

Wiltshire Guild
Spinners Weavers and Dyers



Newsletter December 2012



Letter from the Editors

We are sure that all the members could say that they have enjoyed being part of the Guild in 2012, not only for the companionship of like minded people, but for the opportunities to learn and share skills.

A big **Thank you** goes to the committee members for all their hard work over the year and to the volunteers who helped with various events and with the up keep of the buildings and garden. **Thank you**, also to our very own cleaning fairy - please help her to keep the studios tidy and the floors fluff free by using either your own protective sheet or the Guild's when you work.

Happy Christmas to you all and best wishes for a creative and healthy New Year!

Harriette and Julia

A very warm welcome to new members; Valerie Sheppard, Alison Rossiter, Carole Hill, Pat Waller, Tracy Waller and Kathy Davis.

All our very best wishes to Sarah Maclean, who is getting married, but hopes to be coming back in a year's time. Congratulations to Sarah and her fiancé.

And a fond farewell to Anne Decent, A long term postal member, leaving for health and family reasons, we wish her well for the future.



And it's Goodbye from me and ...

I have been Chair for the last 3 years of great change at the Guild. We have moved to permanent premises, expanded our membership and now offer; weaving, patchwork, dyeing, felting and knitting to the activities we could offer at Rode.

It has been an exciting and rewarding experience and I have been supported by all the members of the Guild and particularly the Guild Committee.

We have got over the transition period and are well established to continue developing and growing in the future. I'm sure we all have lots of interesting and fun times ahead.

Lesley

...Hello to Sue

First, may I thank you for giving me the opportunity to chair the Guild for the next year. I know you will all want me to express our appreciation to Lesley for the sterling work over the past three years and only hope I will be able to carry on in this tradition. I welcome our two new committee members, Una and Hazel, and look forward to having them aboard with their expertise and new ideas.

We all look forward to the Christmas Sale which, with your support, will surely be a success.

There is of course our Christmas Guild meeting in the offing, where like you, I will enjoy the opportunity to share an excellent shared lunch in good company with the seasonal party spirit. To those of you who have recently joined us, it will show just how much the Guild means to all of us and I urge you to get involved in all we do.

Finally I would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and an eventful, prosperous 2013.

Sue

Treasurer's Report November 2012

Terri reported:

The Library: To borrow a book - enter the title of the book you are borrowing and your name into the Register provided and put your payment in the honesty box. There are new books in the library. Please use the facility. Last year the income received was less than the books purchased.

Future Projects

Annual Exhibition at West Barn, Bradford-on-Avon in August 2013. Dates are in your programme and help will be needed to mount the exhibition.

Damp patch in Studio 2: the School Buildings Trust committee will deal with the cause but it is likely that we will need volunteers to paint the ceiling unless we can make an insurance claim.

Hallways and stairs: in need of redecoration. We'll be calling for volunteers in the spring.

Windows: the sash windows have been repaired by the School committee. We will need to repaint all window woodwork in Studios 1 and 2 in the spring so a working party will be needed there too.

2014 will be the Guild's 50th anniversary (Gold). The new committee has agreed that during 2013 we must plan how to celebrate this. Ideas from members will be much appreciated.

Membership System:

An explanation, particularly for all our new members:

Full membership:

£30 per year entitles you to attend all areas/groups where space permits for £2.00 per session. The weaving group is the exception and they pay a further £20.00 per term.

Each member receives: a programme of the year's events, newsletters, the right to enter the annual exhibition, the right to vote at the AGM and put forward ideas and proposals, the opportunity to become a committee member.

At present: cards allowing 10% off goods purchased at both Herrings of Dorchester and the Spinning Wheel in Clevedon.

Associate membership

£20 per year entitles you to join a specific group; eg the Patchwork group only. If subsequently you decide to also attend the Knitting group you must either increase your membership to full or pay a further associate membership fee of £20.00. No other benefits apart from a subject based membership badge.

All members regardless of type must pay £2.00 door money for each visit.

There is also postal and honorary membership, information about these is available in your constitution.

Dates for your diary

13 April 2013; AGM of the National Association for Spinners Weavers and Dyers this is being held at Bonhill House, in London.

Sunday 4 August to Sunday 11 August 2013 ; Summer School at the University of Wales, Trinity St David's College in Carmarthen.

The course programme is as follows;

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 3-end block weave | Jason Collingwood |
| Warp ikat | Martin Weatherhead |
| Pick-up damask from 4 to 8 shafts in linen | Riitta Sinkkonen Davies |
| Rule breaking weaving | Laura Thomas |
| Just add water: Textiles that shape themselves | Ann Richards |
| Tapestry | Alastair Duncan |
| Inkle weaving: a new development | John Stoker |
| Eco dyeing the natural way | Helen Melvin |
| Spinning beyond the basics: fun with fibres | Anne Field |
| Creative spinning | Jane Deane |
| Short fibres at length | Amanda Hannaford |
| Turkey red and all that madder | Debra Bamford |
| Bags of bags from bits | Janet Crowther |
| String and string bags | Sue Hiley Harris |
| Making up your precious length of handwoven fabric | Lynne Abbott |
| Braids beyond the box | Kathy Williams |

| | <u>Fees £</u> | <u>Deposit £</u> |
|--|---------------|------------------|
| Residential student (Guild member) | 580 | 200 |
| Residential companion | 390 | 200 |
| Non-resident student (Guild member) | | |
| including Gala Dinner but no other evening meals | 275 | 50 |
| Residential student (non-Guild member) | 650 | 200 |
| Non-residential student (non-Guild member) | | |
| including Gala Dinner but no other evening meals | 325 | 50 |

Course allocation will commence on **1 January 2013** for further details please refer to the website www.wsd.org.uk or ask at the Guild for someone to print off an application form.

Saturday 28 September 2013; 6 Guilds' Open Meeting

At King Edward 6th School, Chapel Lane, Stratford Upon Avon

Doors Open from 10.00a.m. to 3.30p.m.

Speakers; Isabella Whitworth and Joan Baxter.

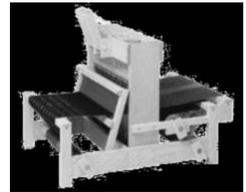
Parking is available on site

Contact Joan on 01295 251008

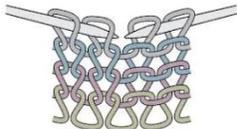
Please see the notice board, or ask, for dates of;



Rosemary Speller's **Spinning Course**,
planned for February 2013,



Jacqui Pohnert's **Weaving Course**,
planned mid-March 2013,



Knitting Group meetings,
cake included,

Patchwork Group meetings
and

Felting Days.



Please also let the Committee know of any other textile related activities that you would like to see at The Steeple Ashton Textile Studios.



Please refer to our very own **For Sale** section on our website. There are contact details for Alpaca, Dorset Horn and Hebridean Fleeces. If you want further details and you cannot access the website, please ask.

Poet's Corner

Janet Milner wrote this poem in response to her sister-outlaw's e mail asking if, 'When the rain is pelting, have you ever felt like felting?'

I am sitting listening to the rain yet again and know that the sentiment will resonate with us all!

The Call of Fleece

The call of fleece, the smell of sheep,
The raindrops trickle, the rain is pelting,
The staple long, the fleece is deep,
You ponder long, your heart is melting,
That project dreamt, whilst in your sleep,
The fibres meld, like iron smelting,
A thought out end, it makes you weep,
A wonderous felt, the perfect belting!



Thank you Janet!

Dorset Buttons

A Talk and Workshop by Anna McDowell

Anna provided a fascinating history of these buttons and in particular, one man whose life she has studied in depth.

Abraham Case, a native of the Cotswold's, married a local girl from Donhead St Andrew in Wiltshire near Shaftesbury around 1622. They set up home in Shaftesbury and started the Dorset Button Industry.

This industry was to affect the lives of hundreds of families in Shaftesbury and Dorset for 200 years. After three generations the business was revitalised by a “business manager”, had shops in London and Liverpool during the Regency period; in fact there were about 4000 people working in the button industry in Dorset, just before the time of the Tolpuddle martyrs.

The ‘High Top’ was Abraham’s first button. A ring of horn with a piece of linen pulled in a twist to form a firm conical shape with the horn at its base. They were used for gentlemen’s waistcoats and the bodices of ladies’ dresses. It is said that Abraham Case made the High Top buttons on the waistcoat worn by Charles I at his execution in 1649.

‘Dorset Knobs’ followed the ‘High Top’: this was made in the same way but was broader and flatter. Queen Victoria owned a dress decorated with ‘Dorset Knob’ buttons.

By 1658 thirty-one different kinds of buttons were being designed. Abraham died around this time and his sons took over the family business.

The only coloured button produced was the black ‘Singleton’ button: designed by members of the family after the death of their father. It is said that Abraham’s widow made one of these buttons each year until her death in 1682.

Originally made of horn (whether sheep, cattle or deer needs to be clarified by DNA testing) the later ones were made from wire circles wrapped in fine knotted linen or wool and crossed with patterns of multiple threads which were again interwoven to create tiny patterns.

Dorset was the first area to make mass produced buttons on cards. The cards came in different colours: pink for those to be sent abroad, black for Britain, yellow for the seconds.

In the early 18th century 700 men, women and children worked for the firm. By the end of the 18th century around 4,000 women and children were employed making buttons in and around the town. A good worker could produce seven dozen buttons a day

Then at the Great Exhibition, Crystal Palace, in 1851 Ashton displayed his button making machine originally developed in about 1830. Shortly after this the Dorset Button industry collapsed as it could not compete. This caused mass unemployment and with the help of local gentry and government funding many families emigrated to Australia and Canada, including 350 families from Shaftesbury. This had been vital trade for the poor and archaeologists often find wire discs in paupers' graves, presumably from the clothes that they were buried in.

For very fine examples you can see Princess Charlotte's blouse in the Museum of London and a Child's dress from 1860-70 showing buttons as decoration rather than for practical use. Lots of the different varieties can be seen in the Gold Hill Museum, Shaftesbury and Anna makes and sells them at her shop, Henry's Buttons. They are often now used for wedding wear and were popular for underwear and corsets!

Harriette

After the talk by Anna, about 15 of the guild members spent a happy afternoon making a Dorset button under the expert tuition of Anna. Anna sells supplies for creating buttons, as well as Fairtrade buttons from South Africa made by a company providing work and training for 45 women.

The shop is in the picturesque town of Shaftesbury.

Henry's Buttons

Undercliffe Cottage

Donhead St Mary

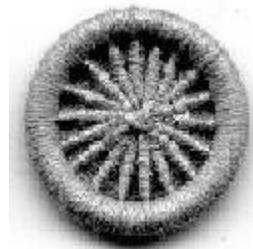
Shaftesbury

Dorset

SP7 9DG

Telephone: 01747 829010

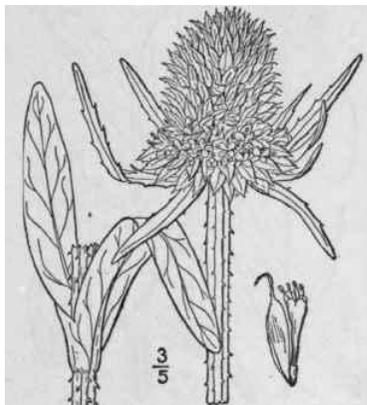
<http://www.henrysbbuttons.co.uk/news.html>



Cartwheel Button

Harriette recently visited a retired archivist who has special knowledge of textiles in Somerset and Wiltshire, not only was he able to answer the question “What is Druggett?” which was posed in September’s Newsletter, “Drugget was a hard-wearing woollen cloth made with a worsted warp and a corded weft.”, but he was also kind enough to allow us to print his article about teazles.

The Cultivation of Teazles in Somerset and Wiltshire



The heads of a special variety of teazles (*Dipsacus fullonum*) were used in the west of England cloth industry for raising the nap on the cloth in preparation for shearing. These teazles have a hard head and fiercely hooked spikes. They were fitted in frames called ‘handles’; during the 19th century were set in a gig-mill which had a revolving drum and was worked by water power. The fulled cloth was hung on a rack so that the handle fitted with the teazle heads could be drawn over it to raise the nap. The nap was then cut by shearmen using heavy iron shears to produce the fine surface of the finished cloth. This was the most skilful and specialized part of the cloth-making process. The demand for these teazle-heads from clothiers led to their widespread cultivation in Somerset and Wiltshire. In his survey of Somerset farming produced for the newly-formed Board of Agriculture in 1798, John Billingsley of Ashwick near Shepton Mallet commented on the importance of the crop, especially in north Somerset and the Chew valley. ¹A dispute over the tithes payable on teazles which came before the Exchequer Court in 1699 provides details of the methods of cultivation. Numerous witnesses, including many of the local clergy, were examined at the *Sign of the Golden Lyon* in Wrington. All testified to the widespread cultivation of teazles and the profit which could be made from them. Some described how the teazles were generally sown on newly-cultivated land. The seed was sown in March or April, and the heads were ready to harvest during the following year.

¹ John Billingsley, *General View of the Agriculture of Somerset*, (1798), 110-12.

They were cut with knives about St James's tide (25 July) and sorted into Kings, Middles and Smalls. John Balton, a yeoman from Wrington, aged 60, stated that the number of growers had greatly increased during his lifetime and that 'a good acre of teazles is as good or rather better than a good acre of wheate'.² After the teazles were used on damp cloth they needed to be dried and ventilated. 'Handle-houses' survive in Trowbridge and at Croscombe, between Shepton Mallet and Wells, as reminders of the former importance of teazles in the cloth industry.³

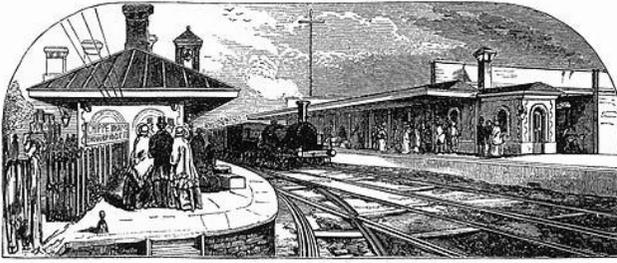
Further evidence can be found in the account books of William Sage, a teazle merchant from Trowbridge during the mid-19th century. These are part of a Trowbridge solicitor's records which have recently been deposited at the Wiltshire Archives Service (WAS) now based in the new Heritage Centre in Chippenham.⁴ The account books cover the years 1854-62 and show that William Sage had a large business dealing in teazles. He also dealt in cloth, wheat, barley, beans, potatoes and other products. His team of horses was employed in transporting teazles and in ploughing, harrowing and hauling manure at 5s 0d per horse per day. He purchased teazles from Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, but since he tends to give the name of the supplier rather than the place name it is not always possible to identify the origin. He grew crops of teazles himself at various places around Trowbridge, especially at Ashton Common, West Ashton and East Town in Steeple Ashton parish. The teazles were supplied to cloth workers all over the district although it is generally the name of the purchaser which is given rather than the place. Places mentioned in the accounts include Trowbridge, Bradford-on-Avon, Frome, Freshford, Westbury and Melksham. Some teazles were sent to Bristol by train, the railway connection with Chippenham having opened in 1848.

² The National Archives E134/II William III, Easter 4 Commission appointed by the Court of the Exchequer 13 April 1699.

³ Kenneth Rogers, *Warp and Weft: The Story of the Somerset and Wilts. Woollen Industry*, (1986), 51-3;

Julia de Lacy Mann, *The Cloth Industry of the West of England 1640-1880*, (1987), 299-301.

⁴ WAS 2153/1491 Account Books of William Sage 1854-62. I am grateful to Kenneth Rogers, the former County Archivist, for telling me about these newly-listed accounts.



Bradford-on-Avon station 1848

The teazles were sold according to size and quality and the prices varied considerably from year to year, probably reflecting availability and crop variation. William Sage also supplied ‘teazle

staves’ which presumably were the handles in which the teazle heads were fitted. The scale of business recorded in the account books provides ample evidence of the importance of teazles in the west of England cloth industry.

J. BETTEY

UK Supplier of handmade Charkas

Christine Stedman is the proud owner of a charka which she bought at the Glastonbury Wool Festival this year. If you are interested in buying one then you can contact the supplier, John Fletcher on 01981 500616.

The address is;

Lakeside Crafts, Lakeside Cottage, Tyberton, Madley, Hereford.HR2 9PT

Items included in the charka are;

1. Box with large fixed wheel
2. Small wheel
3. Spindle with bobbin
4. 2 drive belts
5. Spare wooden spindle washer
6. Cotton Pooni
7. Anti-slip mat

The website is <http://www.lakesidecrafts.co.uk/products/> details are a little sparse on the website at the moment but Harriette has contacted him to ask for prices to be included on there. The price is £70.00.

Supplier of cotton slivers

Combed cotton slivers available from www.texereyarns.co.uk
01274 722191

Washing greasy but precious fleece.

If you are lucky enough to have a Merino fleece, you will know how hard it is to get the grease out of it. Harriette's friend, Wendy Cox, kindly gave her a tried and tested method for cleaning greasy fleece.

1. Pull out an individual staple and just comb out or use your fingers to pull out the tip to open up the fibres.
2. Place it on a net I have been using an old net curtain from the charity shop cut into strips.
3. Continue laying out the staples until you have a layer the size of the saucepan you are going to use.
4. Fold the net over this layer and start on the next one.
5. Layer the wool up in this way until you run out of net.
6. Using a bright coloured thread tack roughly round the edges to hold everything together.
7. Half fill a saucepan with tepid water and splodge in a good squirt of baby shampoo.
8. Slowly heat the water up to at least 60°C (I don't have a thermometer, but if I put my finger in the water and it is too hot to stay in there but simmer bubbles haven't yet started to form.)
9. Meanwhile heat another pan up to the same temperature
10. When they are both at 60°C transfer the net to the clean water.
11. When you pour away the first water you will see that it is milky with melted grease and lanolin.
12. Refill the first pan and heat it up.
13. When they are both at 60°C transfer the net to the clean water.
14. This should be enough to get rid of the grease.
15. Lift the net out and let the worst of the water run off then roll in an old towel to very gently squeeze dry.
16. Put somewhere warm to dry.
17. When it is dry you can pull out the tacking thread peel back the net and lift up individual degreased staples ready to comb and spin.

Rosemary Speller gave us a copy of Weavers Journal from 1984 with an article written by one of our Guild members. Harriette has updated it but has been unable to contact the original author or her family for more information.

Wiltshire Guild: our heritage

By D. V. Baker

Wiltshire has a long history of textile making and formed part of the great West of England textile regions which produced huge quantities of fine cloth over hundreds of years.

As early as the twelfth century weavers and fullers are known to have made woollen cloth in Marlborough and nearby Great Bedwyn and, by the fourteenth century, Salisbury was an important and prosperous cloth-making centre along with smaller towns and villages such as Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury, Steeple Ashton and Castle Combe. As the textile industry developed it became increasingly concentrated in the west of the county.



Manual “waulking” of fabric before fulling machines were invented

The early growth of the industry was largely related to expanding wool exports and the introduction of technical innovations such as fulling mills. Fulling is the process of cloth being felted and trodden in water and Fuller’s earth (from which the surname ‘Walker’ derived) and the mills mechanised and facilitated this process. Some of the first fulling mills in the

country were those of Wiltshire: that at West Harnham near Salisbury dating from the fifteenth century. Other fulling mills were established along the valley of the River Frome on the Wiltshire/Somerset border in particular at Freshford, Iford, Farleigh Hungerford, Stowford, Tellisford, Road and Lullington: all places of charm and character.

The wealthy clothiers of this area usually owned the materials through all stages of production from raw fleece to the finished cloth and often lived at or near their mills. The house at Keevil near Trowbridge called ‘Talboys’ is a good example of a clothier’s home of the late sixteenth century.

The elaborate finishing processes at this time included raising the nap of the cloth with locally grown teazels. The only remaining example in the area of a ‘handle house’, where teazels were dried by air currents after use, can be seen in Trowbridge over the River Biss near the Town Bridge. After the nap was raised excess fibres was removed with immense iron shears, a pair of which are on display *as part of the Garlick collection at the Trowbridge Museum*. The majority of the white dressed broadcloth so produced was exported unfinished to Flanders and Italy.

The seventeenth century saw important changes in the Wiltshire textile industry. New types of cloth called ‘Medleys’, originating in Spain, were made by mixing wools of two or more colours that had been dyed before spinning, producing a much lighter cloth than the earlier broadcloth.

This development helped to maintain the prosperity of the Wiltshire clothiers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which can be seen in the many great houses built for them at this time. The growth of Bradford-on-Avon, a charming town full of interest and architectural beauty, was largely the result of the wealth of local clothiers. A good example of a clothier’s workshop of this period, with long windows to give adequate light, adjoins Courtfield House in Polebarn Road, Trowbridge.

The widespread introduction of machinery during the 1790s caused even more fundamental changes and there was considerable unrest amongst the workers for



a time. The earliest machines were for carding, spinning, raising the nap and shearing. In 1833 John Dyer, a Trowbridge engineer, invented the rotary fulling machine which is still in use today. Water power was increasingly used to drive the new machinery.

Avon Mill, Malmesbury, was probably one of the earliest textile factories in the world. Originally a corn mill, it was purchased by a Bradford-on-Avon clothier in 1790 and converted to a weaving mill equipped with the new achines. *The main buildings were converted into flats in 1984.*

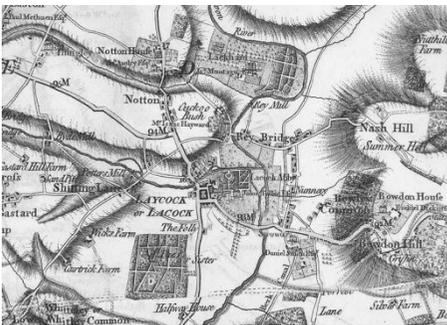
Other examples of former water powered textile factories are Greenland Mill, Bradford-on-Avon; Quemerford Mill east of Calne; and Staverton Mill near Trowbridge. At Wilton Royal Carpet Factory two industries established during the eighteenth century are still carried out: the manufacture of carpets and high quality felt for industrial purposes. *In 1984 there was a factory shop nearby, does this still exist in 2012?*

It took some time for coal to come into use in the Wiltshire woollen industry but in the eighteenth century more factories were built to utilise this source of power. Angel Mill, Westbury, is the earliest known surviving factory of this type. *It has now been converted into flats (2012).*

In the mid-1800s a depression put many clothiers out of business and of the woollen towns only Trowbridge continued to prosper. The newly available gas lighting aided those clothiers who managed to survive the decline. It was during this period that weaving also became concentrated into the factories from the individual workshops, a good example being the large weaving shed at Ashton Mill, Trowbridge, built in 1860. Some hand loom weaving however continued in villages such as Dilton Marsh and Chapmanslade near Wesbury. Wool drying stoves from this date, in the form of small stone towers, can be seen at Bearfield, Bradford-on-Avon; Horningsham; and Lowbourne and Church Street, Melksham.

Silk weaving was also an important industry in parts of Wiltshire from the seventeenth century. The main centre was Malmesbury, but other important centres were Chippenham, Devizes and Crockerton near Warminster. The area around Mere had an extensive linen industry in the eighteenth century making bed ticking, although this was primarily a cottage industry and died away in the latter part of the century. At Aldbourne near Marlborough fustians, cloth made from a mixture of linen and cotton, were produced from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

There are too many sites in Wiltshire associated with the textile industry to detail here, and interested readers are referred to the books listed at the end of this article for further information (there is also extensive information online). Many towns became particularly rich in this respect; for example: Trowbridge is known as the ‘wool church’ being entirely rebuilt in the fifteenth century through the generosity of rich clothiers and wool merchants. *The Wiltshire Heritage Museum in Devizes, the headquarters of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society and The Lackham Museum of Agriculture and Rural Life in Lacock both have exhibits related to the local woollen industry.* Longleat House has many Flemish tapestries and Westwood Manor, The Hall at Bradford-on-Avon, and Corsham Court have all been owned at one time by wealthy clothiers.



What a heritage the Wiltshire Guild has! We started in 1964 and have become a busy thriving group with annual exhibitions held in historic settings such as Laycock Villand, Stourhead, Bradford-on-Avon. We have a full agenda with lectures by well-known craftspeople, workshops, visits *and courses at our own studios in Steeple*

Ashton. A small group within the Guild advertise their crafts, and visitors to their studios are welcome. To commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Wiltshire Guild in 1974 the ‘Rode Coat’ was made on the 18th June. Twenty-nine people took part, starting at 5.00am with the sorting of fleeces and finishing at 8.20pm with the completed handmade garment which was then worn in celebration to the local pub for supper! With the twentieth anniversary now approaching what challenge will we take up this time? The end result may not be an exhibition piece, but the participation in and preservation of our craft is our main aim. *This was written in 1984 – what did we do? What might we do in 2014 for our 50th anniversary?*



In preparing this article particular use was made of the following books, all of which are recommended for further reading:

Wool and Water – K G Ponting, Moonraker Press

Industrial Archaeology of Southern England K Hudson, David and Charles/MacDonald 1965

A History of the West of England Cloth Industry K G Ponting, MacDonald 1957

Wiltshire and Somerset Woollen Mills K H Rogers, Pasold Publications 1976

A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of Wiltshire Ed. M C Corfield, Wiltshire County Council Library and Museum Service 1978.

This article was written by Di Baker, a member of the Wiltshire Guild in response to the Journal's request some time ago for local information of interest to our readers. As a weaver she is particularly interested in woven wall-hangings, fibre constructions, jackets and creative use of natural and synthetic fibres.

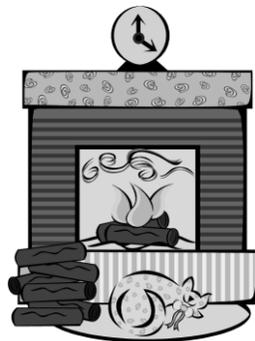
A good idea for a badly felted fleece

If you have ever washed a fleece and thought, “Oh dear! What a mess – it has felted!” don't waste your time trying to rescue it for spinning. It can go straight on the compost heap, but try using it as a wash cloth and duster for your car first.



Quotes to make a grey winter day more interesting

Lyn Pybus found some quotes to cheer us all up;



“Winter is an etching, Spring a watercolour, Summer an oil painting and Autumn is a mosaic of them all.”

Stanley Horowitz

“Your dry logs have in them all the circumstances for a conversation. For four or five hours, let us love Winter, for it is the Spring of genius.”

Unknown

Thank you Lyn.

The Study of Andean Textiles at the British Museum

I was invited to a presentation at the British Museum on 22nd October 2012 by a friend, who is beginning to encourage my textile obsession!

This is just a short summary of the talk but there is a lot more information on the British Museum website:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/andean_textiles.aspx

Textiles from Andean South America represent a range of visually striking and technically sophisticated weaving and dyeing traditions.

The British Museum collection of over 900 early Andean textiles comprises a representative sample of techniques and materials used over 2,000 years in the Andean weaving tradition of the coastal and highland regions. The textiles, preserved by the arid conditions of coastal desert graves range in date from the Paracas to the Inca and Colonial periods: 200 BC to the late eighteenth century AD.

Pre-Hispanic textiles are notable for a range of complex weaving techniques as well as non-woven techniques including embroidery, plaiting and sprang and for their striking designs which can be figurative or highly abstract. Made mainly from cotton and camelid fibres (the hair of llama, alpaca, vicuna and guanaco) many of the textiles display an impressive range of vibrant colours produced by the use of natural dyes and pigments.

Work to upgrade documentation and improve storage of the collections has progressed over the past five years and the talk was to explain some of the work done under a 3 year project funded by the Leverhulme Trust and in partnership with French, Peruvian and Spanish organisations as well as Edinburgh University and Kew Gardens.

Dr Thibaut Deviese travelled to Peru to obtain samples of dyeplants growing both on the coast and in the highlands. He studied dyeing methods and obtained samples of fibres, mordants, modifiers and noted the various techniques in which they were used. With accurate analysis of samples comparison can be made with items in the BM collection and more information about their provenance and production can be gathered. This will help future study of the nature, trade and exchange networks across the ages as well as conservation of the items.

The funding and use of High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) has meant that much smaller samples can be taken from items in the collection and that a greater range of chemicals can be identified than by previous methods. Other analytical and imaging techniques being used are: SEM = scanning electron microscopy, XRF – X-ray fluorescence analysis, FTIR – Raman and Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy and multispectral imaging. Artificial ageing will also be carried out to address colourant stability, identify degradation markers and identify deterioration mechanisms to allow for optimum study, preservation and display of the museum collection. Whilst madder (*rubia tinctorum*) may have been used as a dye, the action of mordants and modifiers such as alum and lemon juice can alter the colour and the chemical makeup of the dye. It is known that cochineal was imported into Peru to produce reds but identifying whether dyes are animal or plant based is important for their conservation.

The most striking photograph we were shown was one of the workbaskets found in a weaver's grave in Peru and the explanation of how this has helped the study was extremely interesting. The baskets hold yarn, spindles and other tools, presumably for use in the afterlife!



Dr Deviese's visit to Peru included him presenting a paper at the third Latin-American Symposium on Physical and Chemical Methods in Archaeology, Art and Cultural Heritage Conservation organised by San Marcos University, Lima. He also visited the Yachay Wasi Institute and the Institut Francais d'Etudes Andines (IFEA) whose library holds essential reference material for his work. He gathered plants from coastal regions around Ica and Nazca with local botanists running the Huarango Project (habitat restoration, conservation and sustainable plant use in Southern Peru) in collaboration with the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew.

Alongside the study of the materials used is also study of the techniques (cotton warps, camelid wefts) and the actual designs of garments and items as well as the symbols and patterns they include.

It was a fascinating talk and I am hoping to get more detail of some of the plants identified (possibly for Auli's Guild Dye garden?) and will include them in a later newsletter if I learn any more. At present I only noted Madder, Cochineal, *Indigofera suffruticosa*, *Bidens* (possibly *ferulifolia*?) and of course, cochineal which is a parasite of cactus plants! There was so much information in the evening that it was difficult to take it all in. If you want to see more of the items in the collection this publication would be a start : P. Dransart, P and H Wolfe: *Textiles from the Andes (Fabric Folios)*, British Museum Press, 201.

Harriette

Teneriffe Lace

A workshop by Jenny Smith



Teneriffe Lace

About a year ago Jenny spotted a book entitled *The Technique of Teneriffe Lace* by Alexandra Stillwell, in a second-hand bookshop in Cirencester. The first edition was printed in 1980; subsequent editions were made in 1981 and 1990. Alexandra is well known and respected in the lace making community. The lace originates from Teneriffe and is similar to *Sol Lace* which is made in South America.

The lace is created by putting pins in a cushion or, block of wood, a “web” is created by winding thread round the pins, then a needle used to stitch onto the “web”. Only three basic stitches are used. Intricate collars and table cloths can be made, but we were happy to spend an afternoon making one small motif.

Thank you Jenny, we did not know that a scouring pad (which we used as the “cushion”) could be a source of so much contented entertainment.

Jenny is planning to do another workshop on the Skills Day in 2013.

How to make a simple scarf loom

Harriette recently enlisted the skills of her husband to make a simple scarf loom. It is a fantastic way to use a variety of yarns to great effect.

You will need

Two 5ft lengths of 2x2cm. wood – which should be fairly smooth and knot free.

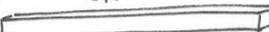
Six 3 inch pieces of 2x2cm. wood

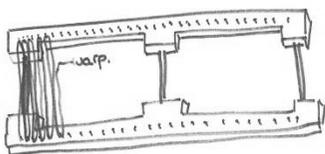
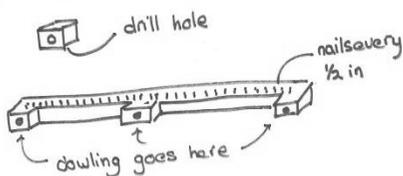
12 screws

Three 14 inch lengths of ¼ inch diameter dowel

240 nails with smooth round shanks and heads

How to make up the loom

- 2 x  5ft 2cm x 2cm
- 6 x  3in 2cm x 2cm
- 3 x  14in ¼ in diameter
- 12 x 
- 240 x 



Drill a hole in the centre of each of the small pieces of 2x2 wood.

Screw the small pieces at even intervals along the longer pieces.

Measure intervals of ½ inch all

along the length of the longer

pieces of wood and place the

nails. (If you want a closer warp

place the nails 1cm apart – you

will need 300).

The loom is now ready for

assembling together by inserting

the dowling.

If you would like to see pictures

of how to make this loom then

http://www.downsizer.net/Articles/Make_your_own/Weaving_mohair_scarves_on_a_home-made_scarf_loom/

Please note the mix of metric and imperial measures!

If you are suffering from a winter cold or sniffles then Lyn Pybus recommends this recipe which was given her by a yoga teacher. It sounds like a nice drink anyway.

Lyn's Congestion Clearing Cocktail

Ingredients

4 black peppercorns
4 cardamon pods
4 cloves
1 cinnamon stick
1-1½ inches fresh ginger root – grated

2 tablespoons Honey
2 lemons
2 tablespoons glycerine
Optional - whisky

Method

Simmer (do not boil) the ingredients for 15-20 minutes in 1 pint of water. Strain and add two tablespoons of honey (try the Wiltshire honey from the Community Shop), the juice of two lemons, two tablespoons of glycerine which can be purchased from any chemist- it is soothing to the throat.

Allow the mixture to cool and keep it in the fridge. When required decant into a glass and heat in the microwave.

I guess it would be best to add the whisky at the last minute – just in case someone thinks the mixture in the fridge would be an excellent remedy for any visiting small children! (Julia)

Sip as required

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