

Just Like the Kings Road, Only Nearer: Scotland's Boutique Bonanza, 1965–1970

By JADE HALBERT

The fashion entrepreneurs of so-called 'Swinging London' – John Stephen on Carnaby Street or Mary Quant on the Kings Road, for example – fundamentally changed British fashion in the 1960s: from old to young, dull to vibrant, and crucially, from shop to boutique. But while the impact of 'Swinging London' is well-recorded in the historiography of English fashion and retail, less is known about its effects further afield. This article considers the impact of 'Swinging London' boutique culture in Scotland between 1965 and 1970. Taking the example of the Glasgow fashion design and manufacturing business Marion Donaldson as its main case study, it draws on a variety of oral history, archival, and media evidence to trace the dissemination of boutique fashion culture in Scotland across multiple retail contexts. From the urban centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh to the towns and regions beyond, it offers new analyses of the opportunities boutique retailing afforded Marion Donaldson and the Scottish fashion industry more generally, and thus provides new insight into the impact of the so-called 'boutique boom' of the 1960s on Scottish fashion and enterprise culture.

Keywords: boutique, Glasgow, Scotland, fashion, 1960s, Marion Donaldson, Carnaby Street, Swinging London

INTRODUCTION

In January 1968, Latters department store in Glasgow, Scotland's largest city, launched its newest concession with an advertising campaign that drew on all the familiar signifiers of

‘Swinging London’ and Carnaby Street: a psychedelic bubble-font logo, five young women in miniskirts draped over a convertible sports car, each posed as though in frantic motion momentarily paused, and below it all a hectic paragraph of ‘swinging’ patois:

JUST IN is the super and newest boutique in Glasgow. Groovy music adds to the fun...and it’s fun all the time at JUST IN because it’s that kind of place. Latters created JUST IN downstairs in their smooth Royal Exchange Square fashion salon especially for the slick young set. Girls going places go first to JUST IN...the boutique where buying clothes is fun. JUST IN clothes are styles which go everywhere and certainly straight into the wardrobes of the cleverest dollies. Swing straight into the fashion merry-go-round with the in-gear you buy at JUST IN. Go-anywhere clothes at prices you’ll love are modelled for you by Glasgow’s top dollies, so come round for a good look!

These powerful tropes – the dynamic imagery, flashy vernacular, and florid hyperbole – are familiar to all historians of 1960s fashion culture; they permeated fashion media then and have transcended the decade, remaining potent in retellings and in the collective memory today. As Mark Donnelly has argued, the 1960s has ‘left a legacy that refuses to go away. The semiotics of the sixties, the fashions, the music, the flower-power aesthetic, have never been far from the surface of contemporary culture.’¹ This enduring legacy of its distinctive ‘pop’ culture has formed an intoxicating mythology around the 1960s, obscuring its quotidian realities and allowing for what Donnelly describes as ‘imagined territory to be fought over, malleable material to be constructed, analysed, critiqued and pulled apart again.’² In challenging blithe acquiescence to ‘imagined territory’, or unquestioning subscription to the *perception* of the 1960s, Christopher Breward has called for ‘a reconsideration of the work of 1960s fashion designers, retail entrepreneurs and consumers themselves’; in this way, it is possible to decipher the hyperbole and reach a clearer and more informed understanding of this most exciting and vibrant of fashion decades.³

This article seeks to answer that call, and thus prioritises fashion designers, retail entrepreneurs and consumers in its primary evidence. Through examination of oral historical, archival, and contemporary media sources, and taking the Glasgow-based fashion design business Marion Donaldson as its central case study, it looks beyond hyperbole and hype to trace the dissemination of ‘Swinging London’ boutique culture across multiple Scottish retail contexts – from the boutiques and department stores of Glasgow and Edinburgh to the high streets of Falkirk and Motherwell and back again – between 1965 and 1970.⁴ It begins by identifying and defining how the boutique concept was understood (and misunderstood) in Scotland, before moving on to examine encounters between the Scottish fashion design and retail sectors in the example of Marion Donaldson and the boutiques (and later department store boutique concessions) that sold its clothes, thereby bringing clarity to the commercial transactions that were fundamental to the success of 1960s fashion entrepreneurs, but which have been mostly absent in existing accounts of creative retail cultures in post-war fashion business. Finally, by reconciling the well-known histories of ‘Swinging London’ and Carnaby Street with the lesser-known histories of fashionable Scotland in the same period, this article argues for a reappraisal of the Scottish sixties, and establishes new perspectives from which to both acknowledge and appreciate the significance of the ‘swinging’ boutique and its legacy in the history of Scottish fashion and enterprise culture.⁵

‘DO LET’S REMEMBER – IT’S ONLY A SHOP’

The boutique concept as it is now understood originated in London’s Carnaby Street and was established by independent fashion retailers catering to a flamboyant (predominately male and often homosexual) market.⁶ According to Richard Lester, the first acknowledged boutiques – Vince Man’s Shop (opened at 5 Newburgh Street in 1954), and His Clothes (opened at 19 Beak Street in 1957) – ‘represented substantial departures from what had gone before.’⁷ The influence of John Stephen, the Glaswegian entrepreneur and owner of His Clothes cannot be overstated; he

was a pioneer of retail innovation and a talented marketer. As Lester notes, Stephen ‘employed designers of his own age to ensure that every rapid and subtle change in fashion was catered for, his shop assistants were the same age as the clients, and the boutique played the latest music, non-stop. [...] [it] became the menswear boutique that was copied across London, eventually across the country.’⁸ From His Clothes, Stephen built a boutique empire; by 1966 he owned 22 boutiques selling both men’s and womenswear in the Greater London area, with nine on Carnaby Street alone, earning him the epithet ‘King of Carnaby Street’.⁹ Stephen, alongside his King’s Road counterpart Mary Quant, and others, inspired a generation of enthusiastic amateur ‘boutiquers’ who were eager to enter the fashion fray. Thus, an exciting shift in retail was initiated – one that was youth-led and exuberant, and a direct challenge to the stuffy retail establishment and its ‘bridge-playing matrons with fat Pekineses’ who had reigned over high streets since the nineteenth century.¹⁰

Thanks to the rise of youth television and print media, by the middle of the 1960s information about the latest fashions was communicated much more quickly than before and thus the boutique concept was disseminated from Carnaby Street across the country at rapid pace, empowered and sustained by the sizeable youth demographic and its considerable spending power.¹¹ While fashion magazines and weekend colour supplements clamoured to report on the latest trends, in some other sectors of the media the response was lukewarm. *Drapers’ Record*, for example, was filled with boutique-related editorial split between complaints about the invasion of unprofessional incomers, and joy at the fresh direction in the trade.¹² ‘Boutiques,’ enthused Felix, *Drapers’* roving reporter in October 1965, ‘are springing up in towns all over Britain like Chinese restaurants. More and more young people are taking the plunge into retailing with their own fashion ideas.’¹³ Despite Felix’s positive spin on the boutique movement, the Editor’s letter in the same issue was rather less amiable: ‘Smart public relations seems to have obscured the sad little fact that a boutique is in fact just another word (a French one at that) for a

small shop. We have a suspicion that more and more boutiques are being started by people whose experience of retailing is hazy or even non-existent. In many cases, it seems they feel too superior to admit they are actually becoming shopkeepers. There is a slight air of having-the-chums-around-for-coffee sound about the longer word. But do let's remember – it's only a shop.'¹⁴

By January 1966, 'Swinging London' – including Carnaby Street and its wild coterie of boutique mavericks, posturing peacocks, and dolly birds – teetered on the edge of a global media phenomenon.¹⁵ The national media had long since embraced 'op' and 'pop', and dedicated acres of print to John Stephen, Mary Quant and the rest, but in Scotland all was much as it had been ten years before. Here, the conservative press clung to tradition, usually confining fashion editorial to stiff reports on elite Paris and London designs for the increasingly irrelevant social season.¹⁶ One typical *Glasgow Herald* article of January 1966 praised the latest 'old guard' presentations from the likes of Sir Norman Hartnell and Charles Creed, and noted with approval that, 'so far as they are concerned, Courrèges and so much that he is responsible for [namely the mini-skirt, which the *Herald* maintained was 'simply indecent'] might never have been.'¹⁷ The tabloid *Evening Times*, meanwhile, treated youth fashion as a joke; one cartoon of 1966 shows two friends, one wearing a mini dress emblazoned with the iconic tri-colour target motif and below the caption: 'Sandra says, "If ye go to the pub wi' that dress, Deirdre, they'll throw darts at ye!'"¹⁸

One Glasgow newspaper, however, did embrace the rise of youth fashion. The *Evening Citizen* was among the city's top-selling tabloids, and was especially popular with a younger audience.¹⁹ In January 1966, it launched a new weekly column, 'Scene 66' which aimed to tell all about pop, people, clothes, and clubs. Written by twenty-one year old girl-about-town, Elizabeth Lyon, 'Scene 66' began with a manifesto that captured the spirit of ascendant youth culture: 'We the with it, young, in-touch, trend-setting set are the pacemakers. Oh, we're always

making news. We have practically taken over the telly with pop, the rag trade with pop, we're pirating the seas with pop, hitting the stock exchange and getting OBEs for contributing to the export drive.'²⁰ As part of its initiative to embrace its young readership, 'Scene 66' ran a competition to win £50 worth of 'mod' clothing. The clothes were described as 'offbeat mixtures of the newest clothes in Glasgow supplied by Wallis, Fraser Sons, Pettigrews and Jaeger.'²¹ This was far from the cutting edge of 'swinging' fashion and retail, but it was the best available in Glasgow. Like its media, Scotland's retailers remained largely in denial about the shifting landscape of British fashion and its turn to a youth market; as such, there was very little opportunity for young Scots to participate in the new fashion wave beyond the 'vicarious consumption' offered by mail order and home dressmaking.²² They were excluded from the pleasures of the new boutique culture; the tactile enjoyment of shopping, the opportunity for stylistic experimentation, and the leisurely saunter and display provided by a Saturday afternoon spent at ease browsing in boutiques.

Despite the lack of material connection to the most up-to-date London fashions, 'Scene 66' did its best to keep its young readership abreast of the latest style and pop news. Lyon often travelled to London to report on the Carnaby Street atmosphere, the shopping, and the trends. Very quickly, primed by the effervescent national media and their local 'Scene 66', Glasgow's young people were desperate to experience boutique culture for themselves and to dress as flamboyantly as their Carnaby Street counterparts. They wanted everything they had been promised: to buy all the up-to-the-minute clobber they saw in magazines like *Honey* or *Petticoat*, or worn by Cathy McGowan on *Ready Steady Go!* and crucially, somewhere to buy it all.

GLASGOW: GETTING IN GEAR

In March 1966 there was a frenzy on the pages of 'Scene 66' induced by the opening of In Gear, a new boutique on Gibson Street in Glasgow's bohemian west end, hyped and celebrated by

Lyon as the city's first 'real live' boutique.²³ This fanfare for In Gear, however, was not wholly deserved. A few months earlier on 19 January 1966, 31-year-old Edward McCullough had opened Modrock, a boutique on Lambhill Street in the mainly industrial Kinning Park area of the city. McCullough had launched Modrock with a riotous public performance by the local band the Beatstalkers (so wild it made front page news the following day) and recruited Bruce McClure to design Modrock's fashion range.²⁴ McClure, a local celebrity and choreographer of BBC's *Stramash!* music show (similar to the national *Ready Steady Go!*), considered himself a connoisseur at the cutting-edge of fashion. His responsibilities at *Stramash!* included dressing The Stramashers, the show's troupe of dancing girls, and in an interview with the *Evening Times*, he waxed lyrical about his superior instinct for seizing the zeitgeist: 'We don't follow London. When London gets a new dress style, it's already dead for us [...] We're always on the lookout for something new.'²⁵

Ready Steady Go! had made a star of its stylish teenage host, Cathy McGowan, and had sent thousands of eager young Londoners and their pay packets flocking to boutiques to copy her clothes.²⁶ McCullough sought to emulate that success by using McClure's reputation and connections at *Stramash!* as a launchpad for his own enterprise. Unhappily, however, he failed. Despite his calculated entry into the boutique world, Modrock was unsuccessful and seems to have made little impact, with some sources suggesting it closed as early as the summer of 1966.²⁷ Its unfashionable and out-of-the-way location must certainly have been a factor in its rapid downfall, but it is also compelling to consider other factors that may have limited its success – among these must surely be lack of press attention and promotion, not least its glaring and unexplained absence on the hallowed pages of Elizabeth Lyons' 'Scene 66'.

In contrast to Modrock, In Gear enjoyed extensive flattering coverage. As the Hirsts prepared for opening in March 1966, Lyon interviewed Ann; she started by giving her own insider perspective of boutique culture:

Here in Glasgow there is a lot of uninformed talk about boutiques. A boutique is a little shop that sells clothes and the kit to go with them. There is pop music and there are pop girls and you try on everything, and there is a certain ambiance you can't explain. Soon a real live boutique is to open in Glasgow's West End. Just like a Carnaby Street – King's Road boutique. [...] The brains, money, and hammers and nails are Ann and Gerald Hirst's. On April 4 they are launching IN GEAR [sic] in Gibson Street, in the heart of what they hope will flower into Glasgow's Chelsea. Ann Hirst – she's the brains – is 23, an ex-drama student, a mother and a housewife. She's pretty and shy and nice. 'I want the shop to be fun. I want shopping to be fun. Like going through someone else's wardrobe. You can try on all the clothes, and you don't have to buy anything unless you want to. I should hate anyone to buy anything they didn't want.'²⁸

This interview, as well as emulating the hyperbolic chummy turn in journalism that characterised coverage of 'Swinging London', also emphasised and endorsed Ann Hirst's boutique credentials; she was 23 and 'pretty and shy and nice', the opposite, we might suppose, of Edward McCollough. It also offered readers a clear definition of what Lyon considered a 'real live' boutique to be: a fun place run for young people by young people, where everyone could try on the latest fashionable clothes without intrusion or pressure to purchase.

Unlike Edward McCollough, Ann Hirst conformed to the ideal image of the archetypal boutique entrepreneur, and she shared, as Marnie Fogg has put it, 'values and practices with customers'.²⁹ The Hirsts understood fashion and the importance of aspiration; they decorated In Gear in high boutique style with a completely white interior and a vibrant window mural, and stocked it full of clothes by new exciting fashion designers including André Courrèges, Ossie Clark, and Jean Varon, alongside more affordable stock house brands such as Dollyrockers and Susan Small (Figure 1). Their privileged position as insiders, their status as enthusiastic amateurs (therefore, authentic), and the general informality of how business was run at In Gear was fortunate for Marion (1944 –) and David Donaldson (1943 –) (Figure 2) who had recently

returned home to Glasgow from London, inspired by the exciting clothes and vivid, psychedelic colours they had seen and worn during their six months in the capital. Their plan was to set up a cottage industry making the kind of clothes they had seen on Carnaby Street but which they knew could not be found on Sauchiehall Street (Figure 3). The day after their return they made a beeline for In Gear, and in interview, they remembered their first encounter with Ann and Gerald:

David: We drive over to Gibson Street – we’d heard there was this boutique opening – we stop outside this boutique, which was to become In Gear.

Marion: That’s right, and we knocked on the window – it wasn’t even open – we knocked on the window and said ‘Hello! We’re designers from London, we were wondering if you would like some of our clothes?’ And they went, ‘Eh, yes!’ Because they were actually even greener than we were. Or maybe as green as we were. And I remember Ann kind of looked at us and said, ‘Well, actually, these purple bell bottoms that you’re wearing, do you do things like that?’ And I said, ‘Yes, sure, of course!’ So, ‘We’ll have some of them!’ And it was actually...as simple as that. They were looking for people who could actually supply clothes, because they had actually bought things from Ossie Clark and various other really expensive designers in London. And they hadn’t a clue, actually, what they were going to sell. And that was it, we actually said, ‘Yes, we can do that’.

David: We nipped down to Arnott’s [a department store on Argyle Street] and bought curtain fabric and brass zips, you know, big ring-pull zips. [...] Basically, literally, we run out and buy some fabric and make up these trousers.³⁰

Fortunately, the Hirsts were excited by that initial delivery and agreed to stock Marion Donaldson clothes on a sale or return basis. It was a successful arrangement for both parties.

Marion Donaldson was immediately popular at In Gear, and the Donaldsons were able to make enough money every week to continue purchasing fabric and making clothes at their kitchen table in the evenings and at weekends.

Within weeks, Marion was being promoted in the press as ‘Scotland’s Mary Quant’, and by the summer of 1966 the Donaldsons were confident that their cottage industry was profitable. If they could find another customer, and replicate their success at In Gear, they would be able to leave their part-time day jobs and work at building Marion Donaldson full-time.³¹ Duplicating their approach at In Gear, they travelled forty miles by bus to a new boutique in Edinburgh with a suitcase full of Marion Donaldson clothes and asked the owner if he would like to stock their designs. Togs for Togs on Edinburgh’s Hanover Street was a much bigger boutique than In Gear, and as Marion and David remembered, it was a dynamic space:

Marion: I mean the shop was really mobbed...it was really crowded because it was kind of exciting, it had different things, [...] like coloured tights. [...] I can’t remember any of the labels, but he actually had a better assortment of merchandise [than In Gear].

David: He was on the money, you know? That shop was pulling them in [...] You couldn’t see the shop for people!

Marion: Absolutely...he had the tight ribbed polo necks, he had great trousers, great belts, coloured tights which was, you know, a real thing then. Purple tights, orange tights, pink tights. And it just literally took off like a rocket. It was the most amazing success that shop, in no time at all.³²

The owner of Togs for Togs placed an order for 60 Marion Donaldson dresses, payment on delivery, to be delivered in two weeks. That initial order sold out within two days and the owner was on the phone pleading for more stock: a repeat order was placed – to be delivered immediately. This second order meant that Marion and David were pushed to find a Cut Make

Trim (CMT) factory that would manufacture their clothes for them, and thus the success of Togs for Togs meant success for Marion Donaldson in turn, quickly elevating the company from kitchen table production and cottage industry to factory sourcing and formal fashion business.

These fruitful business transactions, first at In Gear and then at Togs for Togs demonstrate in microcosm the critical incubating function fulfilled by independent boutique retail in the shifting and challenging environment of 1960s fashion business. In this case, boutique encounters afforded Marion and David Donaldson the opportunity to sell their designs and grow a viable fashion business inside Scotland; the profitable existence of such a business would have been unimaginable at the start of the 1960s. It was through encounters with boutiques that Marion Donaldson had gained access to the vast youth and young professional markets that clamoured for the novelty of new fashions with every weekly wage and thus sustained their nascent business.³³ There was profitable synergy between Marion Donaldson and its boutique retailers and through this Marion and David were afforded the space to learn their trade and their craft, to make mistakes and to experiment with their aesthetic, all the while steadily growing their business. None of this would have been possible had they attempted to sell their first home-made designs in a traditional retail environment.

By 1968 Marion and David Donaldson had enough boutique customers in Scotland to keep themselves and the factory making their clothes busy. Togs for Togs was a sensation in Edinburgh, opening a second then a third branch in quick succession. In Glasgow, In Gear was joined on Gibson Street by Campus, and on Byres Road (also in the student-populated west-end of the city), Aquarius opened selling 'ethnic' curiosities alongside fashionable fripperies. Aberdeen's Chapel Street had the wittily-named Gone to Chapel Street as well as The Place, a discotheque-come-boutique opened by the pirate radio disc jockey Stuart Henry.³⁴ In Edinburgh, Togs for Togs faced competition from Pacesetters, Stella Nova, and Unit One, while in Falkirk Go Gal sold everything the fashionable provincial teen could want. In Airdrie, Thinkle Peep was

the place to be, in Hamilton it was Boutique 263, in Shotts and Motherwell Angie's Boutique reigned supreme (Figure 4), while in Cumbernauld, Dip Boutique dominated the scene.³⁵ All over the country, aspiring boutique entrepreneurs followed suit, running as Sonia Ashmore puts it, 'like miners to a goldrush' to join in with a national boutique bonanza that some sources estimate was bringing in £5 million a year for its proprietors in London alone.³⁶

Such was the glut of boutiques being opened, in 1967 *Petticoat*, the popular fashion magazine aimed at teenage girls, ran a double-page editorial, 'So You Want to Open Your Own Boutique', which was an attempt to balance optimism with practical and cautionary advice. 'If you want to live dangerously, business-wise,' wrote Phillipa Sidney, *Petticoat's* careers editor, 'opening your own boutique (because you love clothes, have fashion flair, and a few hundred pounds in the bank) should be your first choice.'³⁷ Sidney interviewed several boutique owners, including Vanessa Denza, owner of the successful Knightsbridge boutique, Vanessa Frye, to give her readers some idea of the tough reality of running a successful boutique, including the pitfalls of shoplifting and overlooking manufacturers' 30-day credit terms. Included in this editorial was Denza's breakdown of the costs of running a typical 'country' boutique which set out in stark terms the initial capital and business acumen required to run a viable fashion emporium. Denza's budget detailed 'all sorts of items the unwary probably never thought of', and was explicit about the potential returns, detailing in this case a miserable profit forecast of £226 from a projected turnover of £13,520.³⁸

FROM CARNABY STREET TO SAUCHIEHALL STREET

In Glasgow, Dalys on Sauchiehall Street was one of the most prominent and prestigious department stores, and in her overview of the British fashion industry in the 1960s, the journalist Roma Fairley described in evocative terms the store and its affluent clientele:

To my friends and me, Dalys was a palace. We would stop in front of the big windows and breathe in the warm, perfumed smells that wafted out as the doors swung open and shut. Women we supposed to be very rich would come out, flushed from afternoon tea, talking in the refined accents of Glasgow's fur cape district, Kelvinside. Then we would move on, suddenly bored. We were young and Dalys was old.³⁹

Despite this exclusive and conservative reputation, Dalys had recognised the shift to boutique-style retailing and the ascendancy of the youth market relatively early, opening its Miss Dalys Boutique in December 1965. There was no mention of this in the local press, but *Drapers' Record* did publish a brief notice, reporting that: 'the boutique is handling outerwear for career girls, office workers and the daughters of Dalys shoppers'.⁴⁰ While Dalys' move towards the younger market was astute, there is little evidence to indicate that they actually sold cutting-edge or fashionable boutique-style clothes; instead, conservative dinner dresses and twinset-and-sensible-skirt outfits dominated their sales brochures.⁴¹ Dalys' adoption of boutique culture (in nomenclature if not in material terms) foreshadowed a considerable shift in business strategy that was only just beginning, but which would shape Scottish department stores for the remainder of the decade and beyond.

Unlike in London, where the rise of boutiques had taken department stores and other established retailers by surprise, in Glasgow and Edinburgh their emergence coincided with a wider retail awakening, and as a result many department stores were able to react to and capitalise on the boutique trend almost as it happened.⁴² Andrew Stewart, a womenswear fashion buyer at Henderson's department store, also on Sauchiehall Street, recalled the moment in 1966 when he learned that there was a vast market to whom his department did not cater:

My boss had indicated that he was aware that there was merchandise being sold, [...] which was mostly dresses, in what he considered to be garish colours and materials and make that weren't

just what we bought for our own more mature customers, but for young people. And he thought that we might be missing out in this area...although we didn't even know what the area was. Although, his colleagues, the people he worked with down in London, were saying 'It seems as though there's more business growing, increasingly in this area'.⁴³

Joe Wilson, Andrew's boss and the owner of Henderson's, frequently visited the factories of London's rag trade to buy for his store. On one of these trips, he learned from his colleagues that the 'garish' clothes he had seen hanging by the thousand on rails in east end factories were mostly being sold in boutiques for young people. Keen for Henderson's to take part in and profit from the boutique trend, he sent Andrew to London on a reconnaissance mission to visit Carnaby Street and learn everything he could. As Andrew recalled in interview:

Carnaby Street was I think about a couple of dozen outlets, mostly run by or owned or influenced by John Stephen, who came from Glasgow. I was fortunate enough to meet him a couple of times, and he was very, very supportive and helpful, and helped me get my mind around what was actually happening. The most impressive thing about these visits to Carnaby Street was how very busy it was, how all the merchandise in each of the outlets was related, so there was jewellery, there was underwear, there were shoes, dresses, coats, trousers...all connecting...so what we now think of as a boutique situation. Whereas in department stores we sold in sections or areas, so bringing all these areas together to give a look, an identity to the young person was obviously...I was aware of this.⁴⁴

Henderson's was not alone. Many Scottish department stores raced to accommodate the lucrative youth market by emulating the identity of Carnaby Street-style boutiques: Darlings in Edinburgh turned its basement over to boutique-style retail with Darlings Dungeon (Figure 5) while Latters in Glasgow's Royal Exchange Square rushed to open its Just In boutique (Figure 6). At Henderson's, Joe Wilson gave Andrew instructions to design Henderson's boutique in the

image of Carnaby Street; as Andrew explained, ‘he left it entirely to me to sort of recreate if possible, (ho-ho-ho!), Carnaby Street in a basement in Sauchiehall Street!’⁴⁵ Andrew’s basement boutique – initially christened The Mod Boutique at its launch in March 1967 before a subsequent rebrand as The Underground – was fitted out to look the part and stocked full of ‘garish’ clothes. Its launch was advertised in the *Evening Citizen*, which had by then entirely surrendered to the baroque vocabulary and hectic cadence of boutique vernacular:

The Mod Boutique now on the lower ground floor. The whole scene going from 9am tomorrow! Packed with young idea gear by the slickest of the new pacesetters. Fab colours, rave styles. No need to search the town. You won’t find better. So come and make with the trend. And all that goes with the gear! In the same department – trendy styles in hats, bags, jewellery, and tights. It’s all here! Now!’⁴⁶

One of the crucial factors that contributed to the department stores’ success in developing the original boutique concept was one of the very things that had been central to earlier predictions of their decline as viable businesses: the volume of space they had available to lure young shoppers and capture their wages. As well as a constantly-evolving selection of up-to-the-minute styles, many department store boutiques also had space for customers to relax and, as Andrew put it, ‘mosey around’; they could spend time listening to and buying music, drinking at coffee bars, browsing the accessories departments, or testing the latest beauty trends at make-up counters.⁴⁷ As Alison Adburgham noted in *The Guardian*, ‘Far from being ossified, [department stores] seem to have got their second breath and are showing great adaptability to the changing climate. They have been shrewd in sizing up the new generation of young shoppers [...] [and] have joined the youth game, opening young boutiques, wig bars, coffee bars, displaying merchandise for self-selection and laying on piped music where it seems to be required.’⁴⁸

While in Edinburgh, Darlings Dungeon invited customers to ‘sip a cool coke...spin a cool disc...buy the coolest craziest clothes’, the advertising for The Underground at Henderson’s was even more explicit: ‘Just like the Kings Road, only nearer’ (Figure 7).⁴⁹ The invocation of Kings Road cool suggests that Henderson’s was trying to encourage its young customers to look on The Underground as a place to pose and be seen, not exclusively a place to consume. They took the shopping-as-relaxation concept further in a subsequent campaign: ‘All you have to spend is time’ (Figure 8). For the first time since the rise of Carnaby Street, the boutiques had real competition, and many went out of business. What had initially been the catalyst to their success – amateurish enthusiasm and a haphazard approach to the intricacies of business – became their downfall in the face of department store professionalism.

The move of Glasgow’s department stores into youth retailing brought boutique-style fashion to a much larger market sector, and their purchasing clout, healthy budgets, and the relative autonomy of buyers like Andrew Stewart was fortunate for Marion Donaldson. In early 1968 when the owner of Togs for Togs failed to pay the company £2000 he owed for previous deliveries, Marion and David withheld an order of several hundred dresses. This non-payment was a potential catastrophe, as Marion explained: ‘David sent him the bill. Finally, by this time he owed us £2000 [...] and he sent back the invoice with “Nuts!” at which point we thought “Oh-oh! This is us in real trouble!” And by that time, we had rails of clothes ready for sending through to Edinburgh. [...] Rails of dresses that were all manufactured and had been paid for, of course. Fabric paid for, manufacturing paid for...and we were really in trouble!’⁵⁰

The Donaldsons decided that they would try to sell the unpaid-for Togs for Togs stock to Henderson’s newly-opened basement boutique and in interview, Andrew Stewart was delighted to recount this episode, an ‘apprehensive’ Marion and a ‘confident’ David approaching him with a box full of samples:

Down the stairs came...and I can actually physically remember these two, this couple coming down...Marion and David with a box. [...] What was striking about the merchandise when the box was open was first of all, the material. The fabric, the pattern, and then the detail of lace [...]. And the colours, right? And I hadn't actually seen anything like this particular presentation [...]. So, I said, 'Right, let's have a look at this,' and I got one of my girls to try it on. And the girl came out of the dressing room, and said, 'Oh, Andrew, this is really pretty!'. Now, 'pretty' wasn't a word we used [...] our customers weren't looking to be pretty. But this was in keeping with the time, as it were, but it was also pretty and very flattering to wear. So, I said, 'Right, I think we'll go for this'.⁵¹

This was the start of a profitable relationship between Henderson's and Marion Donaldson, and also the start of Marion Donaldson breaking away from the vibrant but fiscally unreliable boutique sector, which was, in any case, already in decline. Although keen to still deal with boutiques that could compete under pressure from department store competition – Campus, Aquarius, and a few others – many boutiques, including In Gear and Togs for Togs eventually faltered and went out of business by the end of the decade.⁵² This was not just happening in Scotland. At the liquidation proceedings of one Carnaby Street boutique, the young owner lamented her bad luck. After six months of excellent trading, she had suffered two bad seasons. 'The first was caused by increased competition from other Carnaby Street traders; the second by competition from the big department stores which had by then entered the boutique business.'⁵³ As Phillipa Sidney had warned her readers in *Petticoat*, 'At one time, builders used to be the most likely types to attend bankruptcy courts, then it was hairdressers, and now it is boutique owners.'⁵⁴

As the 1960s drew to a close, department stores came to dominate fashionable boutique-style retailing in Scotland and across the United Kingdom; even John Stephen himself opened a department store, a three-storey monument to the boutique-as-lifestyle concept, with a restaurant,

a wig bar, and a dedicated men's haberdashery section.⁵⁵ Department stores were able to retain new design talent with their professionalism and payment on time, and this was a major factor in their successful fashion coup – for Marion and David Donaldson, the economies of scale were irresistible. With customers all over Scotland and as far south as Newcastle by 1967, they were fulfilling orders for hundreds of garments every week, and both the fabric and the manufacturing had to be paid for. Had Andrew Stewart not come to the rescue in buying up the withheld Togs for Togs stock, a £2000 debt could have meant bankruptcy. It taught Marion and David a valuable lesson: to avoid over-reliance on any one retailer. As Marion explained, 'It gave us a very cautious kind of view.'⁵⁶

By 1968 the bulk of Marion Donaldson clothes in Scotland were being sold not in independent boutiques, but in boutique-style concessions in department stores. While Marnie Fogg has condemned department store appropriation of boutique culture, arguing that it 'had become debased as every desperate department store threw a cordon around a corner of the shop that didn't contain cutlery or cushions, played loud music, and called it a boutique', in Glasgow, department store intervention in boutique culture went far beyond base appropriation.⁵⁷ It shaped new a new retail agenda and invited a new generation of Glaswegians to embrace these 'palaces' of consumption as integral spaces of creative enterprise and urban fashionability. Andrew Stewart's efforts at The Underground (for example, having his staff dress in the latest fashions as an example to young shoppers and providing dedicated leisure space), demonstrate one aspect of how this worked in practice, showing that in Scotland department stores were powerful agents in democratising, demystifying, and deciphering metropolitan boutique culture for local markets.

GUERRILLAS VS BIG BATTALIONS

By 1969, 'Swinging London' was over. Carnaby Street was more sad and seedy than swish and switched on, and all across the country the boutique concept was in its death throes.⁵⁸ The Editor of *Drapers' Record* was delighted to report the news:

Fashion is on the march again – and this time it is the big battalions not the guerrillas who are out in force [...]. Once – and not so long ago – there were prophets by the hundred who foretold the imminent demise of the big stores, who pinned their faith to the boutiques when it came to setting the pace for selling fashion. [...] But in the end, the sheer weight of professionalism and expertise has proved its worth. Over the past 18 months, one store after another [...] has come forward with heavily capitalised ventures that are transforming the store image [...]. Special departments have leaped forward, dedicated to promoting fashion on the highest level to the most highly fashion-conscious customers...the under 25s.⁵⁹

As he so gleefully made clear, the boutique was dead, but he could not deny that it had been the catalyst to a profound and material change in British retailing. By 1970 in Glasgow, the next wave of retail disruption was in full swing and cheap-and-cheerful high street fashion shops targeting the youth market had become commonplace. Shops with cheeky, *Carry On*-style nod-and-wink names like Fanny's Keyhole (620 Gallowgate) (Figure 9) and Bird's Bazaar (90 West Regent Street) retained the most appealing aspects of boutique retailing (loud music, eye-catching graphics) but rather than claiming elite status within stylish commercial enclaves, they were often located on the fringes of the city centre among what were traditionally the manufacturing areas. These shops specialised in inexpensive, fast fashion as well as newly-fashionable branded goods such as Wrangler jeans and Ben Sherman shirts. Popular with the latest under-25 demographic and catering to their natural expectations for trendy clothes they could afford to buy every week (this was no longer a novelty), these new fashion shops concentrated their merchandise and marketing in piling it high, selling it cheap, and making it fun.

Also in 1970, Henderson's department store and its popular Underground boutique was closed down – the House of Fraser group had acquired the business and promptly closed the doors.⁶⁰ Other local department stores and their boutique departments were struggling to keep

pace with the rapid changes in consumption patterns and the increased competition from cheaper shops like Fanny's Keyhole and Bird's Bazaar. To compound these problems, the powerful multiple chains had recognised the potential rewards of catering to the youth market and had followed the department stores into the boutique bonanza, tentatively at first, but with gusto once the profit potential was clear.⁶¹ Like the department stores before them, the multiple retailers with their existing high street properties, were geographically well-placed and – importantly – well-financed; this meant that they could quickly build recognisable brands and put those brands on high streets around the country. Of these multiples, vertically-integrated chain stores that designed, manufactured, and retailed the bulk of their own merchandise, such as Lewis Separates, C&A Modes, Peter Robinson, and Richard Shops were quick to acclimatise to the needs and desires of the young fashion-conscious shopper.⁶² Lewis Separates, a family-owned retail powerhouse, was the pioneer of diversification. Mimicking the atmosphere and appearance of the initial Carnaby Street and Kensington boutiques, Lewis Separates opened the first of their Chelsea Girl boutique chain in 1965.⁶³ It was a great success; by 1970, all seventy Lewis Separates stores had been converted into Chelsea Girl shops, and subsequently Chelsea Girl became one of the most recognisable and popular fashion destinations for young women on the British high street. Within a few short years, Chelsea Girl was joined by a cohort of similar retailers – all subsidiaries of the giant retail corporations – aimed at the under-25 market. Peter Robinson's Top Shop, which had been a boutique-style concession in its stores since 1964, and Selfridge's Miss Selfridge which first opened as a concession in 1966, became a chain of very successful stand-alone high street shops in the early 1970s.⁶⁴ Eventually, store-by-store, multiple retailers expanded their offering and made every high street an identikit, watered down version of Carnaby Street at its most swinging.

CONCLUSION

The boutique concept was elastic, and was applicable across a range of retail environments; it was stretched first by department store intervention and subsequently by multiple retailers who used it as a template for a new kind of fast-paced but homogenous high street. While the original boutique retailers may have been dismayed to see their ideas and innovations become industry standard, appropriated and subsumed by corporate retailers, for those that survived the boutique bonanza, the truth was that they themselves and the designers they had helped to establish had already evolved beyond the boutique concept. Shops like Campus, for example, which had started out as a typical Gibson Street boutique, soon progressed into a chic independent fashion store selling expensive, high-quality clothes with a sharp focus on design and style. Marion and David Donaldson had also evolved beyond boutiques; by 1970 Marion Donaldson clothes were designed with an older, more discerning (and importantly, wealthier) market in mind. Such was their success, the Donaldsons spent much of the following decade trying to keep pace with the rapid growth of their business which had far exceeded its Glasgow boutique origins; by 1975, their customer base extended from the Highlands of Scotland to Saudi Arabia via a whole range of retail contexts. Boutiques provided a fertile starting ground for all that subsequent success, and although it is true that the swinging sixties – especially in the context of fashion and shopping – has left a legacy that refuses to go away, this assessment of its rise and evolution in Scottish terms allows for a fresh appraisal of its manifestation and impact beyond London and beyond the 1960s.

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³ C. Breward, “‘Goodbye Baby, and Amen’: A Postscript for the Swinging Sixties”, in *Swinging Sixties: Fashion in London and Beyond, 1955–1970*, ed. by C. Breward, D. Gilbert and J. Lister (London: V&A Publishing, 2006), p. 121. *Swinging Sixties* was one of several outputs (including a V&A exhibition) arising from the research project, ‘Shopping Routes: Networks of Fashion Consumption in London’s West End 1945–1979’. The project challenged the mythology of ‘Swinging London’, but as David Gilbert made clear in a separate publication, its intention was ‘not to provide the “real” story of fashion and consumption practices in the West End during the 1960s as a corrective to the mythologies of Swinging London’. See D. Gilbert, ‘The Youngest Legend in History’: Cultures of Consumption and the Mythology of Swinging London’, *The London Journal*, 31, 1 (2006), 1–14.

⁴ This article is based on the author’s doctoral research (‘Marion Donaldson and the Business of British Fashion, 1966-1999’, University of Glasgow, 2018) which was itself based on research in the Marion Donaldson Collection, a private archive comprising business and administrative accounts, photograph albums, press-cuttings and scrapbooks, marketing and

advertising materials, and some ninety garments. The Marion Donaldson Collection remains the property of the Donaldson family. The oral histories (eighteen interviews in total with Marion and David Donaldson, their staff, and associates) are held at the University of Glasgow and will be available for consultation after April 2022.

⁵ While the Scottish textile industries are well-served in literature, having enjoyed the attentions of a long line of meticulous economic and labour historians, the fashion industries have been uniquely neglected and (beyond museum catalogues) are almost entirely absent in the historiography of modern Scotland. There are a few exceptions, notably *Keeping Glasgow in Stitches*, ed. by L. Arthur (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1991).

⁶ S. Cole, *Don We Now Our Gay Apparel: Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000).

⁷ R. Lester, *Boutique London, A History: King's Road to Carnaby Street* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 2010), p. 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

⁹ A. O'Neill, 'John Stephen: A Carnaby Street Presentation of Masculinity 1957–1975', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, 4, 4 (2000), 487-506, p. 489.

¹⁰ F. MacCarthy, 'Boutique Sans Mystique', *The Guardian*, 20 August 1965, p. 8.

¹¹ D. Gilbert, 'Out of London', in *Swinging Sixties*, p. 114; according to one report by the Clothing Economic Development Committee and Associated Independent Consultants Ltd., by 1967, teenage girls' disposable income was such that their purchases accounted for almost half the total women's outerwear sold, disproportionate to their share of the population. For more see S. Majima, 'Fashion and Frequency of Purchase: Womenswear Consumption in

Britain, 1961–2001’, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 12, 4 (2008), 504.

¹² Published weekly in London since 1887, *Drapers’ Record* was Britain’s most widely-read fashion trade paper throughout the twentieth-century and was widely considered the voice of authority in the trade.

¹³ ‘With it Among the Mills’, *Drapers’ Record*, 9 October 1965, p. 12.

¹⁴ ‘It’s Only a Shop’, *Drapers’ Record*, 9 October 1965, p. 28.

¹⁵ This was the period immediately preceding the publication of the now-infamous ‘London: The Swinging City’ issue of the American *Time Magazine* in April 1966.

¹⁶ National titles including *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, and *The Daily Mirror*, for example, were all quick to catch on to and embrace youth styles several years before *The Glasgow Herald* or the *Evening Times* acquiesced.

¹⁷ A. Donaldson, ‘Safe But Sound the Slogan’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 19 January 1966, p. 7;

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¹⁸ *Evening Times*, 8 January 1966, p. 3.

¹⁹ P. Jephcott, *Time of One’s Own: Leisure and Young People* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1967), p. 61.

²⁰ E. Lyon, ‘When the Trendsetters Grow Up’, *Evening Citizen*, 26 January 1966, p. 4.

²¹ Anon, ‘£50 Worth of Clothes to be Won’, *Evening Citizen*, 1 January 1966, p. 4.

²² For more on ‘vicarious consumption’ see D. Gilbert, ‘Out of London’, pp. 102–120; for more on the regional English experience of consuming ‘Swinging London’ see K. Milestone,

‘Swinging Regions: Young Women and Club Culture in 1960s Manchester’, *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, 7, 2 (2018), 179–194.

²³ E. Lyon, ‘Scene 66’, *Evening Citizen*, 23 March 1966, p. 5.

²⁴ ‘Stramash! Beatstalkers Mobbed as They Open Boutique’, *Evening Times*, 20 January 1966, p. 1.

²⁵ D. Gibson, ‘The Big Three Who Put on the Big Noise,’ *Evening Times*, 28 Dec. 1965, p. 5.

²⁶ M. Pel and B. Hulanicki, *The Biba Years: 1963–1975* (London: Harry N. Abrams, 2014), p. 51

²⁷ Modrock does not appear in local newspapers again after its opening (which itself was only covered in the press, it seems, because of the appearance of the popular local band, the Beatstalkers. One post on Facebook’s ‘Lost Glasgow’ page on 11 July 2016 <www.facebook.com/lostglasgowofficial>, included comments from users who had attended Modrock’s opening, but who never visited again with some speculating that it closed in the summer of 1966 [last accessed 9 August 2017].

²⁸ E. Lyon, ‘Scene 66’, *Evening Citizen*, 23 March 1966, p. 5.

²⁹ M. Fogg, *Boutique: A ‘60s Cultural Icon* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2003) p. 17.

³⁰ M. and D. Donaldson in interview, 14 February 2017.

³¹ There are several un-dated press clippings from the summer of 1966 in the Marion Donaldson Collection that refer to Marion as such. One slightly later dated example is R. Turberville, ‘Marion is Going to be Scotland’s Mary Quant’, *Evening Express*, 13 March 1967, p. 6.

³² M. and D. Donaldson in interview, 16 March 2015.

³³ S. Majima, 'Fashion and Frequency of Purchase: Womenswear Consumption in Britain, 1961–2001', *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 12, 4 (2008), 504.

³⁴ Henry was an early admirer of Marion Donaldson clothes, and Marion and David often made one-off pieces for his public appearances. Some of these clothes survive and now form part of the Stuart Henry collection in Glasgow Museums' European Costume and Textile Collection. Other 1960s fashion and boutique labels in the Henry accession include Glasgow's Arthur Black and Carnaby Street's Male by Paul. For the full Stuart Henry collection see museum numbers: E.1984.116.41/42/43/45/46/48/49/50/51/52/53/71/103.

³⁵ M. Donaldson in interview, 9 March 2015; boutique names and locations drawn from the Marion Donaldson sales day book which details all boutique sales from November 1966–September 1967, part of the Marion Donaldson Collection.

³⁶ S. Ashmore, "I think they're all mad": Shopping in Swinging London', in *Swinging Sixties*, p. 73.

³⁷ P. Sidney, 'So You Want to Open Your Own Boutique', *Petticoat*, 7 October 1967, pp. 6–7.

³⁸ Sidney, p. 7.

³⁹ R. Fairley, *A Bomb in the Collection: Fashion with the Lid Off* (Brighton: Clifton Books, 1969), p. 66.

⁴⁰ 'Miss Daly Boutique is a Success', *Drapers' Record*, 4 December 1965, p. 16.

⁴¹ A catalogue promoting the Miss Daly boutique's selections for autumn winter fashions c.1967 is startlingly conservative in tone, styling and product. In one feature, 'Dalys Gets Down to the Heart of Fashion' the writer explains (seemingly through gritted teeth) how

‘fashion has become a way of describing a classless and essentially young society. [...] It has broken all the rules of what was acceptable to do and what was not. This has been tremendously exciting and refreshing but has left us with no accepted fashion leader to dictate our choice of colour and line.’ The House of Fraser Archive, University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections, FRAS 77.

⁴² In London, for example, the rapid ascent of the boutique format in retailing represented yet another damaging blow to many of the ‘dinosaur’ department stores that had been prominent in metropolitan cultures of consumption. For more on the adaptability and vulnerability of the department store see S. Ashmore, ‘Extinction and Evolution: Department Stores in London’s West End, 1945–1982’, *The London Journal*, 31, 1 (2006), 41–63.

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⁴⁶ *Evening Citizen*, 17 March 1967, p. 7.

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⁵¹ A. Stewart in interview, 6 June 2017. Andrew’s mention of the ‘Young Idea’ department is in reference to the ‘official’ name of the department in the Henderson’s corporate hierarchy.

⁵² Togs for Togs expanded too quickly and went bankrupt through cash flow difficulties, while In Gear succumbed to inexperienced management. M. and D. Donaldson in interview, 16 March 2015.

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⁵⁴ Sidney, 'So You Want to Open Your Own Boutique', p. 6.

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⁵⁷ Fogg, *Boutique*, p. 181.

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⁵⁹ 'Point of View', *Drapers' Record*, 15 March 1969, p. 24.

⁶⁰ It is unclear why House of Fraser closed Henderson's; as yet efforts to find archival evidence to explain the closure have been unsuccessful. House of Fraser were known to acquire rival businesses, and it is possible that while The Underground was successful, the other Henderson's departments were less able to compete with changing shopping habits and therefore the business as a whole was failing.

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