



Deposited via The University of Leeds.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/188658/>

Version: Accepted Version

---

**Article:**

Almond, K and Wadsworth, H (Cover date: December 2021) Forgotten Wardrobes: Keepers of Lost Clothes. *Clothing Cultures*, 8 (2). pp. 135-155. ISSN: 2050-0742

[https://doi.org/10.1386/cc\\_00050\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/cc_00050_1)

---

© 2021 Intellect Ltd. This is an author produced version of an article published in *Clothing Cultures*. Uploaded in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

**Reuse**

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

**Takedown**

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing [eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk) including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

## **Forgotten Wardrobes: Keepers of Lost Clothes**

### **Abstract**

Once purchased, clothing spends the majority of its life ensconced in a wardrobe until it is selected, to be worn or is finally forgotten about or discarded. The wearing of a garment also changes over time as a person's body size, taste and lifestyle develop. The research explores these changing facets through a pedagogic research project – *Keepers of Lost Clothes* - that centered on embedding sustainability within the fashion design curriculum. It explored the contemporary relationship we have with discarded garments and considered how this clothing could be remade and reconsidered. Garments were created from clothes that wearers had fallen out of love with; found in the back of the wardrobe, the bottom of the drawer or on a charity shop rail. They were, washed; ironed; unpicked; dismantled; cut and re-stitched, to recreate new clothes to fall in love with. The Keepers of Lost Clothes project is evaluated in relation to the sustainable approach of the *Make Do and Mend* initiative established in World War II. This encouraged people to remake, recycle and envision new ways to wear their clothes at a time when garment production had virtually ceased. Key factors are identified from both initiatives to ascertain a global direction for remade and recycled fashion and how this can enrich the future of fashion design and education.

### **Key Words**

Fashion, Design, Sustainability, Wardrobe, Clothes, Remake, Recycle, Pedagogic

### **Introduction**

The paper takes a systematic approach to explore the research aims, which have four significant purposes. The mixed methodological approach is described and justified and includes a description of how primary data was collected and analysed. The literature review explores how the consumer has changing relationships with their items of clothing, which are often forgotten and left hidden in wardrobes. The key facets of the Make Do and Mend initiative introduced in World War II, which encouraged people to remake and repair forgotten clothes at a time of severe economic shortage was explored together with an overview of literature related to sustainability and the circular economy in fashion. The results of the pedagogic project, Keepers of Lost Clothes, which explored how discarded clothing can be reconsidered and remade, are described in detail in the context of practice-based research. The project findings are evaluated in relation to the Make Do and Mend initiative in order to identify a future direction for remade and recycled clothing in global fashion, establishing an important reference point of lasting influence for the direction of fashion sustainability. This evaluation is tested through a table that documented key themes identified from Make Do and Mend and the project. The table was forwarded to a large international fashion network who were requested to list the themes in a numerical order of importance related to the future direction for recycled and remade clothes in fashion design and education.

### **Aims**

- 1.) To explore the hidden life of clothing and the changing relationships we have with our clothes.
- 2.) To document the results of the pedagogic project that considered how discarded and forgotten clothing could be remade and reconsidered.
- 3.) To evaluate the results of the project in relation to the sustainability of the Make Do and Mend initiative established in World War II.

- 4.) To identify key factors from both initiatives to identify a future direction for remade and recycled clothes in fashion design and education.

### **Methodology**

The research was conducted utilizing a mixed methodology that combined a qualitative and quantitative approach (Creswell, 2014). This endorsed a close analysis of the subject and allowed the researchers to understand how forgotten clothing, hidden in wardrobes is often perceived and reused. Sociologists Corbin and Strauss considered that qualitative examination, 'Allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables' (2008: 12). Many qualitative researchers consider that if a concept needs investigation this approach is appropriate. The sociologist Kawamura suggested that it is 'Exploratory and is useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine' (Kawamura 2011: 111). Quantitative research concentrates on enumerating the gathering and collection of data and in this research, the findings were measured through a numerical evaluation of their importance. As Kawamura explained, quantitative research often includes, 'Questionnaires that have questions with multiple choice or yes/no answers that are converted into numeric assessment' (2011: 112). This allows the researcher to consider positive, negative or neutral percentages from the responses. Much research can be analyzed through a qualitative or quantitative approach or when human experience cannot be considered in one way, a mixed methods tactic is adopted to capture the best of both approaches.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

The qualitative approach utilized archival and practice based research to gather data related to the hidden life of clothing and the changing relationships we have with our clothes (Moore, Salter et al, 2016; Leavy, 2020). The quantitative data came from a survey that asked participants to rank key findings related to the future of fashion design and sustainability in a numeric order of importance. Archival research involves collating, observing and handling the records housed in repositories held in libraries, museums and accounts held by individuals. These can contain; photographs, documents, manuscripts, objects, film or audio-visual material and clothing etc. In this research, items of Make-Do and Mend clothing in the *Yorkshire Fashion Archive*, held at University of Leeds were examined, to identify how they had been remade or repaired. This permitted an in-depth exploration of the characteristics and qualities of the clothes. Practice based research was employed throughout the Keepers of Lost Clothes project delivered to the fashion students. This type of research involves producing things as part of its process. It is endemic in creative practice and explores the research question through making and meaning. In the project, design exploration was key and utilised the practices of unmaking and remaking existing clothing owned or found by the practitioners in order to develop innovative and wearable new clothes and gain new knowledge from the outcomes of that practice.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data from the archival and object based research was scrutinised through content analysis, which permitted a systematic examination of the findings (Swann, 2020). A thematic analysis was conducted from the findings of the literature review and the practice based research (Braun and Clarke, 2021). This identified patterns of meaning that facilitated the development of a table of six different themes related to the

sustainable clothing practices of both Make-Do and Mend and the Keepers of Lost Clothes project. The table was sent to a large fashion network who were asked to rank the findings in a numeric assessment of their relevance to a global direction for remade and recycled fashion. Following this analysis, a triangulation of the assessment was conducted through consultation with six fashion industry experts who were not involved in the research. The researchers Bekhet and Zauszniewski described how triangulation, 'Has been found to be beneficial in providing confirmation of findings, more comprehensive data, increased validity and enhanced understanding of studied phenomena' (2012: n.pag.). The experts, were approached individually and asked to substantiate the assessment. This ensured a level of independent scrutiny from industry professionals, which warranted a robust level of methodological credibility and validity from which to identify a future direction for reconstructed and remade clothes.

### **Literature Review**

A comprehensive literature review attempted to identify, appraise and integrate all the experiential data to address the research aims (University of Leeds, 2022). This becomes a discernable secondary research methodology when clear steps are taken to validate the review as exact, meticulous and dependable. The review focused on an in-depth evaluation of a variety of books, journal and newspaper articles, reviews and websites. To set a context for the study this included an historical analysis of the origins to remaking and recycling clothing framed by the Make-Do and Mend initiative established in World War II (Eben, 2005; Imperial War Museum, 2007; Lonsdale, 2009; McDowell, 1997; Norman, 2013; Summers, 2015; Tavangari, 2010; Wilson, 2009). Of particular note, works such as The Ministry of Information booklet, *Make-Do and Mend* originally published in 1943 promoted the concept of recycling clothing products at a time of extreme manufacturing shortage (Ministry of Information, 2007). In Julie Summers work, *Fashion on the Ration* (2015), she described the restrictions at this time, 'If you ask anyone who lived through the war about clothes rationing, they will almost certainly tell you about coupons, parachute silk, utility clothing, Make-Do and Mend' (2015: 2).

A selection of works that act as instruction guides for recycling clothing were also consulted (Chapple, 2016; Edwards, 2021; Fulop, 2021; Hertz, 2011; Maycroft, 2009, Press, 2018; Sullivan, 2021; Tickner and Peacock, 2012; Ward, 2021). These works were important as they give context to the craft skills adopted in the making of clothing throughout the Keepers of Lost Clothes project. Literature related to the expansion of the circular economy and sustainability in the design of products was evaluated to gain a broad perspective of its advantages and disadvantages in the future of fashion (Egenhoefer, 2017; Lacy and Long et al., 2019; Mayer, 2019; Weetman, 2020). Further works that considered how sustainability in a circular economy works in fashion and how the enhanced value of clothing can be extended through a longer lifespan were appraised (Archana, Geetika et al., 2020; Brooks, 2019; Geettika, 2020; Henninger; Panaviota et al., 2017; Hur, 2020; Muthu, 2018; Niinimaki, 2019; Vignali and Reid et al, 2020). This system looks at eliminating waste through a continuous regeneration of resources and maintaining the life span of a product by keeping it going longer. In relation to fashion it means, salvaging, repairing, reprocessing, remanufacturing, regenerating or sharing and reselling clothing. It also reduces the over use of resources therefore minimizing carbon emissions and pollution, which damage the planet.

### ***Forgotten Wardrobes: The Hidden Life of Clothing***

To explore the hidden life of clothing and the changing relationships we have with our clothes, literature was examined that considered how clothing spends much of its life in a wardrobe or drawer. These items lie dormant and redundant, only coming to life when they adorn the human body (Cwerner, 2001). After time they begin to overcrowd a wardrobe and consumers are faced with what to do with garments that have become out of date or faded. Guy, Green and Banim argued that, 'At one level clothes are merely consumer objects, so we should be able to control and manage them and make them do our bidding' (2001: 3). They reflected how clothes have minds of their own and can disrupt the intentions we have for wearing them as they sit concealed and forgotten, 'They age, fade, lose their shape, etc. and that they have variable lifespans as material objects' (2001: 4). The consumer who is able to separate their physical body from the garments is often unable to face their ejection from the wardrobe. The value of a garment therefore needs considering in relation to its importance as a possession and the emotional connections the owner has with it: be they happy, sad or indifferent. These were described by Guy and Banim as, 'The relationships that women have with clothes they keep but no longer wear' (2001: 203).

It has been suggested, that clothes, which are no longer worn but are retained in a wardrobe, can be read as a series of representational connections to a person's characteristics in the past, present and future (Banim and Guy, 2001). In relation to this, Bye and McKinney identified four different premises for saving unworn clothing, which separate the notions of disconnecting the actual person from the item and the items from the wardrobe. These were 'Weight Management, Investment Value, Sentimental Value, and Aesthetic Object' (2015: 483). The financial value of an object changes over time in relation to these four notions. In her article *Why We Keep Clothes We Never Wear*, the journalist Barbara Brownie considered that the value of a garment, 'Changes depending on whether we classify it as a possession or as rubbish, and so if we discard something we perceive a loss of economic value' (2013: 1). Throwing clothing out suggests it is no longer worth anything however, recycling it or using it to become part of another garment is a way of retaining its emotional connection and meaning to the individual. Bye and McKinney liken clothes in the wardrobe to a library or archive of imagination, 'Storing every possible vision of "potential selves"'. They preserve our younger, more beautiful selves, and also reflect our aspirations to be thinner or more confident' (2015: 496). Recycling our clothes, making them into something new, wearable or desirable is a means of retaining our relationships with them. These can be given a new life when purchased by someone else, as were the recycled garments from the *Keepers of Lost Clothes* project. Here new garments were made from clothes that wearers had fallen out of love with.

### ***Make Do and Mend***

The original Make Do and Mend campaign, which encouraged people to repair or remake old clothes, was established by the British government in 1943, during World War II. The war had created a shortage of cloth to make garments, as the majority of manufacturing was limited to the requirements of the war effort. The import and export of clothing was terminated, making it extremely difficult for people to acquire new clothes. Garment consumption was rationed and civilians were issued with clothing coupons that limited the amount of clothes they could acquire. The systematic introduction of new fashions each season also virtually ceased. The campaign encouraged people to explore how forgotten clothing could be remade, and reworked as expounded in the Make do and Mend: dressmaking class fashion show in London,

1943 (figure 1). A new approach to dressing emerged as the fashion historian Colin McDowell observed, ‘The result was innovative and more unique clothes on the streets than had ever been seen before’ (1997: 97). Leaflets were printed to promote Make Do and Mend and featured a character called, *Mrs. Sew and Sew*, who encouraged people to recycle and remake. The information intended to enthuse people with ideas and make them accessible to those with little knowledge of sewing. New coats could be made from old ones or curtains could be made into dresses or trousers and the fringing used as a trim, old jumpers could be unraveled and the yarn knitted into new garments. The overriding concern was to keep people clothed. Fashion took a backseat as a cornucopia of new, incongruous, unusual or unflattering ideas emerged. Concepts related to what was or was not acceptable to wear and the kind of fabrics they could be made from were overturned as the fashion historian, Dominique Veillon identified ‘The trends created, ‘A wartime fashion’ in which ‘street wear’ sometimes combined with the eccentric’ (2002: 145).



**Figure 1. *Make do and Mend: dressmaking class fashion show in London, 1943*, catalogue number; D12897. Courtesy of The Imperial War Museum, UK.**

A systematic literature review of key works related to Make Do and Mend revealed significant statements about the initiative. These provide a useful overview of how the life of clothing was extended and waste was reduced in a period of severe resource shortage. Colin McDowell’s work, *Forties Fashion and the New Look* (1997), recognised how the campaign quickly established itself as crucial, using resources that would have been thrown away or forgotten about. Civilians were reminded that recycling clothes or reusing them contributed to the war effort and manufacturing could be focussed on creating parts for aeroplanes, guns or tanks. Traditional notions of style and taste were discarded however ingenuity and resourcefulness resulted in many distinctive clothes made from limited fabrics and worn clothing. In *Forties Fashion from Siren Suits to the New Look*, Jonathon Walford explained how the labour politician, Hugh Dalton wrote, ‘The board of trade Make Do and Mend campaign is intended to help you to get the last possible ounce of wear out of all your clothes’ (2008: 126). He also explored how makers adopted the trend for remade and reworked garments as design inspiration for garments that continued to be manufactured during the war.

In *Fashion on the Ration* (2016), author Julie Summers explored how people were inspired to revitalize their clothes through applying contrasting colour pockets to skirts, trousers or dresses or using different coloured ribbons as a decorative trim. She described how an old dress suit with tails was unpicked and made into a luxurious looking housecoat with a deep hem. Bands were applied to the front for buttons and buttonholes and a turn down collar was made. Make-do and Mend encouraged a quirky, idiosyncratic approach to dressing as bold patches and contrasting coloured cuffs and collars were incorporated into clothes. In *The New Look: The Dior Revolution* (1996), author, Nigel Cawthorne explained how the leaflet included useful information about how to turn old trousers into a skirt, to use the reverse side of collars on shirts and coats or cut up pillow cases to make baby clothes. He observed how the homely Mrs Sew and Sew character endorsed this restyling of old clothes, 'She explained how to turn two dish clothes into a sort of jersey and an old man's overcoat into a tweed coat and skirt' (1996: 44). Blankets and fleece sheets were dyed in many colours in order to sew coats. Knitwear was cut up and re-patch worked to make waistcoats, wedding dresses were made from net curtains and parachute silk was made up into lingerie, 'Use it, wear it out, make it do or do without' was the overriding message (1996: 45). Make Do and Mend encouraged people to plunder their wardrobes for forgotten items and refocus their relationships with clothing in a time of severe shortage and rationing. The recycling of these garments inspired new and alternative ways to wear and create clothes and confront their ejection from the wardrobe in a worthwhile way. In this instance, the importance of the garments attained a heightened value as they were repatriated for a necessary cause.

Three garments that epitomized the values of the make-do and mend initiative were identified in the *Yorkshire Fashion Archive* at University of Leeds, UK. This archive was selected as being, 'A publicly accessible collection of haute couture, fashion garments and everyday clothing of major historical significance, reflecting the social and economic changes in the region throughout the 20th century' (Yorkshire Fashion Archive, 2022: n.pag.). The archive is also available to the lecturers at Leeds Beckett University and was used as inspiration in the Keepers project. The first item is the hand knitted grey cardigan with cabling to make a honeycomb like structure from c.1943 (figure 2). The sleeves are shortened and finished by hand rolling the knit under to form a hem. Jonathon Walford reflected how, 'The shortage of heating fuel made knitted waist coats and jumpers popular. Resourceful knitters, short of yarn unravelled out of date and moth eaten items for re-use' (2008: 130). Odd scraps of wool were used in their construction and in this garment bright, hand embroidered flowers have been sewn after knitting in red, burgundy, blue and cream. The example of the dress and top in (figure 3 and 4) demonstrates how, 'Many unique fashion statements resulted from using precious lengths of material with imagination, if not flair' (McDowell, 1997: 98). The dress made in c.1944, is crudely manufactured in a remnant of hounds tooth check that had originally been a coat, with a cream camisole attached to the skirt made from an old sheet. This is teamed with a silk top cut in one piece, including cap sleeves. The final garment is the grey dress from 1945 (figure 5). It was made by a home dressmaker from a discarded piece of men's suiting and the heavy black fringing was originally an upholstery trim on a chair.



**Figure 2. Hand knitted grey cardigan with cabling to make a honeycomb like structure from c.1943. Yorkshire Fashion Archive, University of Leeds. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.**



**Figure 3 and 4. Dress and Top front and back view c. 1944. Yorkshire Fashion Archive, University of Leeds. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.**





**Figure 5. Grey dress made from men's suiting c. 1945. Yorkshire Fashion Archive, University of Leeds. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.**

### **Keepers of Lost Clothes**

Lecturers, Katie Lenton and Jennie Pendergast at Leeds Beckett University, UK originally established Keepers of Lost Clothes as a pedagogic research project (The Newsroom 2019: n.pag.). The project centered around embedding sustainability within the BA (Hons) Fashion course curriculum to increase awareness of the industry's impact upon the environment and encourage students to adopt environmentally conscious approaches to fashion design and production. Begun originally in 2017, the project asked students to source three or four men's shirts from family, friends or charity shops. They unpicked them and used the fabric pieces to create new garments as an alternative to designing patterns and cutting these from fabrics on the roll. The teaching practices and principles facilitated a range lectures and workshops that encompassed, design, deconstruction and machine, and traditional hand construction techniques. The students were able to develop a conceptual approach to considered design resulting from their experience of the project.

The lecturers identified the impact of this sustainable methodology as having several key benefits. The first being the unpicking of the garments, which provided students with insight into the different stages of the production process and helped them to appreciate seam details and the shape of individual pattern pieces. It also contributed to their understanding of how 2D shapes create 3D garments. The parameters set through using existing garments had a positive impact upon the design innovation of the students. For instance, design details such as a patch pocket (traditionally found on the left or right breast), could be transferred to the back yoke. This pedagogic approach facilitated an introduction to sustainable design, pattern cutting and construction, whilst also addressing preconceptions about the aesthetics of ethical clothing. It resulted in a significant increase in the student's adoption of resourceful approaches to fabric sourcing for fashion design and their usage. Raising public and industry awareness of

issues surrounding fashion disposal was at the core of the project. Teaching the value of sustainable practice through learning activities tailored to both issues provided students with key skills and promoted mindful design to tackle the issue of waste fashion on the environment. Throughout the project, students became advocates of re-use and upcycling practices and as a result were able to challenge the consumer's perception of sustainable clothing by producing desirable, creative and commercial garments.

When forming Keepers of Lost Clothes, the tutors anticipated that students would form an emotional connection with the designs they created. This was considered important as it helped to paint a true narrative of the Keepers outcomes. Some students collected garments from charity shops for the fabrication and colour choices only. There was no pre-thinking behind their selection. However, in the design process an interesting combination of narratives took place as the 'unemotional' garments were transformed into design lead emotive and sustainable pieces. The shirt in figure 1 is by Grace Wilson. She had a serious illness in her final year of school (GCSE's) so missed out on any leaver's activities, contributing to the school graduation book, the traditional practice of signing goodbye messages on the school shirts or saying goodbye to her school friends. Her keeper's shirt is therefore a homage to missing out on leaving school (figure 6). The concept came from adding value to an old shirt containing her school day memories. As she described, 'I took inspiration from my old school shirt used on the last day of school and tried to replicate this theme within the shirt designed for the Keepers of Lost Clothes project' (Lenton, 2021, n.pag.). This garment was constructed from four cotton shirts found at the back of her father's wardrobe. The main bodice was made from two shirts, in alternate bands. The logo, 'LEAVERS 2018' was laser cut out of stripes from the third shirt and laid over the white striped bands on the main bodice. The sleeves were created from two shirts decorated with embroidered messages and signatures from her old school friends. The middle section was held together with loose embroidery threads, symbolising the ties we keep with old friends. The fourth shirt was used for the collar, cuffs and button stand.



**Figure 6. Grace Wilson, Keepers of Lost Clothes shirt. Photograph courtesy of Lunar Rising.**

Before she started university, Sasha Wilding had established an independent clothing line called, *Only Pretending* in 2017 that focussed on the recycling of clothing (Wilding 2020: n.pag.). The *Keepers of Lost Clothes* project provided an introduction, to pattern cutting and developed Wilding's skills in sustainable fashion practice. Through exploring draping techniques on the dress stand, she began to create back to front designs and oversized styles with belts to adjust for each customer's shape. Her garment is unisex, and influenced by the street style she observed around Leeds city centre (figure 7). It is made from second hand shirts sourced from Oxfam however during construction, she ran out of shirts with which to construct the sleeves. She came up with the idea of using the cloth bag Oxfam put the shirts in when purchased. The bag then influenced the shape of the sleeve pattern and she created two sleeves out of one bag. The original pattern idea was scrapped and the design process was enhanced by the sustainable choices.



**Figure 7. Sasha Wilding, Keepers of Lost Clothes shirt. Photograph courtesy of Lunar Rising.**

Bethan Hood's focus in the project was to develop a design relationship with old and used clothes and consider how they could be transformed to reduce waste. She also wanted to incorporate her interests in cycling and non-binary clothing into the design narrative as well as developing her skills in patchwork and surface embellishment. In her garment, the back pockets mimic cycling jersey and secret pockets are inserted within the patchwork (figure 8). Some of the hidden pockets are shaped like cycling gloves, which are worked into with freehand embroidery to highlight the hand shape. The shirt is made from three men's shirts, sourced from a variety of charity shops. Hood

developed the fabrication and colourway to suit a variety of customers from all genders to encapsulate her ideas about the ways in which used clothing can be transformed and worn by all. Ellie Woodhead's shirt is illustrated in figure 9 and was designed to raise awareness for cancer research. It is created from a combination of shirts and plastic bags bought from the Cancer Research Charity shop that had been dismantled and reassembled. On the back of the garment, the words *I'm Back* are a prominent feature to represent a celebration of cancer recovery and support.



**Figure 8. Bethan Hood, Keepers of Lost Clothes shirt. Photograph courtesy of Lunar Rising.**



**Figure 9. Ellie Woodhead, Keepers of Lost Clothes shirt. Photograph courtesy of Lunar Rising.**

### ***Lecturer's Thoughts***

A blog written by lecturer, Katie Lenton about the project revealed the philosophy behind Keepers of Lost Clothes (Lenton, 2019). She described how, 'The title is a reference to Ruth Hogan's *The Keeper of Lost Things*, which is a really beautiful book I read a couple of years ago. It tells the story of three unlikely friends, who become the custodians of a collection of lost things' (2019: n.pag.). The collection was spontaneous and consisted of domestic items such as pens, teacups and umbrellas however, the stories behind these lost items were documented with them. The lecturers thought it would be interesting to explore parallel ideologies in the use of discarded clothing within the sustainable pedagogic project. In the blog, lecturer, Harriet Wadsworth considered the fashion consumer to be more aware of how clothing purchases affect the environment and are mindful and ecologically aware. The Keepers of Lost Clothes brand was described as, 'Creative, sentimental and beautiful' (Lenton, 2019: n.pag.). Wadsworth felt the garments produced by the students, should appeal to a wide demographic who seek aesthetically considered, sustainable clothing. When the garments were unpicked, the students were working with second hand pieces of fabric in different sizes, shapes and lengths. They had to be creative and place patterns on unexpected areas of the fabric, which resulted in, 'The introduction of interesting panels, darned holes, visible labels and unexpected design details.' (Lenton, 2019: n.pag.).

The project tutors considered it important for students to engage in sustainable design practice, as designers would need to consistently address this through creative thinking to produce attractive yet ecological garments. Lenton said, 'I think it's important to

introduce this from an early stage, to challenge any preconceptions about sustainable clothing and what it may look like' (2019: n.pag). She felt the project encouraged students to be more aware of the things they need to do when designing and manufacturing and was amazed at the innovative approaches they developed when working with the second hand garments. The concept of serendipity augmented the creation of thoughtful fashion ideas and enhanced the learning process. Unpicking the discarded shirts and deconstructing them provided students with invaluable insight about garment construction, the shape of the pattern pieces and their order of manufacture. The students gained from an innovative learning experience as Harriet Wadsworth explained, 'Students have commented that they felt less pressure working with second hand fabrics, which has enabled them to adopt a more creative approach to design' (2019: n.pag.).

### **Key Factors from Both Initiatives**

The results of the Keepers of Lost Clothes project were evaluated in relation to the sustainability of the Make Do and Mend initiative. Significant testimonials from both enterprises were identified by conducting a thorough content analysis of both the literature review and the practice-based research. These statements were placed in the first section of both the Make Do and Mend and Keepers of Lost Clothes tables, 1 and 2. The second section of the table summarises the statements with one or two word key phrases.

**Table 1. Make Do and Mend**

| <b>Testimonials</b>                                                                   | <b>Key Phrase</b>   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Explore how forgotten clothing could be remade, recycled and reworked.                | Recycle             |
| Life of clothing extended and waste reduced in a period of severe resource shortage.  | Waste Reduction     |
| Used resources that would have been thrown away.                                      | Reuse               |
| Distinctive clothes were made from worn clothing.                                     | Distinctive Clothes |
| Trend for reworked garments adopted by manufacturers as design inspiration.           | Design Inspiration  |
| Encouraged people to ransack their wardrobes for forgotten items.                     | Ransack Wardrobes   |
| Refocus relationships with clothing in a time of economic shortage and rationing.     | Refocus             |
| Garments attained a heightened value as they were repatriated for an important cause. | Heightened Value    |
| Introduced a new fashion sensibility and the beginnings to alternative streetwear.    | Fashion Sensibility |

**Table 2. Keepers of Lost Clothes**

| <b>Testimonials</b>                                                                  | <b>Key Phrase</b>         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Embedded increased awareness of the industry's impact upon the environment.          | Embedded Sustainability   |
| Encouraged students to adopt environmentally conscious approaches to fashion design. | Environmentally Conscious |

|                                                                                                                            |                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Students developed a conceptual approach to considered design.                                                             | Considered Design |
| Using existing garments had a positive impact upon the innovation of the designs produced by the students.                 | Positive Impact   |
| Raising public and industry awareness of issues surrounding fashion disposal.                                              | Raising Awareness |
| Students challenged the public's perception of sustainable clothing by producing desirable, commercial garments.           | Public Perception |
| Important to engage in sustainable design practice as it develops the skills to produce ecologically aware garments.       | Develop Skills    |
| The concept of serendipity augmented the creation of thoughtful fashion ideas.                                             | Happy Accidents   |
| Students felt less pressure working with second hand fabrics, which enabled them to adopt a more creative design approach. | Creative Design   |

The key phrases from the second section of both tables are grouped together in themes in the first section in table 3. These are summarised to form the six overall themes in the second section of the table. This table was sent to the 448 members of Future Fashion Factory whose headquarters are at University of Leeds, UK. This is a £5.4 million research and development partnership, 'Exploring and developing new digital and advanced textile technologies to boost the design of high-value creative products' (Future Fashion Factory, 2022: n.pag.). Future Fashion Factory was selected as a significant network to contact in this research because the international members include experienced fashion professionals who work in a wide variety of roles in high profile companies that include, The British Fashion Council, Burberry, Joshua Ellis, Assyst Bulmer, New Look, Lectra, British Wool, The Digital Fashion Group, Gieves and Hawkes etc. Firstly, members were asked to consider the future for remade and recycled clothes in global fashion design and education as well as the global sustainability of the industry. They were also requested to consider the six different themes in the table and rank them in a numerical order of importance. One being least important and six being most important. 192 replies were received and the overall scores were arrived at by adding up the individual numerical response to each theme, which are detailed in the third section of the table – Order of Importance.

**Table 3. Amalgamated Phrases and Themes**

| <b>Key Phrases</b>                                                      | <b>Theme</b>            | <b>Order of Importance</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Waste Reduction<br>Embedded Sustainability<br>Environmentally Conscious | Embedded Sustainability | 1<br>Score 768             |
| Design Inspiration<br>Creative Design<br>Considered Design              | Design Sensibility      | 2<br>Score 720             |
| Develop Skills<br>Happy Accidents<br>Fashion Sensibility                | Skills and Technology   | 3<br>Score 684             |
| Recycle                                                                 | Reprocess and Change    | 4                          |

|                                                           |                       |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Reuse<br>Refocus                                          |                       | Score 660      |
| Positive Impact<br>Raising Awareness<br>Public Perception | Perception and Impact | 5<br>Score 648 |
| Distinctive Clothes<br>Heightened Value                   | Added Value           | 6<br>Score 564 |

It is significant that the ranking of scores ranged from 768 for embedded sustainability to 564 for added value, a difference of only 204. As there was no sizeable, numerical variation in the scores, it could be suggested that each theme has significant importance to the future of remade and recycled fashion although some to a larger degree. Embedded sustainability achieved the highest ranking. This implies it is crucial for an environmentally conscious awareness of the impact of all aspects of fashion design be inherent in the future design and production of fashionable clothing. It is justified as design sensibility achieved second place, and skills and technology third. This highlights the importance of considered design in the creative process and a sensitivity to what this means to the consumer. The skills needed to make clothes therefore need to embrace sustainable technologies in order to reduce waste and embed a circular approach to reprocessing used or worn clothing. This format of recycling will encourage consistent change and variation in the development of new and exciting fashion products. Perception and impact were scored at fifth place, therefore the embedded sustainability of the design and production process would contribute to a raised awareness of the positive impact of reprocessed fashion. This would result in the added value (ranked at sixth place) of distinctive, novel fashion purchases by a consumer whose awareness of sustainability would be heightened through their consideration of the environmental value in the clothing they choose to wear.

## Conclusion

The literature review unveiled hidden life of clothing and explored how garments often become redundant, spending much of their time unworn and forgotten in wardrobes. The Keepers of Lost Clothes project allowed the student designers to consider how to recycle their own or their family's forgotten clothing as well as discarded clothing found in charity shops. These items were reconstructed into something new both as a means to retain relationships with the clothing and as a way to explore how they could be transformed to enhance sustainability and reduce waste. The designers also explored their personal interests through the different narratives associated with the garments they created. These ranged from replicating the theme of the last day of school in an old school shirt, to incorporating a passion for cycling and non-binary clothing into the design narrative for a remade and reconsidered garment. The sustainable approach to this project emphasised both maintaining and sustaining the changing emotional relationships we can have with our clothes through reprocessing and reusing them.

The rationale for evaluating the sustainable approach of the Make Do and Mend initiative together with that of the Keepers of Lost Clothes project lies in the similarities between the two enterprises despite the 70 year, gap between them. The recycling and reuse of clothing in World War II informed the designers work in the contemporary project and permitted key factors from both initiatives to be identified. These were amalgamated to form the six key themes ranked by the Future Fashion Factory



members in an order of future importance for sustainable fashion. The six fashion experts selected as external to this research substantiated the assessment and agreed that the limited numerical classification between each theme justified the overriding importance of them all. The themes could therefore, be considered holistically as a significant expansion of the range and depth of existing literature and research related to remade and recycled fashion that should enrich the future of the global industry. A further direction for the research could lie in the development of the Keepers of Lost Clothes project, which could consider the six sustainable themes when creating a much wider selection of garments for different levels of the fashion market as a further catalyst for change and innovation. This will drive the research forward to bring new light and meaning to sustainable fashion design and the lasting evolution and potential that forgotten garments and textile waste can hold.

## References

Archana, Shrivastava, Geetika, Jain and Justin, Paul (2020), *Circular Economy and Re-Commerce in the Fashion Industry (Advances in Finance, Accounting, and Economics)*, London: Business Science Reference.

Bekhet, Abir K and Zauszniewski, Jacline A (2012), 'Methodological Triangulation: An Approach to Understanding Data', <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23316537/>. Accessed 20 February 2022.

Braun, Virginia and Clarke, Victoria (2021), *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Brooks, Andrew (2019), *Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes*, London: Zed Books Ltd.

Brownie, Barbra (2013), 'Why We Keep Clothes We Never Wear', *The Guardian* 05 August.

Bye, Elizabeth and McKinney, Ellen (2007), 'Sizing Up The Wardrobe – Why We Keep Clothes That Do Not fit', *Fashion Theory: Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, 11:4, pp. 483-498.

Cawthorne, Nigel (1996), *The New Look: The Dior Revolution*, London: Hamlyn.

Chapple, Matt (2016), *Make It, Own It, Love It: The Essential Guide to Sewing, Altering and Customizing*, London: Jacqui Small LLP.

Corbin, Juliet and Strauss, Anselm (2008), *Basics of Qualitative Research*, London: Sage Publications Inc.

Creswell, John W (2014) *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods*, Thousand Oaks: Research Sage Publications Inc.

Cwerner, Saulo B (2001), 'Clothes At Rest: Elements for a Sociology of the Wardrobe', *Fashion Theory*, 5:1, pp. 79-92.

- Eben, Katie (2005), *Make Do and Mend*, London: Conran Octopus Limited.
- Edwards, Zoey (2021), *Mend it, Wear it, Love it!: Stitch Your Way to a Sustainable Wardrobe*, London: DK.
- Egenhoefer, Rachel Beth (2017), *Routledge Handbook of Sustainable Design*, London: Routledge.
- Future Fashion Factory (2022), 'Supporting Innovation in the UK Fashion and Textiles Industry', <https://futurefashionfactory.org>. Accessed 8 March 2022.
- Fulop, Lily (2020), *Wear, Repair, Repurpose: A Maker's Guide to Mending and Upcycling Clothes*, New York: Countryman Press.
- Guy, Alison and Banim, Maura (2000), 'Personal Collections: Women's Clothing Use and Identity', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 9:3, pp. 313-327.
- Guy, Alison, Green, Eileen and Banim, Maura (eds) (2001), *Through the Wardrobe: Women's Relationship with their Clothes*, Oxford: Berg.
- Henninger, Claudia E, Panaviota, Alevizou J, Gowerek, Helen and Ryding Daniella. (eds) (2017), *Sustainability in Fashion: A Cradle to Upcycle Approach*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hertz, Carrie (2011). 'Costuming Potential: Accommodating Unworn Clothes', *Museum Anthropology Review*, 5 1-2 pp. 18.
- Hogan, Ruth (2017), *The Keeper of Lost Things*, London: Two Roads.
- Hur, Eunsuk (2020), 'Rebirth Fashion: Secondhand Clothing Consumption Values and Perceived Risks', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 273, pp. 1-16.
- Imperial War Museum (2007), *Make Do and Mend*, London: Imperial War Museum.
- Kawamura, Yuniya (2011), *Doing Research in Fashion and Dress: An Introduction to Qualitative Methods*, London: Berg.
- Lacy, Peter, Long, Jessica and Spindler, Wesley (2019), *The Circular Economy Handbook: Realizing the Circular Advantage*, London: Palgrave McMillan.
- Leavy, Patricia (2020), *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Practice Research*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Lenton, Katie (2019), 'Keepers of Lost Clothes', <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/leeds-school-of-arts/2019/02/keepers-of-lost-clothes/>. Accessed 16 November 2021.

Lonsdale, Sarah (2009), 'Make Do and Mend: Restoring the Good Things in Life A new Generation on the Mend', <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/property/green/4304957/Make-do-and-mend>. Accessed 16 November 2021.

McDowell, Colin (1997), *Forties Fashion and the New Look*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Maycroft, Neil (2009), 'Not Moving Things Along: Hoarding Clutter and Other Ambiguous Matter', *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 8:6, pp. 354-364.

Mayer, Lynne Pearl (2019), *How can Fashion Brands Enhance Value and Life-Span Extension of Products? An Exploratory Study of Circular Economy in Regard to the Economic Viability of Product Life-Span Extension*, Zurich: GRIN Verlag.

Ministry of Information (2007), *Make Do and Mend (Historic Booklet Series)*, London: Abe Books.

Moore, Niamh, Salter, Andrea, Stanley, Liz and Tamboukou, Maria (2016), *The Archive Project: Archival Research in the Social Sciences*, London: Routledge.

Muthu, Subramanian Senthilkannan (2018), *Circular Economy in Textiles and Apparel: Processing, Manufacturing, and Design (The Textile Institute Book Series)*, Sawston: Woodhead Publishing.

The Newsroom (2019), 'New Shirts for Old by Keepers of Lost Clothes', <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/new-shirts-old-keepers-lost-clothes-127826>. Accessed 8 March 2022.

Niinimäki, Kirsi (2019), *Sustainable Fashion in a Circular Economy*, Otakaari: Aalto-yliopisto.

Norman, Jill (2013), *Make Do and Mend: Keeping Family and Home Afloat on War Rations*, London: Michael O'Mara.

Press, Clare (2018), *Wardrobe Crisis: How We Went from Sunday Best to Fast Fashion*, London: Abe Books.

Sullivan, Janine Chisholm (2021), *Fashion Hacks: Use simple Sewing Techniques to Recycle, Reuse, and Revamp your Clothes for a More Mindful Approach to Fashion*, London: CICO Books.

Summers, Julie (2015), *Fashion on the Ration: Style in the Second World War*, London: Profile Books.

Swann, Patricia (2020), *The Illustrated Guide to the Content Analysis Research Project*, London: Routledge.

Tavangari, Natasha (2010), 'How Make Do and Mend Clothing in the 1940's is Now the Modern Equivalent to the Eco Recycling Trend and Why?' Undergraduate thesis, Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield.

Tickner, Sam and Peacock, Rebecca (2012), *Make & Mend: A Guide to Recycling Clothes and Fabrics*, London: How To Books; UK ed. Edition.

University of Leeds (2022) 'What is a Systematic Literature Review'.  
[https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1404/literature\\_searching/15/systematic\\_reviews](https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1404/literature_searching/15/systematic_reviews).  
Accessed 8 March 2022.

Veillon, Dominique (2002), *Fashion Under the Occupation*, Oxford: Berg.

Vignali, Gianpaolo and Reid, Louise F (2019), *Technology-Driven Sustainability: Innovation in the Fashion Supply Chain*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Walford, Jonathon (2008), *Forties Fashion: From Siren Suits to the New Look*, London: Thames and Hudson.

Ward, Wendy (2021), *How to Sew Sustainably: Recycling, Reusing, and Remaking with Fabric*, London: CICO Books.

Weetman, Catherine (2020), *A Circular Economy Handbook: How to Build a More Resilient, Competitive and Sustainable Business*, London: Kogan Page.

Wilding, Sasha (2020), 'Sasha Wilding', YouTube, 30 January, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKySEMqhFx8>. Accessed 08 March 2022.

Wilson, B. (2009), 'The Modern 'Make do and Mend'', <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8224494.stm>. Accessed 16 November 2021.

Woodward, Sophie (2007), *Why Women Wear What They Wear*, Oxford: Berg.

Yorkshire Fashion Archive 'Yorkshire Fashion Archive | School of Design | University of Leeds',  
[https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/homepage/254/yorkshire\\_fashion\\_archive](https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/homepage/254/yorkshire_fashion_archive). Accessed 16 November 2021.