trowels
and polythene

hard hats, buckets
and hi vis jackets
overalls, goggles,
boots and jeans

Verse 6

Now I can hear again
Now I can see again
Now I can feel again
Brick and tile

Now I can breathe again
Now I'm alive again
Now I'm a home again
See me smile

[Click here to listen to this song](#)



The Master says

Solo

The master owns the loom
in the tiny upstairs room,
he doesn't like delays,
will only pay the wage
if the work is done by fall day,
it must be done by fall day.

Round (repeated)

The master says
The weaver likes to work
The master says
The weaver likes to shirk
The master says

The master says
the weaver earns his money
just to fill his thirsty belly,
so the master says.

Pay day Saturday,
church on Sunday,
off to the tavern
for jars of ale,

a game of skittles,
moan about his pay,
drink until St Monday,
drink until St Monday
(repeated at very end)

Note: 'St Monday' refers to a traditional
worker's excuse for not coming into work
because he is "celebrating St Monday's
Day".

[Click here to listen to this song](#)



Loom in the Loft

Water in the river
Sun in the sky
Sheep in the field
Horses passing by

CHORUS

Loom in the loft
Silk on the loom
Wool in the shuttle
Give the shuttle room

Wool from the sheep
Silk from the worm
Weaving bombazine
Brings a good return

CHORUS

Feet pressing pedals
Shuttle passing through
Right to left and left to right
Making something new

CHORUS

Mother teaches daughter
Father teaches son
Helping each other
Till the work is done

CHORDS

	Loom in the Loft
Intro	F Bb C C C C F F
Verse	F F F F Bflat C F F (x 2)
Chorus	F C F F F Bflat C C F Bflat C C / C7 C7 F F

[Click here to listen to this song](#)

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