

## Scotch carpets at Stirling: Thomas Gilfillan's Cash Book and Ledger 1764–1770

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*Scotch carpets were a popular form of domestic furnishing for close to 200 years. The name suggests that this kind of pile-less, reversible, woollen double cloth, used as a floor covering, was widely sold outside Scotland. It was also known as Ingrain carpet and made at Kidderminster and several places in the north of England and in Ireland, from the 18th century onwards. Thomas Gilfillan's business books provide rare and early documentary evidence of a working carpet manufactory and raise questions about whether this style of carpet was part of a wider tradition centred in the wool-manufacturing areas of England or an example of a more local tradition.*

### INTRODUCTION

Carpet-making became a significant feature of the industrializing Scottish nation in the later 18th and 19th centuries. Indeed it was actively encouraged by the Board of Trustees for Manufactures as a use for coarse wool from the mid 18th century and a specimen collection of the finest oriental and French carpets could be viewed in their offices in Edinburgh. A bold and early venture had been the arrival in Scotland in 1759 of a French workman named Germain Havard from the celebrated carpet manufactory of Thomas Moore in London, under the patronage of Sir Harry Erskine of Alva.<sup>1</sup> Havard was also employed by the company of Young Trotter & Cheape in Edinburgh to make oriental, or pile, carpets. The manufactory, at the foot of the Canongate, was inspected by the Board of Trustees in February 1765 who reported that three large looms for weaving Turkey carpets were all going and that £1600 of carpets had already been sold.<sup>2</sup> The provision of new carpet patterns by the master of the Drawing Academy in Edinburgh, John Baptist Jackson, was also discussed. The Trustees were anxious to encourage a manufacture which consumed a great deal of wool and one in which both men and women could be involved.<sup>3</sup>

However, by this time the production of Scotch carpets was more generally under way. These carpets have traditionally been recognized as flat, reversible woollen double cloths, used as floor coverings. In the absence of early examples it is difficult to know whether they were always made this way, but certainly during the second half of the 18th century they became a very popular form of furnishing.<sup>4</sup> The writer Edward Topham (1776) remarked in his *Letters from Edinburgh*, 'You find them in every house, from the highest to the lowest, as they are calculated to suit that class of people who wish for the conveniences of life, but who cannot afford the extravagant prices of Wilton, Axminster, and other more expensive manufactories. They have been, in a great measure, the means of rendering the houses here so comfortable, and are the best

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securities against stone buildings, stone stair-cases, and a cold climate.<sup>5</sup> The Trustees offered annual premiums for the most elegant designs and highest quality for Scotch carpets. Grants were also awarded for apprenticeships and new equipment and a bounty was available for the manufacture of coarse wool over a certain weight. Although they were relatively tender, being made entirely of wool, the double-cloth structure of the carpets (that is, a fabric made of two interchanging layers of cloth) gave the patterns great clarity and they could be reversed when showing signs of wear. Kilmarnock, Glasgow, Lanark, Edinburgh, Leith, Hawick, Kelso, Bannockburn, Aberdeen and Stirling were among the principal centres of production, as well as many small manufacturers and individual weavers working in other parts of the country making carpets on commission.<sup>6</sup>

The Stirling carpets were reputedly known for their fine colouring and were made there well into the 19th century.<sup>7</sup> None so far has been identified, but two rare surviving business books, from the company of Thomas, Ebenezer and Alexander Gilfillan, reveal a busy provincial manufactory.<sup>8</sup> Deposited in the National Archives of Scotland among the papers of the Sheriff Court of Stirling, they cover the period from 1764 to 1770, when the Gilfillans got into financial difficulties. The two leather-bound volumes, a Cash Book and a Ledger, which are set out like daybooks, show that carpets were being woven on a regular basis throughout each year by the same group of weavers. They also give details of the dyes used, the suppliers of yarn and how the carpets were made. A 'Carpet Book' mentioned in the Cash Book has not so far come to light, but there is much information in both volumes on where and to whom the carpets were sold. Thomas Gilfillan was in partnership with the merchant James Scott in Edinburgh, trading as James Scott and Co. Most of the carpets were sold through Scott, but some were sold to other merchants and upholsterers in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling and occasionally further afield and to individuals from stock or on commission at the manufactory in Stirling.

## SUPPLIES OF YARN

Gilfillan principally purchased wool as yarn in spindles from a wide circle of local suppliers throughout the year. Many of these are listed in an account of yarn, bought from May 1764 until the end of the year, at the beginning of the Cash Book.<sup>9</sup> He also bought a few spindles for ready money from local markets and country women. One entry in June 1765, for example, reads 'Bought for ready money from a woman in Bannockburn 31 lb carpet yarn @ 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d'.<sup>10</sup> On occasions, he bought gray wool, or coarse white wool and skin wool, to be spun.<sup>11</sup> Skin wool was not sheared, but removed from the dead sheep after skinning. One of Gilfillan's regular suppliers of yarn was James Kilpatrick of Doune in Perthshire:

Stirling Friday 27th Septr 1765

Bot from James Kilpatrick 28 sp @ 3/8 weight 178  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb      £5 2s 8d<sup>12</sup>

He also dealt with James and David Mitchell in Doune; James Oliver, a merchant in Hawick; James and William Stark of Falkirk; Alex Ferguson in Alloa; and James Rodger in Selkirk. Several entries in the Cash Book refer to Nathaniel Handasyde in Wooler, Northumberland. For example, on Saturday 29 June 1765, Gilfillan recorded the purchase of 318 lb of carpet yarn at 8d per lb, costing £10 12s with carriage of 7s from Wooler to Edinburgh and 5s from Edinburgh to Stirling.<sup>13</sup> Another name which regularly appears is Robert Gibbons of Bedford, who also

purchased carpets from the manufactory. This Bedford is perhaps part of the parish of Maderty in Perthshire, as the carriage costs of yarn to Stirling were relatively low. However, 152 lbs of English carpet yarn is noted in one of the inventories in the Ledger. In August 1769 Gibbons bought three carpets:<sup>14</sup>

Sold mr Robert Gibbons mert in Beadford 3 Common Carpets		
1 N153	= 4½ by 3¼	
1 —	= 4¼ by 2¾ 26¼ yards at 3/- per yard	£3 18s 9d
1 N163	= 5¾ by 5 = 28¾ at 3/- per yard	£4 6s 3d
		<hr/>
		£8 5s 0d

In October 1769 he supplied Gilfillan with 194 lb of yarn at 7½d per lb for £6 1s 3d.<sup>15</sup> The majority of the stock of carpet yarn appears to have been of Scottish wool. Several entries refer to the spinning of wool.<sup>16</sup>

Wednesday 18 March 1767		
To the spinin of 84 pound of our own yearn		
To the carder and spiner		4s 3d
To Bed and for Do and board		10s
To 2 pints of oil for the above		3s
To Bead and Board for our own two Lases for three wekes at 4/- per weeke		12s
to 6 stons of wooll at 2 shiling per ston		12s
the 84 pound of yearn will stand us about		£2 1s 3d
6 pence each pound of english weight		£2 2s

Other entries record payment for twisting of yarn, usually to women and sometimes to the wives of weavers, for example to Peter Mcleran's wife.<sup>17</sup>

### WEAVERS AND LOOMS

Little is known about the working patterns of weavers at this period or the variety of equipment they used and so the day-to-day information jotted down in Gilfillan's business books is especially important. Some of the weavers employed between 1764 and 1770 remained with him for the whole period. All worked on a regular basis throughout the year. Some names occur more regularly in the earlier Cash Book (1764–1766) and others in the later Ledger (1764–70). The weavers were:

Alex Aikman	Peter McCleran
William Christie	John Millar
John David	John Neilson
James Dounie	William Reid
James Ewing	John Robertson
George Gilfillan	Robert Stevenson
Andrew Haldane	James Thomson
Robert Harvie	John Wingate
Walter Maxwell	

Gilfillan paid his workmen every Friday and several entries indicate the attention he paid to wages:

Friday 19th January 1770

This day John Wingate and I Counted and I find that he owes me  $7/6$  after Counting 40 yards as wove which is the piece he has just now in the Loomb and all is Clear.<sup>18</sup>

Sometimes, however, the reckoning is in the weavers' favour.<sup>19</sup> An inventory taken in December 1764 shows that the company owned 11 looms.<sup>20</sup> The biggest was capable of taking a web 3 yards wide and had a steel reed and a back harness for figured work. The other looms also had harnesses and took webs of  $2\frac{3}{4}$ , 2,  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $1\frac{3}{8}$ ,  $1\frac{1}{4}$ , and 1 yard wide and several of these had cane reeds. Two men were required to weave the wider webs of 2 yards and over. An entry for Saturday 7 July 1769 notes:<sup>21</sup>

Loomed an Ingrain Blew Ground Carpet for Halden & David 18 yards long &  $2\frac{5}{8}$  broad 33 pound N 161 paid for Looming it 2s

This carpet had been ordered by Collector Hay in Alloa in May and was sold to him in September:<sup>22</sup>

Friday 29 Septembr 1769

Sold Collector Hay in Alloa

I Ingrain Blew Ground Carpet N 161 =  $6\frac{3}{4}$  by  $5\frac{1}{4}$  =  $35\frac{3}{8}$  yards at  $5/4$  per yard weight 73 pound £9 8s 8d'

It appears to have been made up of two breadths of  $2\frac{5}{8}$  yards sewn together. The weavers also set up their looms, making and repairing the tackle:<sup>23</sup>

Monday 11th July 1768

paid John Wingate for Casting a Bak Harness	4s 6d
paid William Rid for Do.	4s 6d
paid John Millar for Do.	5s 0d
paid Peter Mcleren for Do.	6s 0d
paid Peter Mcleren for seting hes loom and mounting hir	2s 0d
Bot from peter mcleran a fore Calm	5s 0d'

Sometimes they supplied Gilfillan with spindles of wool and purchased carpets and bed coverings from him for their own use. Some of Gilfillan's coverings were made of single cloth, particularly black and yellow, where the warp was black and the weft yellow, in size usually 2 yards by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  yards.<sup>24</sup> An interesting entry recorded in September 1768, however, notes '74½ lib of yearen for white to the Castle Coverins'.<sup>25</sup> Twenty-five coverings were later sold to Baillie Nicholl Bryce in Stirling, for £8 2s 6d, all  $2\frac{1}{4}$  by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  yards in size and costing 6s 6d each, which suggests a single

cloth, possibly for beds in the Castle, at that time used as an asylum for pensioned and invalid soldiers.<sup>26</sup> A coverlet sold on a different occasion was heavier and more expensive.<sup>27</sup> It is likely that the weavers worked in their own homes on looms owned by the company, taking in prepared warps and giving out the completed webs of carpet. However, the broader looms which needed much more space may have been housed in a loom shop owned and managed by the company of Gilfillan & Scott. Because of the weight and thickness of the woollen warps, Scotch carpets were generally woven by men and boys over 16.

## COLOURS AND DYES

By far the most popular carpets produced by Gilfillan were those described as black and yellow and also those with a green ground. He also dyed yarn red, scarlet and white, with occasionally pink, light blue, flame, copper colour and chocolate. Some of the carpets were clearly very colourful:

Thursday 18th June 1767

Loomd 1 Carpet for John Wingate of mr Hamiltouns own yearen 16 yards long and 1 yard broad weight 20 pound N27

To Dying of 22 lib of yearen blak

To Dying of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  lib of yearen Reed

To Dying of 6 lib of yearen green

To Dying of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lib of yearen yellow

To Dying of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lib white

To Weaving of 14 yards of Carpeting at 1/- per yd<sup>28</sup>

Others were a substantial size:

Tuesday 28th July 1767

Loomed a web for Wingate & Chrystie a Carpet all Scarlet and blak  $19\frac{1}{2}$  yards long and  $2\frac{1}{4}$  broad weight 25 lib N30 looming of the above 1s 0d<sup>29</sup>

This was made into a carpet for James Scott and may have been a special order:

Monday 10th August 1767

Sold mr James Scott 1 Carpet all Scarlet and blak N30 =  $8\frac{3}{8}$  by  $4\frac{3}{8}$  =  $36\frac{5}{8}$  at 5/7 per yard weight 71 pound £10 4s 5 3/4d<sup>30</sup>

Recipes for dyes are recorded in detail in the Cash Book. The most expensive, cochineal, was used for pink and flame colours in combination with allum and aquafortis and for scarlet with argol and aquafortis. Red was dyed with the much cheaper madder, with equal quantities of allum, argol and aquafortis. Black, the most frequently used colour, was obtained from equal quantities of logwood, sumac and copperas. Logwood, supplied in what were called 'sticks', had first to be chipped and moistened to extract the colouring matter. The workman Alex Adam undertook this

task for Gilfillan, also chipping yellow wood, or fustick, which was used in the dyeing of green, in combination with indigo, allum and vitriol.<sup>31</sup> Yellow was dyed with strawald in combination with allum. White wool was also dyed, with small quantities of indigo and vitriol. An entry in the Cash Book for 27 April 1765, notes that  $3\frac{3}{8}$  oz of indigo and  $6\frac{3}{4}$  oz of vitriol were used to dye 272 lb 2 oz of yarn white.<sup>32</sup> Light blue was also obtained with indigo. From 1768, ingrained blue ground carpets are regularly mentioned in the Ledger and Gilfillan's stock included coarse and Spanish indigo, which was twice the price.<sup>33</sup> A yarn inventory mentions English blue, which may have come to Scotland already dyed, or was perhaps a technique brought from England and adopted by Scottish dyers.<sup>34</sup>

Curiously, inventories of dyed yarn and dye recipes do not refer to ingrain or ingrained colours. These are mentioned specifically only when the web is being warped for the loom or on finished carpets and then the warps and carpets are described as common, half ingrain or ingrain. Since red is the only colour to have more than one recipe, one using madder and one using cochineal, it may be that in this case, the term ingrain refers to the use of grain crimson or scarlet from cochineal in the carpets, and not to any of the other colours. By the time the term half ingrain is used in the Ledger, Gilfillan had stopped writing dye recipes in detail, so it is not possible to see if he was using cochineal in combination with madder, which would indicate that red was the colour being described. However, an entry dated Monday 19 February 1769, notes both the dyeing of red and half scarlet and the following week several half ingrain webs were loomed for the weavers:

Monday 19th

21 lib of yearen dyed 17 lib of Reed  
 13 lib of yearen dyed  $10\frac{1}{2}$  lib of half sarlite  
 $6\frac{1}{2}$  lib of do dyed  $5\frac{1}{4}$  lib of white  
 $6\frac{1}{2}$  lib of do dyed  $5\frac{1}{4}$  lib of half scarlite  
 $11\frac{1}{2}$  lib of do dyed  $9\frac{1}{4}$  lib of half scarlite  
 17 lib of do dyed  $13\frac{3}{4}$  lib of half scarlit  
 21 lib of do dyed 17 lib of half scarlit

The process of dyeing wool 'half grain' crimson, that is by using madder and cochineal, was described in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1810. It saved on the cost of cochineal, but gave a deeper and faster red than brasil wood, sometimes called 'false crimson'. One of several half ingrain carpets was sold to the upholsterer James Caddall in March 1769, which was 18 ft square and cost 3s 4d per yard, which was little more than the cost of the common carpets:

March 1st 1769

Loomed a web for david & Reed half Ingrain 16 yards by 3 broad N128 weight 33 lib paid Looming the above 2 — 0

Tuesday 21st March 1769

Sold mr James Caddall 1 Carpet half Ingrain N128 = 6 by 6 = 36 yards at  $\frac{3}{4}$  per yard £6 — 12s.<sup>35</sup>

Ingrain carpets were more expensive per square yard than the common kinds, though one order to Gilfillan asked for a common carpet in the best colours. A very expensive ingrain carpet was sold to Lady Charlotte Erskine in May 1765, which was  $5\frac{3}{4}$  yds by  $4\frac{3}{4}$  yds, and cost 7s a yard. The

total cost was £9 10s 9d.<sup>36</sup> Generally, the cost of an ingrain carpet to a private individual varied between 4s 0d and 5s 6d per yard. Often, however, common carpets are described as cheap kind or second best kind. A considerable amount of information is recorded on the suppliers of dyes and auxiliaries in the business books. Bailie Nicholl Bryce was one of several merchants who sold Gilfillan indigo, tin, aquafortis, fustick, cochineal and so on. On one occasion cochineal arrived from London on the ship *Success* and on another it came via the merchant Robert Hart in Bo'ness.

Few designs are mentioned by name, apart from those called Cumberland knot, Dambroad and Starr pattern and, on one occasion, Diamond pattern. Cumberland knot was popular in black and yellow, but was also sold in red and green. Starr pattern was also ordered in black and yellow and sometimes blue and yellow. One entry in the Ledger mentions an order for the Edinburgh upholsterer, William Hamilton, for a piece of Starr Carpeting 'which he calls Mosaik', in October 1769.<sup>37</sup> This was perhaps the same pattern, called Green Ground Scarlet Star Carpet, supplied by Young & Trotter to the Earl of Breadalbane in 1785.<sup>38</sup> The black and yellow carpets were often woven in widths of a yard or less and carpets and carpetings in other colour combinations described as, black and red, red and green, blue and yellow or blue and red were also commonly supplied in narrow widths. An early and detailed inventory from Saltoun Hall in East Lothian, dated 1746, lists several floor cloths in different rooms. Described as black and orange, black and white, black and yellow and of 'divers collors', they may be early examples of Scotch carpets.<sup>39</sup> However, another popular form of floor covering at this period, painted wax or oil cloth, the forerunner of linoleum, was also sometimes described as floor cloth.

## SALES OF CARPETS

A substantial number of Gilfillan's carpets and carpeting were consigned to his partner James Scott in Edinburgh. A typical entry in the Ledger records:

Wednesday 15th April 1767

Sold mr James Scott the folowing Carpet Viz

1 Carpet N8 = 4 by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  = 14 yards weight  $37\frac{1}{2}$  lib

1 do N8 =  $3\frac{3}{4}$  by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  =  $13\frac{1}{8}$  ( $11\frac{1}{8}$ ?) yards — 34 lib

1 do N9 =  $4\frac{1}{2}$  by 4 = 18 yards — 52 lib

1 do N15 = 3 by 3 = 9 yards —  $23\frac{1}{2}$  lib

1 do N15 = 3 by 3 = 9 yards —  $24\frac{1}{2}$  lib

1 do N15 = 3 by 3 = 9 yards — 23 lib

1 do N15 =  $3\frac{1}{4}$  by 3 =  $9\frac{3}{4}$  yards —  $24\frac{1}{2}$  lib

1 do N15 =  $3\frac{1}{8}$  by 3 =  $9\frac{3}{8}$  yards —  $23\frac{3}{4}$  lib

1 do N15 =  $3\frac{3}{4}$  by 3 =  $11\frac{1}{4}$  yards — 32 lib

1 do N15 =  $3\frac{3}{4}$  by 3 =  $11\frac{1}{4}$  yards —  $28\frac{1}{4}$  lib

1 do N15 = 4 by 3 = 12 yards —  $29\frac{1}{2}$  lib

1 do N15 = 4 by 3 = 12 yards —  $29\frac{1}{2}$  lib

1 do N18 =  $3\frac{1}{4}$  by  $3\frac{1}{4}$  =  $10\frac{1}{2}$  yards — 25 lib

1 do N19 =  $3\frac{1}{2}$  by 3 =  $10\frac{1}{2}$  yards — 25 lib

1 ps Carpeting blak and yellow N20 =  $16\frac{3}{4}$  by  $\frac{3}{4}$  =  $12\frac{3}{4}$  yards — 28 lib

Sold the above for 2/10 per yard.<sup>40</sup>

He also supplied other Edinburgh merchants and upholsterers, including James Russell and James Caddell, Lewis Gordon and Alexander Beverly, William Hamilton and Messrs Lind & Launie.<sup>41</sup> One consignment of carpets to James Scott was sent on to Glasgow, where Gilfillan also dealt with upholsterers and merchants. Another order totalling 290½ yards of carpets and carpeting was sent directly to Glasgow for the merchant James Barclay, junior.<sup>42</sup> Gilfillan also sold carpets to local merchants in Stirling and in one case in 1768 to a company in London, Bilcher & Tibbets (?), supplying them with three Ingrain carpets.<sup>43</sup> In March 1769, several common carpets, a green ground carpet and a length of black and yellow carpeting was shipped on board the *Success* under her master George Howison, who regularly sailed between London and Scotland, but it is not clear whether the carpets were to go on to another Scottish port or back to London.<sup>44</sup> In September 1767 Howison himself bought an Ingrain carpet, 3⅝ by 3⅝ yards at 5 shillings a yard, one of several purchases made at different times, perhaps for his own home.<sup>45</sup> The Cash Book also records the sale of a carpet to John Harrison of Darlington in 1765.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, some of the most interesting entries are the varied commissions from many individual customers. Lady Campbell of Gargunnoch ordered a carpet, 8½ x 6 yards ‘to be a half Dimond with a Dambroad bord ½ Inch brod’, which was loomed in November 1769:<sup>47</sup>

Tuesday 7th November 1769

Loomed a web for Wingate and David of Lady Campbells own yearen 21 yards by 3 broad Green & White N185 paid Looming it 3/-

To dying 65 lib of white at 3d per lib	16s 3d
To dying 65 lib of Green at 6d per lib	£1 12s 6d
To 20 lib of my own yearen for the above	13s 4d
To 3 lib of soap for Cleaning the above	1s 6d
To Windin & Warpen	2s 6d
To Exchangin 27 lib of yearen at 2d per lib	4s 6d
To weaving a Carpet 8½ by 6 = 51 yards at 1/-	£2 11s 0d
	<hr/>
	£6 1s 7d

This was an unusually large carpet, 25½ feet long by 18 feet broad and apparently made by sewing together two three yard strips. Another order dated 1 November 1769, in the form of a loose letter in the Ledger from J Simpson in Edinburgh, asked for a carpet in some haste:

Sir,

You’ll please make a Common Carpet 16½ Feet Square or 5½ yards x 5½ with all Dispatch, the Best Colours possible it is for a Gentn. going abroad & must be Done Directly or will Lose the Ship, I show’d him No 167 which pattern he pitches upon Pray be quick — I am for Acct Jas Scott

Your obed Servt

J Simpson<sup>48</sup>

A cross-section of Gilfillan’s many other customers and their varied orders and purchases, recorded in his business books, includes Lady Dumbar [sic], Lady Keir, Mrs Bruce at Clackmannan, John Gibson in Alloa, Robert Melville, Mr Walker in Leith, James Brown, stay-maker in Edinburgh, Lady Charlotte Erskine, Lady Parkmill, Cosmo Gordon, advocate in

Edinburgh, John Anderson in Crieff, Alex McIntyre, tailor in Edinburgh, Lord Kaimes, Lord Leven, the Duke of Atholl, and John McEwen, schoolmaster in Greenock. A mixture of wealthy and professional people from the local countryside and the town. Gilfillan appears to have been an accommodating merchant, for in December 1766 he sold a carpet to Bailie Makillop in Stirling which was too large at  $5\frac{3}{4}$  by  $5\frac{1}{4}$  yards and returned. The following March Makillop bought another one,  $5\frac{1}{4}$  by  $4\frac{3}{4}$  in its place.<sup>49</sup>

Thomas Gilfillan's Cash Book and Ledger come to an end in 1770 when he may have gone out of business. One creditor was pursuing him for payment for a cask of madder in January 1770. Ebenezer and Alexander, however, subsequently appear as Ebenezer Gilfillan & Co in the *Edinburgh Street Directories* from 1784 to 1798 as carpet manufacturers, firstly at Leith and then at Broughton. They also had an address at the east end of Queen Street in the New Town.<sup>50</sup> One of their Edinburgh customers was Charles Watson of Saughton for whom they made a drawing room carpet and stair carpet for Cammo House in 1784:<sup>51</sup>

75 yds best Sfine (super fine) Ingrain Green ground Carpeting cut from the Roll, and made up into a large Carpet with two ps for sides of the Hearth, & five for the windows @ 3/8 p yard	£13 15
30 yds green Coach binding 2d	5
Thread and making	9 4½
16½ yds stout yd wide Stair Carpet @ 3/-	£2 9 6
6 yds green binding 1¼d	7½
Cash pd for Staples	2 6

The company ceased trading when Ebenezer died and Alexander retired from business in 1798. The sale of their stock included six Damask carpet looms and two Wilton looms with their furniture.<sup>52</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Although Axminster, Wilton, Brussels and Ingrain carpets were being made in Britain earlier in the 18th century, Thomas Gilfillan's Cash Book and Ledger form the earliest surviving record of an indigenous carpet manufacture so far known. They show that a wide variety of Scotch carpets was being made in the 1760s from narrow carpeting to very substantial broad width carpets in a variety of colours. Then, as now, few people could afford a figured Wilton carpet and Scotch carpets with their bright patterns were a comfortable if coarser alternative. As far as we know, no Scotch carpets have survived from this period and thus some of the intimate furnishings of daily life have been lost. A few grand carpets are preserved, having endured less wear.

The most popular of Gilfillan's carpets, coloured black and yellow, were sometimes mentioned in inventories of household possessions, but may have been made by other manufacturers as well. In the 1750s and 1760s provincial manufacturers often advertised their carpets in the shops of Edinburgh upholsterers, some of whom acted as agents for a particular company. William Lamb, for example, stocked a 'very large assortment of Brussels, Wilton and Scots carpets of every size and quality, carpeetens, trance-cloaths (passage cloths) of all breadths and different kinds, from Mr William Inglis & Co's woollen manufactory at Lanark, having agreed with them to sell their goods on their account, and can afford them on very reasonable terms'.<sup>53</sup> William Robertson & Co of Hawick sold their carpets firstly through the Edinburgh

Upholstery Warehouse and then more generally. There were at least four carpet manufactories in Kilmarnock in the 1750s and a later company, Gregory Thomson & Co, achieved an international reputation for their carpets. Thomas McCulloch & Co of Kilmarnock had gained one of the first premiums offered by the Edinburgh Society for Scotch carpets in 1755.<sup>54</sup> Gilfillan thus had other rural competitors as well as the carpet company of Young Trotter & Cheape in Edinburgh and, in the 1770s, Brotherstone & Hardie in Leith:

There is lately erected at Leith, by Messr Hardie and Brotherstone, a new carpet manufactory, where may be had carpets of all sizes, with various figures or flowers, of whatever colours may be wanted, or can be drawn or painted on paper. The carpets made in this manufactory are not inferior to any wrought in Britain, with respect to strength of cloth, and for the beauty of the figures, there are none made of woolen yarn equal. Those nobility and gentry who are pleased to favour this new undertaking with commissions, may have their carpets made according to what dimensions they think proper, and with what colours and figures they chuse to give orders for.<sup>55</sup>

Gilfillan's venture in Stirling was followed by that of James Young, a prize-winning dyer supported by the Board of Trustees for Manufactures in Edinburgh and his son Robert Young, granted a Royal Patent and described as Carpet Manufacturer to His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales in 1793, and also the partnership of Sutherland Weir & Co.<sup>56</sup> The *Statistical Account of Scotland*, written in the 1790s, emphasized the importance of the Stirling carpets: 'For several years, one company has employed 12 looms in that work, and produced carpets of very fine colour, and the very best quality. Another company employs about 8 looms: and this year a third company has begun work, and mean to employ not less than 12 looms.'<sup>57</sup> This was a view supported by a later writer in his description of Stirling in 1828: 'It has long been celebrated for its Tartans and Carpets, the latter of which is the principal manufacture of this place'.<sup>58</sup>

Surviving examples of Scotch carpets, some still to be found in country houses, date from this period or later. They were often laid with a border in a complementary pattern. Two 19th-century examples show the flat patterns and bold colour contrasts typical of double cloth textiles. One, said to have come from Dalkeith Palace and now in the collections of the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh, shows a large figure, 18 in wide by 23 in deep, which repeats twice across the width of the carpet. The second example comes from Traquair House near Innerleithen. Both are coloured in red, white, orange and blue. Parts of these geometric patterns could be rearranged to make a variety of different designs. However, despite the popularity of this style of carpet its history in Scotland is largely unknown. It seems that this manufacture flourished across the wool-producing belt of the central lowlands and the south-west, often where there had been a tradition of making serges, shalloons and coverlets and where the coarser wool could be put to use. Further research might reveal whether there were any differences in style and colouring between the Scottish and English Ingrain carpets and whether weavers from different Scottish manufactories were known for particular patterns.

## NOTES

1 National Library of Scotland (NLS), Saltoun Mss 17564, f. 171.

2 National Archives of Scotland (NAS), Board of Trustees for Manufactures, Minute Books NG 1/1/18, 77.

3 NAS, NG 1/1/16, 175.

- 4 For a discussion of Ingrain carpets in England and Scotland see ‘Country House Floors 1660–1850’, 71–93; Coggins 1996; and Habib 1997, 161–75. For Ireland see Longfield 1940, 63–88.
- 5 Topham 1776, 175.
- 6 *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 23 April 1768.
- 7 Sinclair, J (ed), viii (1793), 283.
- 8 NAS, Stirling Sheriff Court, Thomas Gilfillan’s Cash Book, SC 67/62/1 and Ledger, SC 67/62/2. The pages are not numbered in either volume and entries are sometimes not in sequence, but page headings are clearly written. Inside the back cover of the Ledger is a small outline sketch of a carpet pattern in pen and ink. Ebenezer’s and Alexander’s names appear inside the front cover of the Cash Book and Ledger respectively.
- 9 NAS, SC 67/62/1. ‘An acct. of yarn bot since the 15th May 1764’.
- 10 NAS, SC 67/62/1. Page headed, ‘Stirling Friday 28th June 1765’.
- 11 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed, ‘Tuesday April 28 1767’.
- ‘Bot from Alexr Lenmon 5 stons Course gray wooll at 3 per ston  
from do 5 stons forsens at 3/ per ston  
from do 4 stons white wooll at 4/ per ston  
paid for Carriage of the above three paks and Coustom’  
This wool, including ‘forsens’, or plucked wool, was spun and sold back to Gilfillan as yarn.
- 12 NAS, SC 67/62/1. Page headed ‘Stirling Friday 27th Sepr 1765’.
- 13 NAS, SC 67/62/1. Page headed ‘Stirling Saturday 29th June 1765’.
- 14 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Saturday 19 Agust 1769’.
- 15 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Friday 13th October 1769’.
- 16 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Tuesday 17th Marh 1767’.
- 17 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Transactions N50 November 2d 1768’. Other twisters included Janet Paterson and Mary Wright. It is not clear from the business books whether the wool was combed, indicating the use of worsted, generally used for warps on the later Scotch carpets.
- 18 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Loose page headed ‘Stirling 19th January 1770’.
- 19 As above.
- 20 NAS, SC 67/62/1. ‘Inventory of sundrie Loombs, Dying Uttencills yarn & Carpets &c belonging to James Scott Merchant in Edinr & Thomas Gilfillan Manufacturer in Stirling.’
- 21 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Friday 6 July 1769’.
- 22 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Friday 29 Septembr 1769’.
- 23 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Friday 8th July 1768’. Entry for Monday 11th.
- 24 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Wednesday Jun 1st 1769’.
- 25 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Monday 5th Septembr 1768’. Entry for Tuesday 6th.
- 26 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Friday April 7th 1769’. Entry for Tuesday 11th.
- 27 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Transactions N1 June 1st 1769’. ‘Sold Alexr Ferguson 1 Coveren N140 2 by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  = 3 1/2 yards at 3/ per yard 10/6’.
- 28 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Thursday 18th June 1767’.
- 29 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Monday 27th July 1767’.
- 30 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Monday 3 Agust 1767’. Entry for 10th August.
- 31 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Transactions N45 — October 13th 1767’.
- 32 NAS, SC 67/62/1. Page headed ‘Saturday 27th April 1765’.
- 33 NAS, SC 67/62/1. ‘Inventory of sundrie Loombs.’
- 34 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Stirling 7th December 1768’.
- 35 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed ‘Transactions N12th Marh 1st 1769’. Entry for Friday 3rd. Page headed ‘Transactions N14th Marh 17th 1769’. Entry for Tuesday 21st. Gilfillan purchased Cochineal for 22s per lb, with slight variations in price, which was twice the cost of indigo, the next most expensive dye. Madder cost around 10d per lb.
- 36 NAS, SC 67/62/1. Page headed ‘Stirling Saturday 18th May 1765’. Entry for Wednesday 22nd.
- 37 NAS, SC 67/62/2. 30 October 1769. Rough notes of carpet orders at the beginning of the Ledger.

- 38 NAS, Breadalbane Mss GD 112/15/463/32.
- 39 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed 'Monday 13th April 1767'. Entry for Wednesday 15th.
- 40 NLS, Saltoun Mss, 17086, ff.4–8.
- 41 All were Edinburgh Burgesses. See also Bamford 1983, where these and other upholsterers and merchants who did business with Gilfillan are mentioned.
- 42 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed 'Monday 9th October 1769'. Entry Tuesday 10th.
- 43 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed 'Friday 20th May 1768'. Entry Wednesday 25th.
- 44 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed 'Stirling 8 Marh 1769.'
- 45 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed 'Wednesday August 26th 1767.' Entry for Wednesday 2nd September 1767.
- 46 NAS, SC 67/62/1. Page headed 'Stirling Monday 12th Augt 1765'. Entry for Wednesday 14th.
- 47 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed 'Friday 3rd Novr 1769'. Entry for Tuesday 7th.
- 48 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Loose letter pinned into Ledger, dated 1 Nov 1769.
- 49 NAS, SC 67/62/2. Page headed 'Tuesday 17th Marh 1767'.
- 50 Williamson 1784–98.
- 51 NAS, Morton Mss GD 150/3317, Miscellaneous Accounts.
- 52 *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 24 March 1798.
- 53 *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 10 August 1768. William Inglis was making Brussels carpet in 1767. He bought a weaver of Wilton carpets from London in 1773, though the Board of Trustees considered that this manufacture was 'already well known and now carried on in different parts of the Country'. NAS, NG 1/1/18, 188. NG 1/1/20, 143.
- 54 *Scots Magazine*, xviii (1756), 48.
- 55 *Edinburgh Advertiser*, 28 March 1772. Peter Brotherstone was admitted as a scholar to the Trustees Drawing Academy in Edinburgh in 1769. NG 1/1/19, 183. The master, David Allan, concerned that there were no carpet manufacturers at all in the Academy later in 1787, recommended David Cochrane, apprentice to Messrs Sherrif in Leith for a place. NG 1/1/26, 43.
- 56 *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 8 September 1792, 4 March 1793.
- 57 See Note 7.
- 58 Wood, J 1828, 337. The Plan of the Town of Stirling in his *Town Atlas of Scotland* shows the Factory of J Thomson Esq at Borough Muir near the Craigs, one of nine carpet manufactories at work in Stirling in this period.

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