



An HJS Studio Project: Beth Caddell's Handspun, Hand- knit Shetland Shawl



Editor's note: I first saw this lovely shawl in the Interweave Press book, *Handspun Treasures from Rare Wools*. When I met Beth on the Internet, I commented that the picture in the book (page 20) really didn't do the shawl justice. It's black and white (!) and shows very little of the shawl, so that it's hard to see the lace patterning as well as the subtle coloring. She sent me a lovely photo of the shawl in color, and I asked her if I could put it on my website, with a narrative of the process of making it. Here it is, thank you, Beth!

Beth's story

In the autumn of 1997, I had the opportunity to purchase several Shetland fleeces from my shearer for \$5.00 each, a time when Shetland sheep were still rare in my area and their wool sold for around \$15.00 per pound. One of the two fleeces I kept for



my own use, after sharing my bounty with some friends, was a beautiful variegated fawn color that needed a very special project to show it off. I had wanted to knit a shawl for quite some time but hadn't found a pattern that I liked, so decided to design one to showcase the beautiful color changes in the fleece. I love Shetland shawls but prefer a triangular shawl to a square one, so I determined to try to make one using the same basic arrangement of patterns as a Shetland shawl, but in a triangle shape.

After washing the fleece I lightly hand carded it to retain the color variations of the fleece, and spun a yarn slightly heavier than fingering weight, as I wanted the color changes in the yarn to be the dominant effect in the shawl. I used stitch patterns found in Barbara Walker's "Treasury" books and chose patterns that were fairly simple and not too lacy, again, so the color variations were the focal point. Also I wanted patterns that allowed me to purl across the wrong-side rows since this was my first shawl and I didn't want to get too complex. The construction was complex enough! I started at the lower edge and cast on about 500 stitches using a provisional cast on so I could pick up stitches later for the edging. I worked back and forth, decreasing two stitches at the center point on every right side row. What's wrong with this picture? After several inches I realized I was making a trapezoid instead of a triangle – I should have decreased two stitches at the center point and one stitch at the beginning of every row! Sympathetic friends suggested various ploys to keep from ripping out



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but I knew it wasn't right so off the needles it came. I spread it out on the floor and realized 500 stitches were far too many, so my mistake was a blessing in disguise.

I diligently unraveled and cast on again, this time about 350 stitches, and started knitting again. The project went much more smoothly this time and I soon came to the point where I needed to begin the center pattern. A true Shetland shawl has a center square surrounded by a border and an edging. The square is knitted in a different direction from the border, so I needed to make a center triangle knitted in a different direction from the rest of the shawl. The border so far was in the shape of a "V" so I knitted to the center stitch and then began working back and forth, filling in the center with stitches knitted on the horizontal.



This was the most difficult part. I was working on a long circular needle and knitted to the center stitch then used another needle to knit the center stitch plus one stitch from the main needle. I then turned the work and purlled these two stitches plus one stitch from the other end of the main needle. Working back and forth in this manner I worked my way up the center, sometimes knitting or purling two stitches together from the main needle to keep the stitch-to-row ratio correct. I know I should have written this down but didn't and now I'm going to have to make another shawl to remember exactly how it

is done! I used an edging found in a shawl pattern by Hazel Carter that was mitered at the corners. I was torn between continuing the edging all the way around the shawl, and working I-cord at the top. Patsy Zawistoski, a member of my spinning group at the time, suggested I do both, so I did, working the lace edging all the way around and tapering it down to I-cord at the center triangle for a firmer edge. After blocking I found the I-cord to be too loose so ripped it out and re-knitted it.



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