

# **Knitting Needle Gauges – New Finds**

**Presentation to the Dorset Thimble Society  
May, 2017**

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**Susan Webster**

1

Many of the very old or rare gauges in this booklet are particularly worn and difficult to photograph, so the reader's tolerance is requested.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, writers frequently used their own versions of proper names, and many variant spellings still existed. In quoting writers and publications of the time, this booklet has used the spellings in the originals. Where the original text or labels used the variant spelling "guage", that spelling is preserved in the proper names in this booklet.

If any readers have additional information about the gauges in this booklet or have other unpublished gauges, please contact the authors through the Dorset Thimble Society.

All items shown are from the authors' collections or research except the images on Slide 27 (collection of Gay Lines) and Slide 30 (collection of Molly Pearce).

This presentation is based on the book *Knitting Needle Gauges – New Finds*, published by the Dorset Thimble Society  
Additional photography by Chris and Anne Photography

**Susan's alphabetical reference collection –**

knitting needle brands and manufacturers in 2011. Now holds twice as many specimens plus drawers for the circulars.



2

## **My Collection –**

- I am a knitter for over 50 years
- Always interested in history – uni, etc; started to combine the two in about 1990
- Collect all sorts of knitting tools, not just luxury
- More you collect, the more you want to know – this is not a well-documented field
- My special research interest is the period when knitting needles were becoming commercialized – no longer sold as a commodity by weight, but sold under brand names.
- 
- Have over 1000 individual brand and manufacturer names in my reference database – circulars not shown here.
- .
- Can only give my own opinions and analysis
- Eager to be corrected – always want to know more

### **The Registered Standard Knitting Guage –**

With alphabetical designations for large size pins.  
Maker and distributor unknown  
Approximately 1840s



3

For new gauges, I am using a general chronological order, then talking about different topics.

### **The Registered Standard Knitting Gauge**

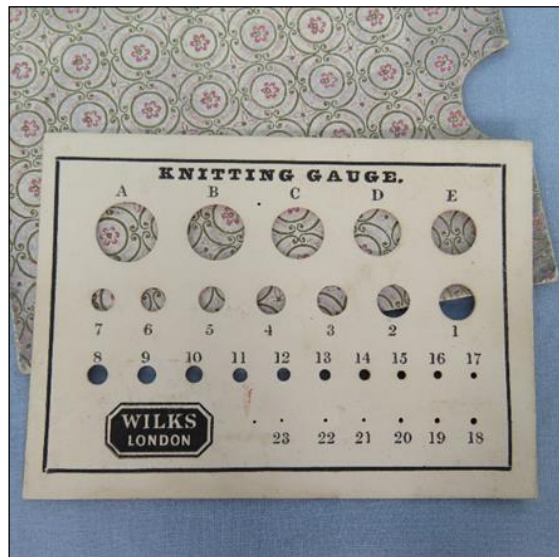
This cardboard survivor, the Registered Standard Knitting Gauge, was found at an outdoor antiques fair about 10 years ago. It appears never to have been used, as the holes are undamaged by thrusting too-large pins through them.

Size 24 is a mere pin hole, and the largest holes are designated with alphabetical characters. This is the only example uncovered so far, and we have found no literary references to it. What firm sold it or gave it away is also unknown.

In fact, it has deteriorated in the five years that I have had it – my own measurements and handling have worn the edges of the holes – the paper is too old and fragile.

### Wilks of London –

Cardboard gauge with printed slipcase and alphabetical designations for large size needles  
Approximately 1840s



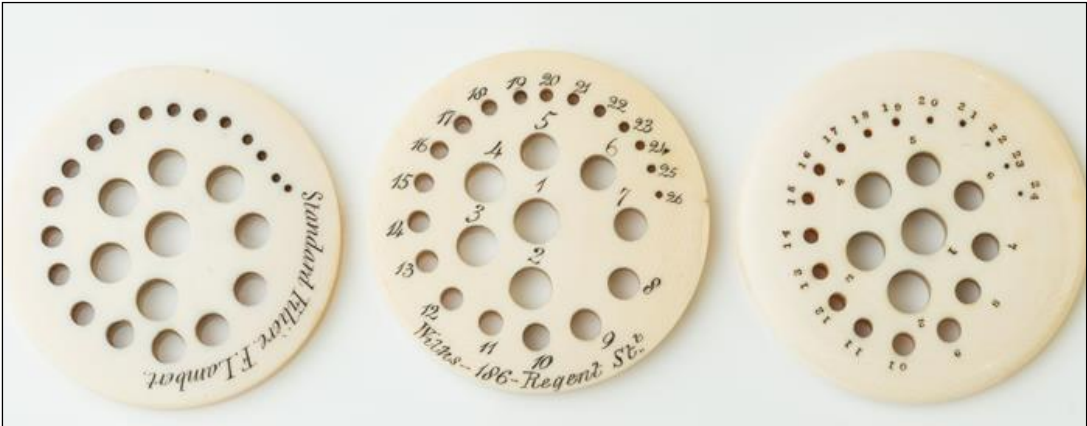
4

### Wilks of Regent Street

Joseph Wilks started his commercial life as a retailer of second-hand books (see *Leigh's New Picture of London*, 1822 and 1825 editions) but by 1831 he had moved to the developing shopping precinct in the west and was a high-class haberdasher at Wilks Warehouse, 186 Regent Street.

He was an early, large-scale importer of Berlin wool patterns and yarns. Many still existent Berlin wool work patterns carry his imprint. He also developed his own brand of pins, advertising in the 1831 *Harmonicon*, that his "new and improved process for the manufacturing of Pins is now in full operation, and that the Pins thus produced are in reality of such decided superiority as to warrant a confident expectation that they will quickly supersede all others." Labelled reels in wood, mother-of-pearl, and ivory were other Wilks-branded tools.

Wilks continued his inventive merchandising, and created one of the earliest knitting pin gauges, a cardboard rectangle with Wilks London in the corner and a printed cardboard slipcase. Whether it was sold or a give-away is not known. This example was found in a group of old Dorset postcards collected around 1900. The collection was formed by the Legg family of Dorset and was purchased during a house clearance in 2012.



### Ivory gauges -

Lambert, Wilks, and Leaman - placement of the largest holes seems to have been started from the same pattern

5

Early needlework authors were strong promoters of knitting pin gauges. Books with needlework patterns began appearing in the 1830s. Before that time, knitters mostly learned their craft by demonstration, and it was not so necessary to select the correct needle size. One authoress who strongly claimed to have devised the original knitting pin gauge was Miss Frances Lambert. Whether or not she was the “creator” of the knitting pin gauge - and the cardboard gauges suggest she was not - Miss Lambert seems to have set a trend with her ivory gauge, which she called the Standard Filiere.

Contemporary rivals asserted that no other gauges matched Miss Lambert’s calibrations; but we have now identified other issuers of gauges that exactly match Miss Lambert’s gauge. In fact, these new gauges seem to have been cut from the same pattern. Shown here with Miss Lambert’s ivory gauge are two others which match her shape exactly and her sizing dimensions very closely, although the inscriptions on the gauges are positioned differently.

In the photo above, Miss Lambert’s gauge on the left is joined by one for Wilks of Regent Street (more merchandising from this entrepreneur) in the centre, and one for F. Du M. Leaman on the right.

**F Du M Leaman's ivory gauge -**

Note the rounded edges, not the coin-like sides of other ivory gauges



6

If Miss Lambert's gauge and that of Wilks are laid with the name of the firm face up, the placement of the piercings and the size designations match those of Mme F Du M Leaman, when the Leaman gauge is placed with the name of the firm face down. The piercings did not match so closely in the very finest gradation, as the creators used whatever ingenuity was necessary to fit in all the smaller sizings. Size 24 on the Leaman gauge, the smallest size for knitting needles, is a mere pin prick, whilst the size 24 hole is well-defined on the other two gauges.

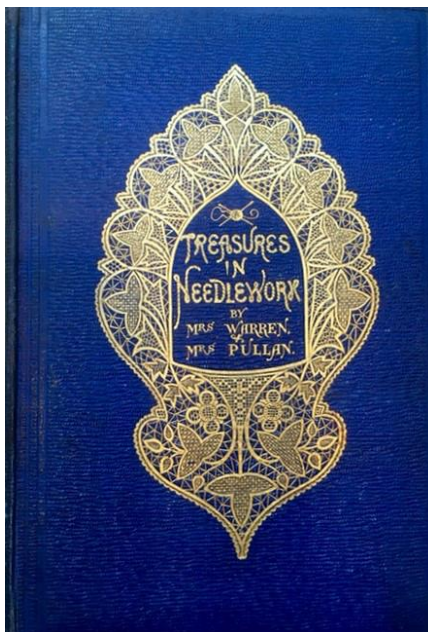
Presumably the Wilks ivory gauge succeeded their cardboard gauge mentioned earlier.

A fourth ivory gauge, pierced in the same pattern as those three, was auctioned at Bleasdales in December, 2009. Inscribed "W. Boulton and Son, Redditch" its price was estimated pre-sale at £30-£50, but it sold after spirited bidding for £800 ! Boultons was another firm which made use of a lot of merchandising and advertising. Presumably all these costly ivory gauges were produced before the bell gauges were devised.

We have seen only one example of the Wilks, Leaman and Boulton gauges; the two versions of the Lambert Filiere are uncommon, but appear regularly.

### ***Treasures in Needlework***

in which Little Mary marvels at the usefulness of an ivory knitting needle gauge in comparison to cardboard.



7

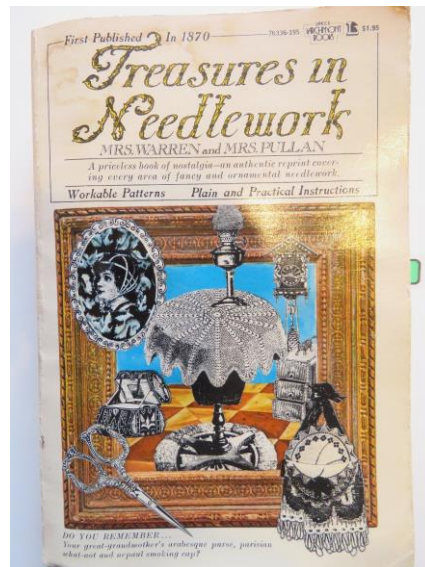
We have other evidence that the ivory gauges were preceded by those of cardboard. The book *Treasures in Needlework* by Mrs Warren and Mrs Pullen contains articles and stories in addition to many, many patterns for small purses, bread bowl cloths, piano stool coverettes, and pen wipes - all re-issued from earlier periodicals.

An “improving” type of article entitled “Work-Table For Juveniles: or, Little Mary’s Half Holidays” has a mother discussing with her daughter the excellent quality of the ivory gauge in the little girl’s new workbasket. The comments attributed to the child make it clear that this gauge is of the Lambert-Boulton-Wilks-Leaman style.

“....And here is an ivory gauge, mamma. This is quite a new thing, is it not? Your gauge is made of card-board?”

“Yes; and as the holes are apt to be injured by thrusting too large a needle through them, the ivory one is a great improvement.... I believe these gauges are also an invention of Mr. Boulton....”

Re-issue of *Treasures in Needlework*, 1973



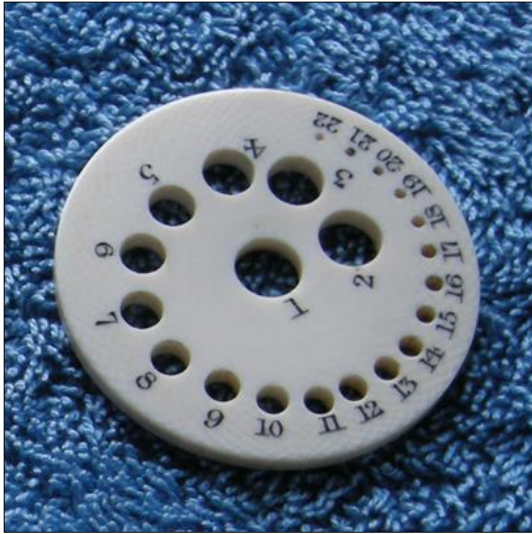
Mrs Warren and Mrs Pullan were two ladies making their way in the commercial worlds opening up to middle-class woman in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Both were authors, magazine editors, designers, retailers, and consultants, all primarily in the arena of “domestic” responsibilities, especially cooking and needlework.

In 1855 the two needlework columnists issued *Treasures in Needlework*, an illustrated reprint of their various columns for *Family Friend* magazine, covering most forms of needlework including knitting, crocheting, [tattling](#), point lace, netting, braiding, and embroidery.

Both women could write from several points of view, including creation of straightforward needlework patterns; but they also wrote stories and articles that illustrated or illuminated aspects of needlework or other domestic responsibilities.

The exploration of a child’s workbox provided an opportunity to introduce readers to patterns and the latest tools, which might then be found in the shop or mail order business each woman ran.





#### Unidentified Ivory Gauge –

No details are known about the producer or retailer of this delicate gauge.

And, finally, we have an ivory gauge which seems to have no relationship to the other ivories at all. Bought in the 1990's at a London antique fair, it has no other provenance we have been able to establish.

The diameter is 1-3/4 inches, and its size range is 1-22, fewer piercings than other early gauges. The spiral placement of the holes mimics the Lambert-style gauges, but the sizing designations are different from those on Miss Lambert's Filiere. In fact, the designations match those on the cardboard gauges. If the cardboard gauges are predecessors to or contemporaries of the Lambert-style gauges, then perhaps this unbranded gauge is also a contemporary or even a predecessor of the Standard Filiere. Really the dating is just a guess on this one.

## New Bells are Ringing

Two of several plain unbranded bells - late 1940s ?



10

The bell gauge was first manufactured just before mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and issued under the names of G. Chambers & Co or of Chambers and Mlle Elinore Riego de la Branchardière. Perhaps because of its appealing shape, it bested the rival hearts and diamonds and circles, and became the most common gauge type for the next 80 years. Eighteen logos were identified before those published here, with many firms producing a variety of designs over the years.

The last bells seem to have come out just around World War II.

Four more branded bells have been identified in recent years, all with a 19th century origin.

## W. Boulton & Son

Boulton's brass bell gauge on left with the Chambers/Mme Reigo bell below



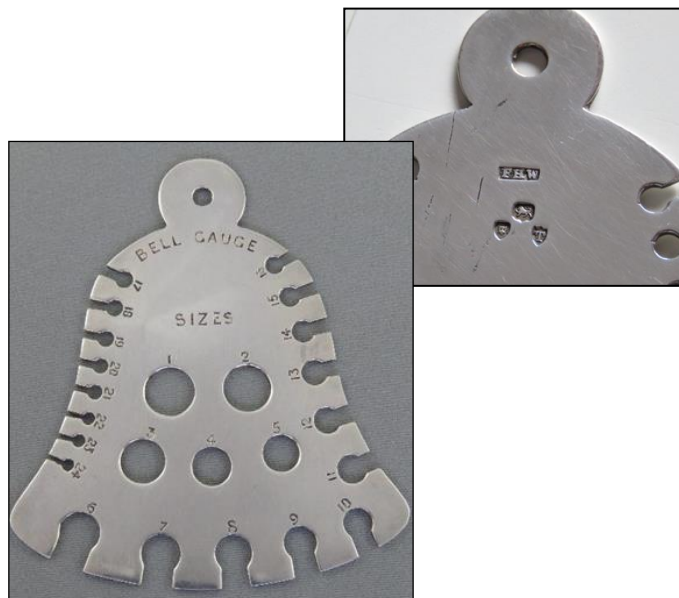
11

The first new bell came to light in 2006-2007. This was produced for William Boulton & Son and seems to match the gauges of Chambers and Mlle Riego with four interior holes for the large size needles and sizing slots down to 28 (slots 25-28 were for crochet hooks in these gauges). Mlle Riego's gauge is inscribed "manufactured solely by G. Chambers & Co... Patented 17 Sept 1847". If Boulton's gauge matches these, then it is among the very earliest.

As noted in the earlier discussion of ivory gauges, W. Boulton & Son was an enthusiastic early advertiser and merchandiser. Their round ivory gauge is probably earlier than the brass bell. The firm's name appears in several early publications as providers of haberdashery, knitting pins and gauges. Another work by Mrs Warren and Mrs Pullen, *Elegant Work for Delicate Fingers*, advised in 1861 to use "Boulton's knitting-needles" - one of the very earliest mentions of a brand name of knitting needle (although sewing needles were being branded from the 1820's).

## Frederick Henry Weare

Front and back of the sterling gauge hallmarked for the jeweller Frederick Henry Weare, showing the very plain front and the hallmarks on the back.



12

This sterling silver bell, a similar shape to thousands of brass, steel, aluminum or chrome gauges, was made by Frederick Henry Weare, a Soho jeweller registered from 1880. It is very plain and uninteresting on the front, but with hallmarks on the back for the maker (FHW), sterling quality (the lion passant), London (the leopard's head uncrowned) and a T for 1894-95. The gauge only has measures down to size 24, so slots to gauge sizing of very fine crochet hooks had already been dropped off. Again, this is the only example we have ever seen.

Earlier this year, I chatted with a dealer at a Ballarat antiques fair, about 120 miles west of Melbourne. I mentioned collecting knitting tools like gauges, and the dealer mentioned that she had sold a silver gauge the year before – as part of a fitted needlework set.

My ears pricked up - looking at my sterling gauge with new eyes, I could easily see it as part of a needlework set. That would explain its sterling substance and the fact that it was unused, totally without the nicks and scratches that always add a special patina to sterling items.

### A.G. Baylis & Sons' Sphinx Brand

*The sock needle oiled paper packet with one s and the bell gauge with two.*



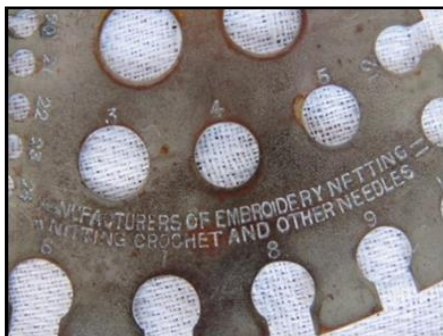
13

Arthur George Baylis & Sons - spelled Bayliss with a double "s" on the gauge in Figure 12, but not on the packet of sock needles in Figure 13 - was a firm tied into the William Hall-George Chambers group of companies, making and selling small notions, including pins, needles, fish hooks, and hooks and eyes. In trade directories the firm termed itself "needle manufacturers" and gave Studley and Redditch as its locations. A.G. Baylis retailed their products under several brand names in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including their own last name and the Sphinx brand. Baylis sewing needle packets generally used a bird logo, but have also been found with the sphinx and with pyramids. These were popular trade logos and advertising graphics during this period, when Britain was wresting mastery of Egypt from the Turkish Empire.

A.G. Baylis was eventually folded into Wm Hall & Co, who continued to sell at least some of the Baylis brands and trademarks. The sizing on this gauge, going down to the smallest knitting pin diameter of 24, the rarity of the gauge - this is the only one we have ever seen - and the variant spelling of gauge all indicate it is a very early bell.

### Wilkes Westwood (Toronto)

*The very worn Westwood gauge with brass showing through the nickel plating, and a close-up of the unique messaging on the gauge, noting goods manufactured by the firm.*



14

This well-worn bell gauge inscribed “Wilkes Westwood” was listed on line in Canada in 2014.

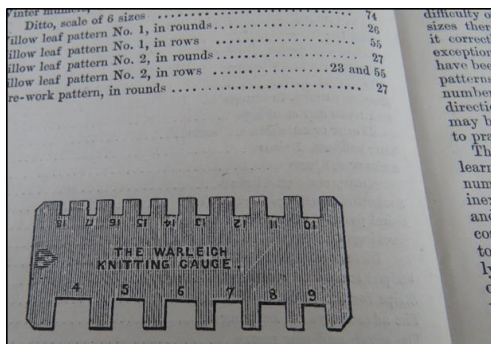
Again, it is the only one we have ever seen. Handling over the last 120 years or so has severely worn the inscriptions with the Wilkes Westwood name, but it actually carries more inscribed information than any other bell gauge. It was a give-away - “with the compliments of” - and the firm manufactured “embroidery, netting, knitting, crochet and other needles”. Sewing needles are not mentioned.

As usual these days, the internet has information on the issuer, a Toronto firm with connections to an English manufacturer. The UK business directory *Graces Guide* states that Henry Wilkes & Co of Studley made hooks and needles, and also had an office in Toronto. The *Guide* states that Henry’s brother, ‘William A. Wilkes had a business called the Wilkes-Westwood Co, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, starting in 1898 (with Charles Westwood). The company dissolved but was re-formed into the “C.H. Westwood and Co” with William as president. It was dissolved in 1910.’

Presumably, the gauge was manufactured around 1898 in England and shipped across the Atlantic for marketing purposes in Canada – making it also the earliest branded North American gauge, as far as we know!

## The Warleigh Gauge

The Warleigh gauge and page viii in the booklet *Full Directions and Scales for Knitting Socks, Stockings, Musical Drill, Chain Edge ...*



15

Mrs Henrietta Warleigh, another needlework writer and retailer around the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, published several books in various domestic topics. Like other writers noted here, she published small paperback booklets and then compiled these into hard-bound re-issues. Her writings made several references to “the Warleigh gauge” and she provided line drawings in some of her books of both a circular gauge and a rectangular gauge.

The source documents collected by Dr. Richard Rutt for *A History of Hand Knitting* are now held in the Knitting Reference Library at the Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton. One source item is Mrs Warleigh’s *Full Directions and Scales for Knitting Socks*. In about 1883, she advises : “The sizes of all of [the needles cited in this book] are determined by ‘The Warleigh knitting gauge’ made by Winn Timmins & Co, Century Works, Commercial Street, Birmingham.”

Another Rutt source book, *Ladies Work for Sailors*, was published by The Mission to Seaman. A later edition was updated by Mrs Warleigh, who again took the opportunity to promote her gauge. The book includes a reference to “the patron of the Mission to Seaman, His Majesty the King”, affirming the early 20<sup>th</sup> century issue date of this edition.

## W. Hall & Co

the round Hall gauge, its jumbo elephant logo slightly more detailed than that on the more common bell gauge below.



16

Examples of a round Hall gauge with the firm's emblem, a very big elephant, were found in 2007. This large 2 3/4 inch diameter gauge, with holes for Imperial sizes 1-20, is made of heavy brass.

The elephant was a Hall logo and is also shown on the Hall bell gauge, identified by Sheila Williams as coming from the Milward pattern. The elephant logo was also shown on packets of Hall sewing needles.

When holding the round gauge, it is easily noticed that punching the gauge holes has slightly distorted the circular outline to out-of-round. The lesser number of sizing holes, going down only to size 20, and the notation of "trademark" on the gauge place it toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The bell gauge has sizing holes down to size 24, so I feel it is earlier.



**Golden Fleece**, right, with the Embassy gauge below, probably both cut from the same pattern



17

This triangular gauge carries a ram's head logo and has slots for Imperial sizing from 5 to 20, which dates it to the 1930s. It presents the same outline and piercings as the Embassy gauge from that era and an unbranded triangular gauge, both discussed in *The History of Knitting Pin Gauges*.

Other packaging that uses the Golden Fleece rams head logo



18

The Golden Fleece Company with the rams head logo was one of the many smaller Reddich companies. The logo also appeared on packets of sewing needles and two unusual cardboard packets of sock needles - one a shallow box and the other a backing card with slots into which the double-pointed needles were inserted. Eventually the brand name was owned by the British Needle Co Ltd; this firm's name appears on the packaging in the picture above, which also locates the maker at Redditch.

The box in the figure below is probably earlier than the cardboard sleeve.

**Alderman's transparent celluloid gauge**



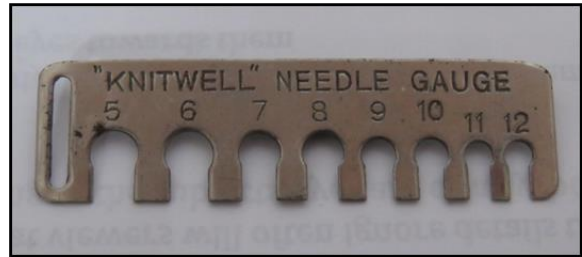
19

These soft transparent circular celluloid gauges are only two inches in diameter and are marked "British made". That designation and the fact that the gauge sizing only goes down to 18 suggests that the gauge was produced in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Fine needles were still being used, but not quite as fine as in the earliest days of knitting needles. The gauge comes in at least five colours - light green, dark green, blue, red, and orange.

This Alderman gauge could be an issue of the City haberdashery firm of Olney Amsden & Sons. The firm, which operated from mid-19<sup>th</sup> century up to the 1990's, was located in the Aldermanbury district of the City of London, continuing the traditional interest of this area in haberdashery and mercery since Tudor times. But we have not been able to verify this.

### Knitwell and Dot

These small gauges have no discoverable provenance so far.



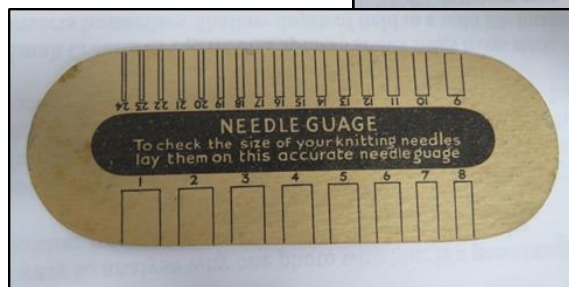
20

Both these small gauges carry Imperial sizing, the Knitwell sizes 5 down to 12, and the Dot sizes 000 to 17.

The small physical size of these gauges - the Knitwell is 2½ inches long and the Dot is 3½ inches long - and the lack of information about the issuers suggest they were mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Betterwear

the front and back of one of the Betterwear needle gauge designs. Three different designs are known.



21

The door-to-door Betterwear salesman was a familiar doorknocker at homes in the 1930s, selling a variety of home products and giving away small items such as this gauge, which appeared in a number of variations. This method of matching a needle shaft to the gauge size by laying the needle on the cardboard was much cheaper than punching holes in a cardboard give-away.

In Britain, J&J Baldwin used this type of outline gauge in issues of their *Universal Knitting Book* and then in *Woolcraft* booklets - easily printed and distributed inside the booklet. After J&J Baldwin joined with Patons in 1920, the merged firm Patons & Baldwins ceased printing the outline gauge, and a drawing of the Beehive gauge appeared in their booklets.

This Betterwear gauge still offered sizing down to Imperial 24, although Aero's Imperial size 20 needles seem to have been the finest-diameter needles sold in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

After World War II, Betterwear moved to hard plastic ruler-style gauges, as depicted in *The History of Knitting Pin Gauges*. Betterwear was re-named Betterware in the 1970s. Even now, in the internet age, its business model of door-to-door catalogue distribution is still going strong.

## Give-aways

*Woman's Illustrated* magazine's long, flimsy five-use gauge



22

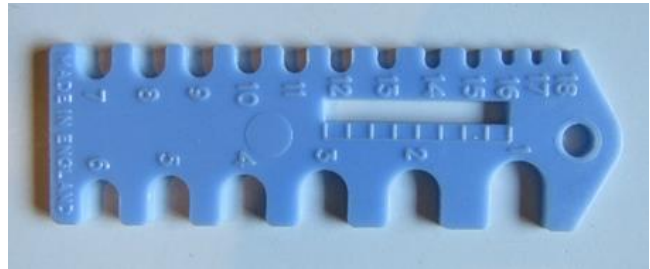
Although some give-aways were unbranded, most were small economical merchandising items, an attempt to keep the giver's brand name in mind.

This 10-inch long, five-use knit-check was given away by *Woman's Illustrated* in 1960; the date appears on the back of the cardboard gauge. With a slot to measure tension, cut-outs to affix the device to your printed pattern, a moving wheel to make note of the number of rows knitted, and the tapering slit for identifying the size of the needles, this cardboard gauge was quite unwieldy. Not surprisingly, few seem to have survived over the last 55 years.

This knitting pin gauge helped to revive the tapering-slot method of establishing the size of the needle, last seen in the UK the 1930's plastic Clyde gauge by Abel Morrell.

**Woman & Home**

front and back of the Woman & Home gauge.



*Woman & Home*, a magazine launched in 1926, gave away this cheapie, labelled “Knitter’s Friend” and “made in England”. Calibrated in Imperial numbering from 1 to 18, it seems to come from the 1950s or ‘60s, with its hard plastic substance being a post-World War II invention.

## Wartime Gauges ??

### World War I ?

The composition gauge fully open and a close-up of the numbering and the designation "Patent Appld For"



24

Knitting circles in both world wars were organised by the Red Cross and other support groups. Many who joined such groups were not experienced or competent knitters, but wanted to help their loved ones or the general war effort. Knitting circle organisers tried to make instructions and aids as simple as possible.

These two unnamed gauges have only a few calibration holes. By analogy with other British 1940s registers labelled "wartime" and also with North American wartime gauges - all of which had only a very few calibration holes - it is possible to deduce that these two gauges were also created to help wartime knitters.

The brown gauge, which rotates into a 5-inch rectangular shape for storage, seems to be made of some sort of composition, perhaps an oiled, pressed cardboard or sawdust. It does not feel like a plastic synthetic but rather like a rigid card board. Its eight piercings are labelled for Imperial sizes 4 to 11, with sizes 4, 5, 8 and 9 on one arm and sizes 6, 7, 10, and 11 on the other arm. "Patent appld for" is also impressed on the size with the gauge label.



### World War II ??

green plastic gauge with Imperial sizing – probably 1940s



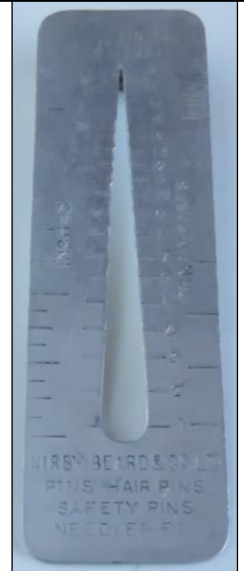
25

The green gauge is about five inches wide, with the slot labelled “tension gauge  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$ ”. Presumably, the knitter could work out stitch tension using just the half-inch slot! The size piercings are positioned three to each arm, from Imperial 3 down to 14. On the reverse side, the gauge is labelled “wool & silk winder” and “made in England”. This gauge/winder feels slightly greasy like bakelite or hardened casein, rather than like the rigid plastics which became available after World War II.

## Updates

### Charles & Debil Kirby Beard

*two varieties of the original, rounded-corner rectangular Crescent gauge. The Kirby Beard gauge has their name printed below the slot, while the Charles & Debil name is on the side.*



26

These are two more variations on the classic lacquered brass Crescent and Kirby Beard gauges. The Kirby Beard is a rare aluminium model - definitely after World War I when aluminium became cheaper.

The Charles & Debil gauge is lacquered brass again, for a firm lost to our knowledge now but with locations in both London and Glasgow.

Both examples show how a gauge manufacturer could adapt their basic shape to the interests of a variety of clients.



### **The Vegetable Ivory Gauge**

The polished corozo nut gauge, presumed to be Imperial sizing.

27

These spherical gauges, imprinted with needle sizing at each drilled hole, are made from corozo nut seeds. This gauge is referred to by Sheila Williams, and several specimens have now appeared. The gauge is obviously a commercial manufacture, although no maker's name or logo appears on it. Corozo and coquilla nuts were often termed "vegetable ivory" for their creamy hard surfaces which dried over time to a honey colour.

It is assumed that this gauge is mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, for two reasons :

Firstly, at this time, the nuts were included with the ivory and bone materials which could be ground by new Birmingham machinery.

Secondly, it seems to use the standard wire gauge (Imperial) sizing used by most mid-19<sup>th</sup> century British knitting pin gauges. It has only 24 sizing holes, down from the 28 sizing holes on the earliest (before mid-century) gauges - perhaps it did not have room for more holes.

## The Dainty Dinah

*Vogue's 20<sup>th</sup> Knitting Book* with Dainty Dinah advertisement in 1942.

VOGUE'S 20TH KNITTING BOOK 1942

Every Knitter Should Have a  
**DAINTY DINAH**  
ALL-STEEL  
KNITTING PIN GAUGE

To knit with needles of the wrong gauge means wrong tension and texture, ill-fitting garments, waste of precious time and wool. Yet, you can check the gauge of any needles—metal, wood or plastic—in a second with the everlasting Dainty Dinah Gauge. Get one now. Carry it in your knitting bag always. From Wool Shares, Drapers, and Stores, price 1/- and 1/3.

If obtainable locally write us for name and address of nearest stockist.

W. L. JAGER, 362 City Road, London, E.C.1

rows. Change to wide and work 1 row. (To MAKE UP.—Press st. 2 very lightly. sleeve seams and set in sleeves, easing in full

SQUARE-NECKED SWEATER  
Continued from page 39

more rows, ending at centre-front edge. S next row, cast off 24, work 8 in st. 3, k. 10 with 8 sts. at neck edge in st. 3, rest in st. 2, ending at armhole edge. Shape shoulder, beg. of every row at armhole edge until all sts. RICHY FRONT.—Cast on 58 and k. back 1 In next row, work 8 in st. 3, 50 in st. 1. Work on with st. 1 on st. 1 and st. 3 on st. 3. of 2nd pattern in st. 3, ending at centre-front row, work 8 in st. 3, p. 50. In following row in st. 3. Work on with st. 3 on st. 3 and st. 2 rows, ending at centre-front edge. Inc. 1 in next row and every 5th row afterwards at sts., then work 6 more rows, ending at side armhole. Cast off at beg. of next and follow edge, 6 once, 4 once and 2 once, then dec. every row at this same edge until there are without further shaping to end of 10th row st. 3, ending at centre-front edge. In next 1 st. 2, p. 25. Work on with st. 2 on st. 2 and Work 15 more rows. Shape neck, k. 10

Save Wool - & Save Coupons

28

In recent years, examples of this unnamed chrome or steel 3x4 inch gauge turned up everywhere, marked only with the size labels and, sometimes, with a 2-inch ruler across the top, and, again often, with little “wings” at the top. Much rarer are casein copies of this gauge, in burgundy and also in cream.

Now, we have found an advertisement in *Vogue's 20th Knitting Book*, dated 1942, which provides the origin. The unlovely gauge was called the “Dainty Dinah” and the purveyor was W.L. Jager.

This needlemaking firm also produced one of the rarer 1930s chrome-on-steel bells, marked with their name Jager in a circle, and seems to have replaced the bell with the Dainty Dinah.

Variations of the Dainty Dinah gauge



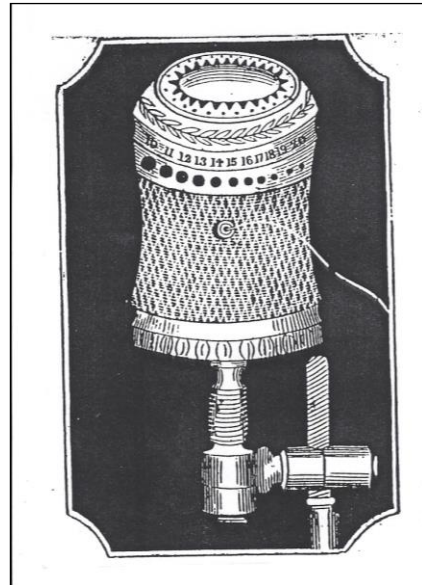
*Various incarnations of the Dainty Dinah : counter-clockwise from front right, the delux model in felted slipcase with felted flower decoration, a leatherette slipcase, a burgundy casein model, a chrome gauge in the standard oiled paper slipcase, and a version without the tiny wings along the top.*

## Known only from the Literature

### The Royal Victoria Cotton Box

W. CARTER has great pleasure in placing before the public a new Article of utility, for the work-table. The cotton is placed in the box and works out without the inconvenience of its rolling and twisting about; attached to which is a needle-gauge, (the numbers on which are the same as the standard used by the wire-drawer and needle-maker); also, an ornamental cushion is affixed at the top. This novel article can be screwed to the table and it will be the means of making Knitting and Crochet an interesting and useful diversion; and I have no doubt, but that it will receive the patronage and support of the Ladies, which will fully repay the inventor.

SOLD WHOLESALE BY THE INVENTOR, 8, CROWN STREET, FINSBURY.



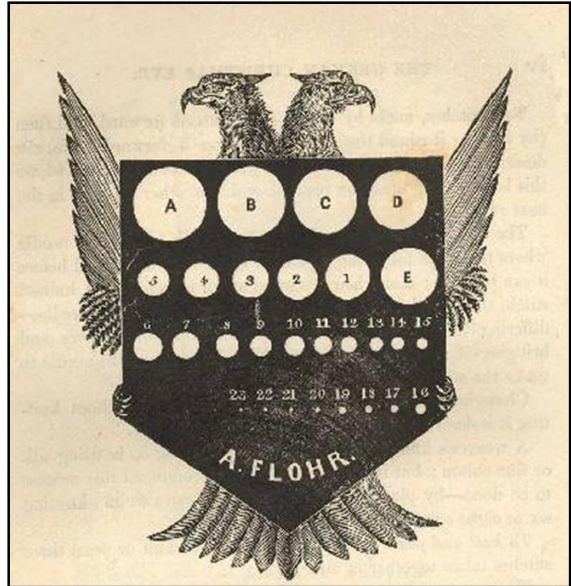
30

This combination pin cushion, cotton ball holder, needle sizer and clamp-mounted “third hand” - see the frontispiece of this book - was invented by W Carter and was advertised in *The Royal Victoria Crochet Book* which Carter published through Finsbury in London in 1849.

Although we cannot physically match its openings to any of the variety of different sizing schemes at the time, Carter claims it matches the standard gauge for the “wire-drawer and needle-maker”. We have never seen one - perhaps, again, too big or too unwieldy to be successful. Or, possibly, never even made.

### Eagle Card Board Gauge

This reproduction of the Eagle Card Board Gauge appears in the book, *The German Christmas-eve*. Note that the name of the book's author, A. Flohr, appears on the gauge itself.



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*The Knitted Lace Collar Receipt Book* was published by Simpkin Marshall & Co., and Mrs. Geoffrey John Baynes is listed as the author in some editions. In other editions Mrs Baynes “arranged” the receipts. The inside cover of the second edition, published in 1846, mentions the Eagle Card Board Gauge.

And an inside page says “the size of the needles are given according to the Eagle Card Board Gauge”. Here again, the gauge is named with the variant spelling “guage”, but printed references to it sometimes use the more modern spelling “gauge” in the name itself.

A line drawing of the Eagle Card Board Gauge was published in the 1846 book by Apolline Flohr, *The German Christmas-eve, or, Deutschen Damen Weihnachts Körbchen : a picture of home life in Germany. Comprising personal recollections, tales, and sketches; with descriptions and directions for working upwards of one hundred very beautiful and entirely original patterns for knitting.*

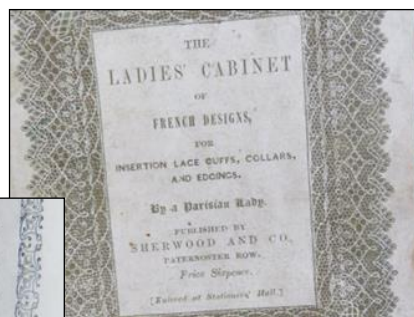
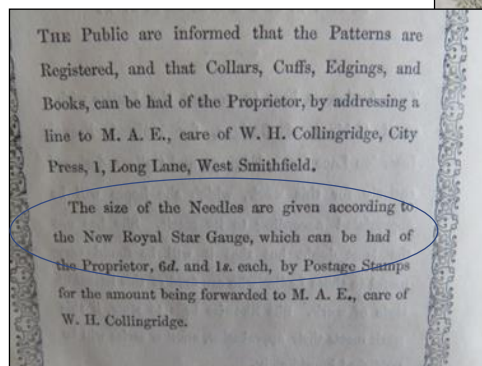
This gauge is also mentioned in several other knitting books and needlework volumes on both sides of the Atlantic. For instance, Mrs Ann Stephens’ *Ladies Complete Guide to Fancy Crochet, Knitting and Needlework*, published in New York in 1854, recommends the “eagle cardboard gauge”. In Britain Mrs Warren and Mrs Pullan’s compilation *Treasures in Needlework*, discussed earlier, noted on page 61 of the knitting section “the numbers we give for needles are according to the Eagle cardboard gauge.” Likewise, Mrs Warren and Mrs Pullan’s *Elegant Work for Delicate Fingers* in 1861 advised “The numbers we give for needles are according to the Eagle cardboard gauge.”





## The Royal Star Gauge

No photo to show.....



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We have written references to this gauge, but no physical specimens. *The Ladies Cabinet of French Design for Insertion Lace Cuffs, Collars, and Edgings* <sic> by a Parisian Lady, published by Sherwood & Co, Paternoster Row, makes a reference to the New Royal Star Gauge.

The back page says : “Just out and to be had at all Fancy Repositories Price 6d and 1s each, the Royal Star Gauge. The Authoress of this little work begs to recommend the above as being the most useful one in circulation, and advises the use only of Clark’s Paisley Thread or Boar’s Head.” The first inside page also mentions the gauge but with a slightly different name, the New Royal Star Gauge, although no picture is provided.

The booklet shown here - it is only 12 pages and 3x3 inches in size - is listed in catalogues of English knitting literature with a publication date of 1850. A very similar booklet was issued earlier, in 1846, with the same title and the author stated as Mrs M. A. Edwards.

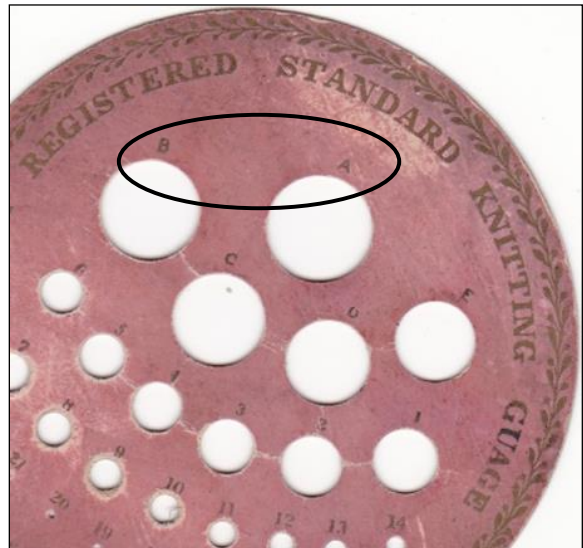
Using the date of 1846 means that the Royal Star Gauge was one of the earliest issued. It is not clear if the gauge is metal, a natural substance like bone or ivory, or even cardboard.

## Alphabetical Sizing on Needle Gauges –

A B C D E

For needle diameters greater than Imperial 1

Registered Standard Knitting Gauge



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The early cardboard gauges mentioned in this book used alphabetical characters for needle sizes greater than Imperial size 1 (equaling metric size 7.5mm).

When the first gauges were produced in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, ladies who read patterns or recipes and needed a gauge rarely used bulky yarns. As machine dexterity was increased, and thicker yarns could be produced with consistency, it became necessary for gauges to accommodate needles with a diameter greater than Imperial 1.

Eventually the Imperial system settled on 0, 00, 000, and 0000 for the fatter needles. And, fortunately, the metric system was introduced before the number of zeros grew unmanageable.

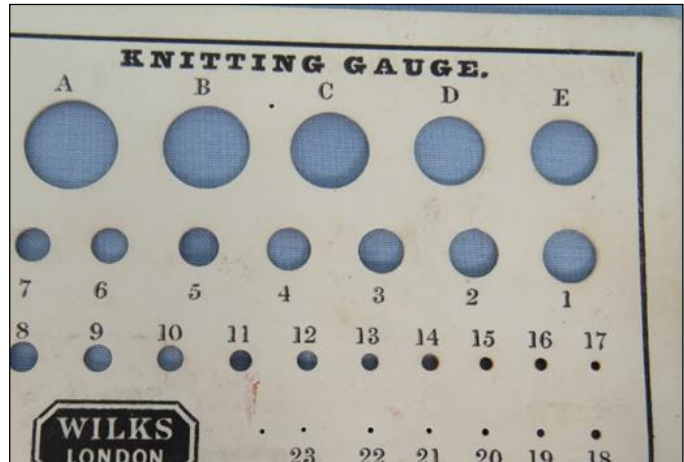
But as we have noted here, the alpha characters were used on some of the earliest cardboard gauges to designate the larger diameters, including the Eagle Card Board Gauge, the Registered Standard Knitting Gauge, and the Wilks of Regent Street. These are not the alphabetical designations used on American crochet hooks. As we noted earlier, the cardboard gauges seem to pre-date most of the better known and sturdier gauges made of bone or ivory, metal or (later) synthetics. The arguments in favour of this very early dating are :

No other gauges use the clumsy mixed-symbols of both alphas and numerals, so this seems an early experiment that died out. *Treasures in Needlework*, quoted above in the section on ivory gauges, refers to the ivory gauge replacing the cardboard gauge.

*Treasures in Needlework*, quoted above in the section on ivory gauges, refers to the ivory gauge replacing the cardboard gauge.

### Wilks of London

Sizes A-E leaves no room for expansion into even larger diameters – presumably this was not envisaged as ever happening !



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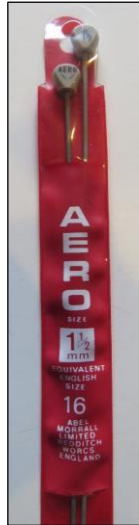
This research also seems to refute Miss Lambert's claim to have invented the knitting pin gauge. If the Eagle gauge is earlier than that of Miss Lambert, the approximate date of creation of the Eagle Card Board Gauge would be early 1840s or late 1830s. Or, at least, we can assume these cardboard gauges are contemporary with the first of the metal and ivory gauges.

The sizing on the cardboard pink and the Wilks gauges can be physically measured, and the sizings are the same on these two gauges. The Eagle Card Board Gauge exists only in line drawing, we cannot physically use test the sizes, but they look the same. The pink gauge is three inches in diameter, and measuring the holes by inserting a knitting needle shows that the sizing does not conform to Miss Lambert. There is some conformance to Imperial sizings, especially sizes 1 to 3 (see table).

The sizings on the unbranded ivory gauge - the example in Figure 7 which does not align with Miss Lambert's ivory gauge - match the cardboard gauges, although the ivory gauge does not include piercings larger than Imperial size 1 (so no alphabetical designations).

### A Comparison of Early Gauge Sizes

The plastic sleeve of Aero size 16 Imperial or 1.5 mm was sold around the late 1960s, as the UK was implementing metric sizing.



Metric Sizing (in mm)	Imperial Sizing (Standard Wire Gauge)	Pink Registered Standard Gauge, Wilks Cardboard, and Eagle Cardboard Gauge	Miss Lambert and Other Ivory Gauges Based on her Gauge
?		A	
?		B	
10	000	C	
9	00	D	
8	0	E	
7.5	1	1	
7	2	2	1
-	-		2
-	-		3
6.5	3	3	-
-	-		4
6	4	3	5
5.5	5	4	6
-	-	5	7

We also have written references to labelling knitting needle sizes by alphabetical. *The Album of Fancy Needlework or, Novelties in Knitting, Netting, and Crochet*, was published in in three parts in 1847-8 by Mrs G.J.Baynes.

Page 21 - “pairs of pins the size of letter E”

Page 23 - “On the letter E-sized pins....”

Page 33 - “a pair of box-wood pins the size of the letter E...”

Later in the book, is stated : “The size of the needles ... are given according to the Eagle Cardboard Gauge, which may be had on application....”

*The Album of Fancy Needlework* was published by the same firm that stocked the Apolline Flohr book on *The German Christmas-eve*. That book refers to using needles in Imperial sizing (eg, No. 15) but illustrates the Eagle Card Board Gauge itself. Mrs Baynes was also the author of the *Knitted Lace Collar Recipe* book mentioned earlier. The table below compares hole sizes on various early gauges. The table above continues into the smaller sizes, but the comparison shown here gives the flavour of the variation.

## Workbox with Knitting Pin Gauge



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This Tunbridge ware workbox turned up in 2015, the first workbox found with a knitting pin gauge as part of its fittings. The large perspective cube work on the cover suggests a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date (Austin) but the interior fitted in blue moire silk and matching starred blue paper firms up the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century origin.

The box is fitted with a standard complement of spools and tools, mainly mother-of-pearl. At the front of the box is a much more rare second tool card, fitted with bone tools for netting, crochet, and knitting. Netting sticks were definitely fittings included in earlier fitted work boxes, along with netting reels, affixed thread spools, and thread barrels.

The bone knitting pin gauge is labelled with Imperial pin sizes 1 to 20, and has a hole on one side to affix the gauge to a hook or chatelaine chain. This gauge is an example of the “peddler ware” described in *The History of Knitting Pin Gauges*, although in this case it seems to have been included in the fit-out by the box manufacturer.