The following is a report on the History of the Harris Tweed Industry by H.A.Moisley. PROFESSOR

The Scottish Woollen Industry is but a small part of the Woollen Industry of Great Britain and it is by no means typical of it, whereas the greater part of the Industry is concentrated in a small area in the West Riding of Yorkshire producing a great variety of materials. The Scottish Industry is dispersed throughout the country with particular concentrations in the Borders, the Glasgow region and the Hebrides and is characterised by the high quality of its products.

This quality has been achieved and maintained by the use of selected raw materials and by the maintainance of high standards of design and craftsmanship. In particular the Scottish Woollen Industry depends on virgin wool, mango, shoddy and other re-manufactured wools such as are used extensively in the West Riding are scarcely recognised. It is not surprising, therefore, that the product has become widely known at home and overseas and that the "Made in Scotland" is a mark which commands particular respect when attached to woollen goods.

The Hebridean section of the Scottish Industry is no exception but it is remarkable in several ways in its extreme geographical concentration in its dependance on a single product, Harris Tweed, woven by self-employed Weavers using a treadle loom and in its extremely rapid and very recent growth.

There are about 1,500 Weavers in the Hebrides itself and almost all are to be found in Lewis, most of them in certain districts. In South Uist there are about 80 and a few may be found in North Uist, Harris and elsewhere. In addition about half a dozen large Carding, Spinning and Finishing Mills in Stornoway and several small Mills including one in Harris and one in North Uist employ almost a 1,000 people.

The Industry has a particular significance in Lewis where in many townships half the families have a loom and where it has replaced fishing and fish curing as the economic mainstay of the population.

Tweed output increased more than sevenfold between 1912 - 1940 when it exceeded 4,000,000 yards. In 1956 about 7,000,000 yards were made in Lewis and less than a 100,000 yards in Harris. Thus despite its name Harris Tweed is a peculiarly Lewis product.

How has this geographical concentration come about and is it likely to continue?

<u>The Origin of Harris Tweed 1844 - 1900.</u> Coarse woollen cloth has been made in the Hebrides as in other rural areas since time immemorial. Rents were sometimes paid in blankets and plaiding and in 1656 plaiding was one of the items of trade brought by the Highland boats to Glasgow. In the last 18th century black faced sheep were introduced into the Hebrides, their fleeces were much heavier than those of the native sheep and consequently provided raw materials for local woollen manufacturers for trade.

In Argyll, for example, the yarn was handspun and sold to dealers. In Inverness and Shetland carding and spinning Mills were established. In Shetland the special quality of the native wool had long been recognised and was responsible for the early success of the Hosiery manufacture. In the Outer Hebrides, however, little commercial developments seem to have taken place at this time, the black faced sheep they introduced there about 1762 were not at first successful, and weaving seems to have been mainly for local use.

In North Uist the writer of the Old Statistical Accounts tells us there were no farms fit for sheep but every tenant endeavours to rear as many as would furnish him with a little mutton and wool for clothing. These were the small native Hebridean sheep, yeilding less than a 1 lb. of fine short wool for each fleece.

In 1808 Walker stressed the possibility of producing wool yarn cloth and blankets in the Outer Hebrides but so long as Kelp remained an easy source of wealth for the Proprietors and of employment for the small tenants there was little incentive to spin and weave for the market. The people of Harris, however, were well known for the excellence of their weaving and in 1844 the Proprietor, the Earl of Dunmore, had the Murray tartan copied in Tweed by local weavers. This was so successful that he and his Wife encouraged improvements and besides using the Tweed themselves and for their employees they introduced it to their friends. No doubt the increasing popularity of the Highlands and Hebrides for sporting parties not only helped to make known the Tweed but also led to its use for it is well suited for outdoor pursuits such as stalking, and fishing since it was yarn yet light and would burn the rain.

About 1857 an Edinburgh Lady began procuring orders for the Harris Weavers and when in 1888 she removed to London she opened a small depot for Tweeds. Similarly in Skye and Uist Lady Gordon Cathcart was buying tweeds from Local Weavers and selling it to a firm in Jeremy Street, London. Thus partly for its utility, and partly out of philanthropic motives, Hebridean Tweed was becoming widely known by the 70's. Weavers and local merchants usually shop keepers developed contacts in London and many large towns.

St. Kilda and Shetland tweeds also began to appear on the market. That from St. Kilda gained a particular reputation. 800 to 1,000 yards were shipped by the annual steamer to Glasgow and were often sold even before they arrived. The Industry was entirely domestic and very primitive all processes being carried out by hand. Washing and dyeing were done out of doors beside any convenient stream where a black pot could be set up on stones and heated by peats.

Carding very tedious and rather unpleasant. Spinning and Weaving were done in the cottages of the people which at that time were mostly black houses without chimneys or proper windows, hence the tweed acquired an aroma of peat smoke which was considered to be one of its attractions.

Only in Lewis was commercial weaving slow to develop. Here a good deal of employment was provided by the building of Shooting Lodges, roads and other public works financed by the new Proprietor, Sir James Matheson who had bought the Island in 1844.

Later in the 60's and 70's fishing was relatively prosperous and this may have reduced the incentive to weave for sale.

A few Lewis Merchants were dealing in tweeds at this time but there are very few records of commercial production in Lewis until after 1880. It may be no coincidence that about this time following the death of Sir James the Proprietors greatly curtailed expenditure. About this time too fish sales by auction replaced private contracts between the Fishermen and Curers. As a result, fishing became far less remunerative to the many Crofters who worked as hired hands.

In the later years of the 19th century as a result of competition from local small mills domestic spinning and weaving declined and almost disappeared in the mainland Highlands but in the Hebrides encouraged by the Proprietors, by local shopkeepers, and non-profit making groups such as the Scottish Home Industries Association and the Crofters Agency it grew and prospered.

By this time the black faced sheep was well established and with it a greatly increased annual clip of raw wool. The cost of the freight made sales of fleeces less attractive than domestic spinning, particularly to Crofting families each with only a few fleeces but with plenty of time on their hands. In addition there was a growing recognition of the particular value of tweed for country use and an interesting fashion for handycraft products.

A reaction against the uniformity of machine made goods. At this time every type of tweed was unique and could never be exactly reproduced. The glamour of homespuns, the association with the Hebrides, the thatched cottages, the peat fire, the natural dyes of moor and shore all contributed to the vogue for tweed which became known by the name of its Principal but by no means sole source - HARRIS.

The First boon on the rise of Lewis Tweed 1900 - 1920. Increasing demand brought its own problems. Carding by hand was very slow and demand for yarn was growing year by year. Consequently the practice grew up of sending wool to mainland mills for carding. Once this began it opened the way to mill spinning and to the use of mainland and overseas wool and even it was suspected of shoddy thus debasing the original product on which the reputation has been gained.

To avoid this in 1900, Sir Samuel Scott, the Proprietor, opened a water powered carding mill at Tarbet, Harris. His example was followed in 1903 in Lewis, Stornoway by the Merchant Aneas Mackenzie who started a carding mill on the Patent Slip.

As demand grew the non-profit making groups still partly philanthropic in their inspiration opened more depots. To the original ones in Tarbet, Harris and Stornoway were added others at Obbe, South Harris now called Leverburgh, Uig and Lewis and in North and South Uist.

The Congested Districts Boards appointed a travelling Instructor who was responsible for the introduction of better designs and other improvements including the flying shuttle for on "Beart bhag" the traditional small wooden loom, the shuttle, a sheep's shin bone was thrown in by hand. The Board paid grants for improved looms and large black iron pots were sent to Uig, Lewis to enable the people there to dye larger batches of wool and so to maintain uniformity of colour in the whole web.

It was Lewis at this time that seized the opportunity offered by increased demand, a demand that could no longer be met by the Harris Spinners and Weavers even though the carding mill relieved them of the most time consuming processes.

In 1899 only 55 Lewis looms were reported to the Congested Districts Board. By 1906 there were 161 and 1911 almost 300. Not only in Lewis was the opportunity seized, in London in 1906 a person was convicted of selling as Harris Tweed a cloth woven on a power loom.

As the Weavers multiplied so the demand for yarn outstripped the capacity for domestic spinning wheels. Cheap millspun yarn from the mainland was a serious temptation to the weavers working on their own account added to which the increased demand was partly met by inferior weaving. In the London Wholesale Trade the terms Stornoway Tweed came into use for a time to describe poor quality cloth and in 1907 the Scottish Home Industries Association closed its Lewis depot because the amount of handspun yarn used did not justify its continuance. The Crofters Agency however, maintained its depot at Balallan, Lewis, to serve the Balallan and Park Districts which with Uig were then the main weaving districts of Lewis. Thus at this time a division began to appear in the Industry between 100% true handspun tweed and tweed made partly or wholly from millspun yarn.

In Stornoway it was appreciated that the use of millspun yarn did not necessarily result in a poor quality cloth. Spinning machinery was added to the Patent Slip Carding Mill and in 1906 another merchant Kenneth Mackenzie began a second Carding and Spinning Mill. A new type of economic organisation began to emerge too.

Originally tweed manufacture was strictly domestic, the wool of the Crofters own sheep was dyed, carded and spun at home. The weaving, however, was often carried out by persons particularly known for their skill usually in a non-monitory commission basis e.g. in exchange for peats, and potatoes, Labour and the walking that is finishing was often a communal operation for the women and something of a social occasion. If the Crofter had no means of selling the web himself the local shopkeeper, the merchant, would buy or give credit for it. Soon some Crofters began to buy raw wool along with dyestuffs etc.and the merchant might advance these on credit to be deducted later from the price of the tweed. Under this system particularly in Harris weaving was a part-time and mainly female occupation. With the rise of weaving for the market in Lewis all this was changed and weaving became a full time specialist occupation and perhaps partly because the flying shuttle made the work heavier it became predominantly mens' work.

There is some evidence that weaving was traditionally mens' work in Lewis and womens' work in other Islands, and with the use of millspun yarn there grew up inevitably a number of merchants who bought up either locally or from the mainland, wound it and put it out for weaving and hand finishing on a commission basis. Yarn and resulting tweed remained the property of the merchant - these were the Lewis producers. Sometimes handspun weft was used and sometimes no handspun at all. The cloth was marketed as Harris Tweed as was the 100% handspun yet it cost about 1/9d. to produce against 2/9 to 3/- for the handspun. It was the type of tweed that provided a rapidly expanding output in Lewis between 1900 - 11 and by the later date Lewis had outstripped Harris.

<u>The definition of Harris Tweed and the concentration of Manufacture in Lewis and Harris.</u> Even in Harris the boon led to the use of some millspun yarn and in order to protect the reputation of the handspun tweed the Harris merchants began to demand a declaration from the weavers, that such a declaration was necessary may indicate how difficult it was to distinguish 100% handspun, from tweed which had only a handspun weft commonly called 50/50 cloth. But such was the reputation of Genuine Harris Handspun that in 1910 when millspun Lewis tweed was selling at 3/- to 3/6d. per yard retail the best handspun could fetch 6/6 to 7/6 per yard.

The Harris Merchants were concefned not only to maintain quality but also to retain a true handycraft nature of the Industry. Realising that there was always a market for a distinctive craft product, as early as about 1890 Mr.R.F.Matheson, Factor, for North Harris Estate had suggested for the Harris Merchants to obtain a trade mark but no steps were taken until 1906. The first application was from Harris only but the Board of Trade insisted on Lewis, the Uists and Barras being included in the definition of origin of Harris Tweed. In 1909, therefore, application was made to the Board of Trade for a trade mark defining Harris Tweed as Tweed Handspun, Handwoven and dyed and finished by hand in the Outere Hebrides with made in Harris, made in Lewis or made in Uist etc added as appropriate. The Harris Merchants joined forces with their former rivals in the tweed marketing business, the voluntary non-profit making Association were to inspect the cloth and stamp it with the trade mark - an Orb surrounded by the Cross. They formed the Harris Tweed Association consisting of two Representatives each of the Harris Merchants, the Crofters Agency and the Scottish Home Industries Association.

Cloth was first stamped in 1911 and in 1912 some Stornoway tweed Merchants asked for, and were granted representation. Two additional Members were then appointed by the Lewis Harris Tweed Association.

Production at this time is shown in table one. Only 100% handspun qualified for the stamp and it can be seen that from the beginning less than half the tweed produced in the Outer Hebrides were entitled to the new trade mark. The figures in table one are as follows:-

About 1912.

Harris - the value is £26,500 and of that 175,000 yards were handspun and 4,000 partly or wholly millspun.

Lewis - the value was £44,000 and of that 10,000 yards were handspun as against 340,000 millspun.

N. Uist - the value was £6,600 and of that 46,000 yards were handspun and millspun just a little.

S. Uist - the value was £900 and of that 6,500 yards were handspun no millspun.

Barra - negligible.

The total value of the Harris Tweed Industry in these days was £78,000 and the handspun yards were 237,500 whereas the millspun yards were 344,000 yards. The source for these figures is the Report of the Congested District Boards and the Board of Agriculture of 1912.

Geographically the Industry was even more concentrated in Lewis which/

which was mainly in Lochs and South Uig and in Harris in the Eastern bays. The use of bought in wools and of carding and spinning mills placed workers in outlying parts at a serious disadvantage particularly those in Barra, the Uists and Benbecula who had to pay freight to and from Tarbert and Stornoway. Carding Mills were proposed for North Uist but nothing was done and after the first World War weaving practically died out in all Southern Islands.

Geographical Concentrations in Lewis 1920-1960. Over production of inferior tweed in Lewis in the years before the first World War had its inevitable effects. In 1913 the wholesale price of Lewis tweed fell to 1/6 and 1/9 per yard and it seemed inevitable that the mills would be forced to introduce power looms in order to maintain a good standard of weaving for millspun yarn, and so to protect themselves. This had already proved a fatal process in the mainland Highlands where several small spinning and weaving mills, themselves once responsible for the decline of local handspinning and weaving, had subsequently succumbed to competition from the South. What was more, the bad name which had been earned by inferior Lewis Tweeds seemed likely to affect the original Harris Industry. "The masquerading of Lewis Tweeds as Harris Tweed has already gone on far too long", thought the Reporter of the Board of Agriculture in 1913 and he went on to urge the improvement of Lewis Tweed and its marketing for what it is and not represented as Harris Tweed.

There was no doubt that a really good tweed could be made from wholly millspun yarn, given good material and workmanship such a cloth could command a reasonable price as compared with the more expensive 100% handspun which was still the main product of Harris as well as of the minority of Lewis weavers. It was fortunate that in Lewis the Organisation of the tweed Industry had come into the hands of producers who were able to insist on quality production. To their great credit and that of the weavers the standard of the millspun tweed was greatly improved but the

name Harris Tweed was so firmly entrenched in the public mind that it was impossible to eradicate it. Despite the restriction of the Orb Trade Mark to 100% handspun, after 1919 expansion in the Industry in Lewis was resumed and aided by the extensive and elaborate advertising of certain producers notably Newalls. This expansion was made possible by the decline of fishing particularly of herring fishing.

Weaving was taken up extensively in townships where it had not previously been important. Many of the townships affected were those where before 1914 there had been a great annual exodus to follow the herring fishing round the Coast of East Anglia and English Channel in their own boats but mainly as hired hands. Many men thus made the greater part of their annual income. More than 2,000 women too, once followed the herring each season gutting and packing but after 1919 this industry suffered a disastrous decline and many Lewis families suffered, thus, and encouraged by enterprising local residents acting as producers i.e. buying yarn and putting it out for weaving the Shawbost District in the West side became one of the chief centres rivalling and eventually exceeding Lochs and Uig. Looms were provided by local and Stornoway producers being paid for by deductions from the Weavers commission.

This cloth was accompanied in Lewis by the introduction of the Hattersley treadle loom which was much quicker and capable of more complicated patterns than the treadle wooden loom. Although some producers were buying the crofters own tweeds a practice which only died out in Lewis in the 30's most of the expanding output between 1920 and 1934 was by commission weaving of producers own yarn. Also whilst a good deal of domestic hand finishing still continued tweeds were also being sent to the mainland especially to the Paisley area for finishing. Thus the Lewis Industry became economically and technically organised to a higher degree than that of Harris where the only change was the increasing proportion of 50/50 tweed consisting of handspun weft and millspun warp.

A Spinning Industry was added to the Tarbert mill and a second small mill was started at Geocrab in Harris (the east bays of South Harris). Meanwhile in Stornoway a third carding and spinning mill was built financed largely by an Edinburgh firm. The use of millspun yarn even for the warp only did not conform to the definition of the Harris Tweed/

Tweed required by the 1911 Orb Trade mark but neither did the increasing output of Lewis Tweed much of which was 100% millspun.

By the late 1920's it was clear that the Orb trade mark restricted as it was to a 100% handspun was outdated. Increasing use of mainland even Yorkshire yarn and of mainland finishing mills seemed likely to so reduce the Hebridean Associations of the product as to damage its reputation and open the door to mainland imitations. Great play was still made in advertising cottage craftsmanship and the Hebridean environment. Many Stornoway Producers had in 1910 opposed the original move by certain Lewis Merchants to join the Harris Tweed Association because it seemed likely to restrict the production to a relatively small quantity and that at an unnecessarily high cost. The justification of their attitude was so obvious that in 1934 the definition of Harris Tweed was eased to include any cloth made from pure virgin wool produced in Scotland spun, dyed and finished in the Outer Hebrides and handwoven by the Islanders at their own homes in the Islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist and Barra and their several purtenances and all known as the Outer Hebrides. It was further provided that woven in Harris, woven in Lewis etc. could be added and also handspun in the case of tweeds made entirely from handspun yarn.

The renewed Harris Tweed Association embarked on a world wide advertising campaign and a period of rapid expansion and great prosperity ensued particularly for Lewis millspun tweed. In 1935 1½ million yards were stamped increasing to 4 million in 1940 almost all being from Lewis.

One mainland firm moved Spinning machinery to Stornoway in order to qualify for the mark and since mainland finishing disqualified for the Orb stamp a finishing plant was added to the Stornoway mills. The change caused much disquiet in Harris where handspun yarn made on spinning wheels continued in use associated with weaving on the old type wooden hand looms.

Occasionally with hand finishing the cost of production was inevitably much greater than that of tweed made wholly from millspun yarn and mill finish. The hand looms were slower too and could not give such a variety of pattern whilst a unique cloth could be produced which had to command a high price to justify the time spent on it and consequently the main product of Harris became 50/50 cloth finished at the mills.

The reluctance of the mills to continue carding for handspinners has led in recent years to the virtual abandonment of the spinning wheel in Harris as it had been abandoned 20 or 30 years earlier in Lewis. A general shortage of cloth gave the individual weavers both of Harris and Lewis a final burst of prosperity during the second world war but this was unfortunately accompanied by some bad weaving and occasional use of mainland spun yarn of dubious origin.

In 1947 to help the Harris Weavers a special gadget indicating the use of handspun weft was introduced but this was didcontinued in 1956. At the end of the war about 200 looms were at work in Harris compared with a 1,000 or more in Lewis, but the imposition of a high rate of purchase tax and other marketing difficulties discouraged many Harris Weavers. Producers in the Lewis sense had not been a feature of the Harris Industry nor had Stornoway mills one small i.e. non-Mill Producers keen to send weaving so far afield when they could get it done in Lewis thus Harrus Weaving has lacked an essential element of organisation. Only a handful of Harris men work as full time weavers for Stornoway producers. These are all near the Lewis boundary and have their own vans, thus they are in a better position than most to assure quick return of tweeds. The custom of spare time weaving by women is not conducive to the rapid and regular return of webs which the manufacturers must have if their orders are to be promptly fulfilled.

A few Harris families maintain the old tradition, hand dyeing and carding, spinning on the wheel, handweaving and finishing. They produce a high quality article often to special orders for individual customers and their tweeds command two or three times the price of the general run of tweed. In addition, there are in Harris the last traces of true domestic Industry. In a number of households the annual wool clip and that of the neighbours perhaps, is washed and dyed, carded, spun/

spun and woven mainly for domestic use. Some send wool to the mainland for carding since Island mills will not now card alone. Some buy yarn and many send tweed to the mills for finishing. The tweed may be offered for casual sale or may be used for the household. Blankets may also be woven. In suchcases two or three or at most a dozen tweeds may be made in a year whereas the average Lewis weaver makes 50 or 60. By 1952 all but about a dozen in Harris had ceased weaving regularly and output of stamped tweed had fallen to little more than 20,000 yards - four to five million yards in Lewis. Although the yardage stamped in Harris has increased a little in recent years Lewis is now undoubtedly established as the main source of Harris Tweed.

The Harris Tweed Industry today. The geographical may well enquire not only why Harris Tweed is made in Lewis but why is it handwoven in the Hebrides at all when there is no technical reason why a similar cloth should not be made more cheaply on power looms on the mainland of Scotland, in Yorkshire, America or elsewhere.

Since 1900 all the processes of manufacture except weaving has been mechanised. Harris Tweed is no longer a domestic product of cottage craftsmen its manufacture is well organised showing self-employed outworkers paid on a commission basis where the critical stage of production If we analyse the wholesale price of a tweed one finds that less than 15% is attributable to the handweaving process. On the other hand by far the greater part of the output is made for Island producers and all the mill processes of Orb stamped tweed carding, dyeing, spinning and finishing are carried out in the Islands. Thus the association with the Hebrides and with individual craftsmanship has been maintained while costs of production have been kept down to a level which has permitted a tremendous increase in sales. A skilful balance has been struck in a true and domestic product selling in limited quantities at a high price and a mass produced article. The resulting expansion of production has been the economical salvation of the Island of Lewis.

There are about 1,400 Weavers in Lewis, many of them are crofters, but the average Lewis Croft is too small supporting no more than a cow or perhaps a dozen sheep and their off-spring, that a regular source of income is essential. In this respect Lewis differs from any other crofting districts where crofts are larger though still not large enough. The majority of Lewis weavers and their families depend on weaving for their livelihood - they are full time weavers and spare time agriculturalists. Work as a self-employed weaver is well suited not only to the management of a small croft but also to the Hebridean temperament. Weaving is tedious and arduous and when yarn is received from a producer a weaver may work long hours in order to complete the tweed quickly and so be ready for another. Most try to average two tweeds a week but the weaver is self employed, his own master, not tied to the tyranny of a factory clock. If the mood and the weather suit he can take a day to look to his sheep to cut peats, or to cultivate his croft and he will be prepared to work at the loom most of the night to make up for it, if need be. In addition about a 1,000 men and women are employed in the Mills and Producer's Warehouses and Offices mostly in Stornoway. These are wage earning employees and while some of them are crofters many are not. Their average annual earnings appear to be greater than that of most weavers but despite the five day week they do not share the weavers freedom. Such of them as have crofts are often hard put to it to cultivate and grow crops sufficient to winter a cow - wives and old children play a useful part here.

This total of 2,400 Lewis people engaged in the tweed industry may be compared with about 2oo regularly employed in fishing and fish-curing, a number which has declined catastrophically since 1914 and considerably even since 1949. There can be no doubt that were it not for the expanding tweed industry most of the 2,400, many of them with their families, would by now have emigrated to the mainland or overseas. As it is they have been able to stay in Lewis where they earn at least one million £ annually in wages and commission. This is not all, the organisation of the industry is such that it still belongs mainly to Lewis, the profits accruing to Lewismen.

The approximate proportion of tweeds woven for the various types of Producer is as follows:-

Woven/

Woven in Lewis.

(a) For Lewis Mill Producers 56%
(b) " " Small Producers 28%
(c) " " Small Producers 2% using mainland yarn.
(d) " Mainland Producers 7% using mainland yarn.
Woven in other Islands for Mainland Producers 7% using mainland yarn.

Thus the greater part of the output is now woven on behalf of the Lewis Mills, at least two thirds of which by capacity are Lewis owned. These mills buy almost a third of the Scottish wool clip although by a curious anomaly much of the Hebridean clip is shipped to the mainland being more suited for carpet manufacture. The small Producers are all domiciled in Lewis, many of them started as weavers and the distinction between weavers and the smallest of small producers is not clear cut. When trade booms many weavers attempt to try to make additional profits by buying yarn for themselves and their friends to weave, and on the other hand the largest of the small producers are comparable in output with smaller mills and very recently some of them have installed spinning and finishing plant.

The Mills obtained their large production of the total output in the period of rapid expansion between 1934 - 1940. Since then, apart from the World War years a number of the small producers have tended on the whole to decline though more slowly than their declining share of the total output.

Distribution of Weaving. Weaving is not equally distributed throughout Lewis. In the first place some districts have far more weavers per capita than others and in the second place neither the mills norsmall producers distribute weaving evenly. Before 1920 weaving was mainly carried on in the two southern parishes of Lochs and Uig but in the 20's Shawbost became an important centre due partly to the efforts of local enterprising producers. From Shawbost before 1940 weaving was spreading to Carloway and the townships beside East Loch Roag. Both local small producers and Stornoway producers including the mills payed a part. Little development took place in the North of Lewis - the Ness District - untill after 1945. Here the outlook of the people has always been seawards, to fishing and latterly the Merchant Navy. Today there are looms in every township and in many at leats half the households contain one or two weavers. Tolsta, Park and Stornoway district and Point provides exceptions. In each of these areas less than 15% of households have weavers. In the case of Park the long and rather indifferent road may here deter would-be producers. Tolsta is nearer to Stornoway than Shawbost so inaccessability cannot be the explanation here as in Ness, fishing and the Merchant Navy still claim many men. Point is quite a different category even the farthest township is but a few miles from Stornoway and a large number of men and women travel daily to work in the Mills.

Stornoway itself has relatively few weavers even though the Harris Tweed weaver does not have to be a crofter and many are not. The possession of a croft has several advantages , it provides a site or a convenient old house or barn for example, where the loom cane be installed and more important a subsistance based, albeit a very rare one, from which a very variable supply of weaving can be carried out. Few Stornoway houses possess premises suitable for a loom and some Stornoway weavers are obliged to use sheds some distance from their houses although there has been some tendency for weavers to emigrate into the Stornoway district from more remote areas in the hope of obtaining some work.

Weaving in this area has to compete with mill work which is more regular and may be financially more rewarding . The distribution of weaving by mills and small produc ers present a difficult problem and certain districts complain that they are neglected. This may to some extent be inevitable. Tweed orders are often urgent and producers cannot afford to be constantly sending vans to remote areas thus the Stornoway district including Park and Point and the townships on the circular route from Stornoway by East Loch Roag to Carloway, Shawbost and Barvas have a natural advantage over other places. The mills, however, do appear to try to maintain an even distribution although over the whole Island they are responsible for only two thirds of the output. They supply up to 90% of the weaving in Berneray and South Uig for Example.

It is understandable that the small Producers whose profit margins are less because they have to depend on the mills for yarn and finishing are unwilling to incur extra transport costs and it is fortunate for the West Coast that several such Producers are resident in Shawbost.

The average annual earnings of weavers have been £300 to £400 in recent years but in the most favoured districts the average may be £500 to £600 and the maximum at least half as much again. The mills and small Producers have lists of weavers and in general distribute weaving in rotation. However, many weavers are on more than one list and apart from the advantages of living in one of the more inaccessible townships certain weavers are well known for the excellence of their work and for their ability to produce complicated patterns this and a reputation of a prompt return of webs bring more work to some than to others.

There appears to be more than sufficient weavers available to fulfil present demands and for this reason it seems unlikely that Harris will ever again regain the important position as a centre of weaving. The Tarbert Carding Mill has long had spinning machinery but this belongs to a Stornoway firm and almost all the yarn is sent to Lewis. It seems unfortunate that the Industry should have so declined in Harris, the Island whence it got its name but the small population of Harris alone could never have sustained it on the present scale. A market for genuine Homespun tweed either 100% handspun or 50/50 could almost certainly be found, since it is now well known and generally accepted that the usual Harris Tweed is millspun. Carding facilities would have to be provided and some sort of organisation set up in Harris but above all enough Spinners and Weavers to execute orders promptly would be required and it is by no means certain that they could now be found.

The experience of a new Spinning Mill in North Uist is relevant in this respect. During the war there had been some signs of renewed interest in weaving in the Island and in the hope of encouraging this the Proprietors Hamilton Estates, established a Spinning Mill about 1947. In the event weaving was not taken up locally to any extent and whilst the Mill is still in operation much of the yarn is shipped to Lewis. Most of the crofters in North Uist are far larger than those in Lewis. Indeed if well worked many are capable of producing a reasonable living, without resorting to any full time auxiliary occupation. This in the absence of leadership in the form of local resident small Producers who play such a large part in the development of weaving Lewis, may explain the situation. On the other hand about 1950 a mainland mill began sending treadle looms to South Uist. Some were installed in a weaving shed and others let out to crofters who undertook to perform a minimum amount of weaving. Unlike the Lewis weavers, these men do not own their own looms which they work. The webs are returned to the mainland for finishing and the cloth is marketed as Harris Tweed although not entitled to be stamped with the Orb trade mark. The scheme was taken up particularly in certain districts where the crofts are poorer than average and in 1959 more than 100 Weaversware at work. No figures of output are available but if the weavers are working at the same average rate of those in Lewis 500,000 yards per anhum may be produced.

Weaving of Mainland Yarn - Is it Harris Tweed. The plentiful supply of weavers has in recent years made it possible for a number of mainland mills to send increasing quantities of yarn to Lewis for commission weaving. Their produce thus gets the status of a handwoven article, is sold as Harris Tweed and gets considerable benefit from the reputation built up by the Lewis Industry since 1920. This type of tweed is not entitled to the Orb stamp. Until recently there was no guarantee that the yarn used was necessarily of Scottish Wool. However, the firms concerned applied to the Lord Lyon, King of Arms for a Grant of Arms to use in lieu of a trade That Official insisted that the Arms could only be used with reference to a purely Scottish product. Nevertheless neither the Arms granted by the Lord Lyon or a similar trade mark for which application has been made to the Board of Trade used in a manner comparable with the well known Orb trade mark in use since 1911. The latter is the property of and applied by an independant non-profit making body, the Harris Tweed Association, Ltd.

Before stamping any tweed presented to it the Association requires a signed statement from the owner declaring that the tweed is made entirely from pure virgin wool produced in Scotland that the wool was dyed by the local Spinner and that the tweed has been handwoven by a certain weaver at his or her home and address. A specimen piece of tweed is attached to each declaration and in the case of millspun yarn it is accompanied by the supplier's invoice thus the stamp transfer applied every few yards on the reverse side of the cloth is a guarantee of Origin. What is more the Association supply labels marked with a serial number so that even when it is made up into a garment a tweed can be traced back to the Weaver. The Mainland Producers label and proposed trade mark appears to be devised with no such check.

The carrying out in the mainland of all productions processes except weaving apparently enables the cloth to be marketed much cheaply. The differential probably being about 10% of the wholesale price. Mainland carding, spinning and finishing may appear to be logical economic developments. Analogous with the replacement of handspun yarn by millspun and of domestic walking by mill finishing and if as seems possible this type of tweed is able to capture the market and so put the Stornoway mills out of business and the Workers out of employment it may seem to some that this is no more inevitable continuation of a process which at an earlier date brought about the demise of the domestic Industry in the original home - Harris. If this view is accepted then by the same principals there will inevitably come a time when the expense of shipping yarn to and tweeds from the Outer Hebrides will no longer seem to be justified for transport already adds several pence to the price of each yard of tweed. Harris Tweed would then be no more than a name of no more geographical significance than Cambric or Eccles cakes and what economic justification would there be of employing 1,500 handloom weavers to perform what could be done more cheaply by a few men with power looms.

It has been argued for the mainland mill Producers that their lower costs of production will induce increased sales and so lead to an overall increase in the amount of work available for weavers in Lewis and further that such an increase would compensate for any decline in employment provided by the Island mills. Three circumstances make this unlikely if not impossible. Firstly there is no guarantee that the market for Harris Tweed is sufficiently elastic. Secondly the Island Mills already consume about one third of the Scottish wool clip, not all of which is suitable for Tweed. At most, therefore, Harris Tweed output could be little more than doubled. Thirdly the value of the weaving process is but a small part of the industry to the Island and no matter how much more weaving was placed in the Islands it is unlikely that it could compensate the loss to the Island of mill employment and Producers profits.

This last point is worthy of further consideration and to this end approximate costs of both types of tweed have been calculated in detail, and figures must be treated with reserve because individual Producers costs would vary a good deal and there is the added complication that about one third of the Orb stamp i.e. Island spun and finished tweed is woeven for small Producers for buying yarn from and sending tweed to the mills. The other two thirds is woven directly by the mills who thus compete with the very firms to whom they supply yarn. The figures apply only to standard weight yarn and cloth. They can only be regard d as approximate since costs must vary between one Producer and another.

Two point emerge from the table. Firstly 50% of the value of Island spun Orb stamped tweed already goes to the mainland. If cost of raw material is taken into accoutn, but if only weaving takes place in the Islands the Island element in the tweed is reduced to 15%. Secondly if the present annual output of Island Producers - six million yards and about 60,000 yards were produced of mainland spun yarn for mainland producers the annual value to the Islands would be reduced from £1,800,000 to half million £ that is £500,000. In other words between three and four times as much weaving would have to be put out to make up the loss. This has been shown to be impossible unless overseas wool be incorporated in the yarn. There is a social as well as an economic aspect to this problem.

The establishment within the present century of an industry employing 2,400 persons in a situation as remote as Lewis is a remarkable achievement or moreover it has been largely achiev d by men domiciled in Lewis. Many of them started on a small scale. On third of the tweed stamped is still made for small producers but their numbers are declining. They are in a most vulnerable position. They must rely on the local mills for yarn and finishing and the mills must make a reasonable profit on these processes. Therefore, the small Producers nett profit margin is fine indeed, perhaps less than a £1. a tweed. There is some feeling that the mills have not always been as helpful as they might have been and that the profit margin on yarn and finishing has been too great. Be that as it may it seems that increased competition may force the small Producers to abandon Island spun yarn in favour of cheaper mainland spun. They would lost the right to the Orb stamp but with commercial connections now well established this might not be so serious. If they do this then the quantity of cheapes tweed marketed by the mainland firms including that woven in South Uist and by the small Producers together would provide serious competition for the Island Mills.

The dilemma which faces the Mills is between their business as Spinners and Finishers and that as Producers of tweed if they are unwise they may lose both. Whatever the outcome in the broader context of the long terms welfare of the Islands the ultimate survival of both mills as employers and of small Producers as a social group is important.

The small and almost uniform size of crofts v ry much smaller in average in Lewis than in other Islands and the absence of alternative outlets for the enterprise and initiative as in the past led to the loss by emigration of far too many of the younger and most intelligent men. The prospect of making a reasonable living as a weaver without abandoning the family croft and of building up a business from weaving to being a small producer is one of the few such outlets. It is in the interests of the Industry and the Islands and it should remain.

Scottish Industry, Lowland and Highlands alike is continuously bedevilled by problems of location. Such Industries as have overcome these problems have done so by specialisation often relying on the unique reputation as to quality a reputation which in the mind of the buyer is closely bound up with geographical origin. Thus a natural disadvantage is turned to advantage. Harris Tweed is perhaps the extreme example of this. The reputation gained by products of cottage craftsmen has been transferred to those of large scale industry. Even the locus of the Industry have to some extent been changed although there can be no question that for at least half a century the name Harris Tweed has been generally accepted for all Lewis and Harris Tweeds. It remains to be seen whether the train of events set in motion 60 years ago by the first carding mills and greatly accelerated by the use of millspun yarn in the 1920's are brought to a halt before all real connections with the Hebrides has suffered or whether in turn Island spun yarn will be replaced by mainland spun. The Scottish Countryside is littered with sorry examples of former prosperous establishments shut down once their products could be successfully imitated by more favourably placed competitors in the south or overseas. Industry cannot be expected to disregard economic considerations for those of social welfare, still less of sentiment but can the reputation of Harris Tweed withstand a further and severe attenuation of its Hebridean association. If such an attenuation is to the cost of a further short term expansion then the long term prospects of an industry maintaining its Hebridean or even Scottish location are poor indeed. To Scotland its loss would beserious enough to Lewis it would spell economic and social disaster.