

Wiltshire Guild Spinners Weavers and Dyers



Newsletter December 2019

Registered Charity Number 1168349



Letter from the Editors

Harriette and Julia are excited to have another year of newsletters ahead of us, particularly as there are now several textile groups cross-fertilising ideas and abilities at our Steeple Ashton base. We have produced 4 newsletters a year for the last 8 years (32 issues all available on the [Guild website](#)).

We would love it if the textile groups could also submit articles, reviews or pictures and new techniques. If each group produced one item every 4 months this would help share information about the range of activities (and reduce the work for us both!).

We are very excited to report that [Helen Haysom](#) has started a degree course in textile design. Click on her link for her blog which is her journal of her learning journey. See also a brief extract of her design process for her piece in the WEFT Exhibition on page 12.

We are also delighted to include articles from members either upcycling or reducing waste (Manda and Liz, thank you both).

We wish you all a happy and creative winter and 2020.

Harriette and Julia

A warm welcome to new members;

Jenny Stuart, Jayne Dun, Janice Maskrey.

We hope that you enjoying learning and sharing new skills with the Guild.

Wiltshire Guild Website	National Association website	
Newsletter edited by Harriette Dottridge and Julia Shahin		
hdottridge@hotmail.com	01761 490445	07791 832592
juliashahin@blueyonder.co.uk	01179 867255	07366396713

Chair's Report 2019

This will be my last Chair's report, as I shall be standing down after the fourth year, of this, my third session, as Guild Chairman. I have again enjoyed the privilege of meeting and greeting you all at our wonderful Studios. Are we not so very lucky to have such a great space to work within and to create our beautiful textiles? I hope the facility will endure for many years to come.

As we approach many changes to our committee it is my pleasure to thank most sincerely all of those hard working colleagues who beaver away behind the scenes and particularly those nine of you who are standing down today. Thank you so very much for all of your support over so many years.

Well done once again to Dawn and Kathy for teaching new members the art of Weaving and Spinning and for Liz who has just finished with her first group of New Spinners.

A big thank you to Sally for all her hard work in our Guild Garden: she has been out in all weathers for so many years; also Auli who started the dye garden almost 10 years ago when we moved into what was then just a barren place. We hope to keep it all going with a new group of gardeners.

Also thanks must go to Julia and Harriette for their great regular newsletter, I always look forward to each edition, which gets better and better each time. Our Textile groups have been growing in popularity, this last year attracting new members and allowing us to increase the number of days on which they are held.

The programme is currently:

SEWING BEE on the first and third Monday of the month,
HANDICRAFTS second and fourth Monday,
FELTING first and third Wednesday in the month,
PATCHWORK second and fourth Wednesday in the month and the
WEAVING studios are open every Tuesday and Thursday each week .

It would be very nice if members of each of these groups would share the responsibility of opening-up and then closing and securing our premises after each of the sessions, instead of always leaving it to the same person. This year we again held our Exhibition at the same time as the Steeple Ashton Village Open Gardens. Unfortunately Beryl and I were both away, so didn't experience it. Many thanks to Liz and her team for all the hard work involved in staging this event.

It has again been a good year for speakers: thanks to Margaret and Anne for organizing the programme, also to Kathy for arranging our always very popular annual fleece sale.

Beryl has been continuing to organizing the WI Visits and already has two in the diary for next year. The Guild is now listed in the WI Yearbook as a venue for group visits. Thanks to all who have helped out with the hands-on experiences enjoyed by WI members; feedback from that organisation has been very positive.

My special thanks for all of the support you have given to me personally these past years and for all of those who have served on the Guild's hard working Committee. I hope that members realise that things do not just happen by magic but are achieved by the dedicated work of individuals. I think that our combined efforts have been most effective in moving the Guild forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the new Guild Committee well and am confident that they will build upon the work of the outgoing team in making this place a joy in which to practice, develop and share our skills. For continuity, Erica, Sarah and I have offered to serve on the new committee. In conclusion, I would like to thank the wider membership: without your kindness and friendliness to one another and the generosity of sharing your skills then we would not be such a happy and successful Guild – the envy of many others around the country.

Valerie Laverick
Wiltshire Guild Chair

Eds: please note that Craft and Chat is usually the first Saturday of the month and Guild Day the 3rd Saturday of the month.

Erica Staxenius – Treasurer Report 16th November 2019

AGM – Wiltshire Guild Spinners, Weavers & Dyers Year End 2018/19 – Annual Return/31st October 2019

Receipts/Income

1. WI visits started this year has brought in £305 and thank you to Val Laverick and Beryl Francis for hard work in getting this underway and for ensuring the visit went well.
2. Donations made up of goods supplied by members and purchased via the session was up on the previous year.
3. The introduction of having door money has produced a decent income but the loss of the weavers fees and the reduction in active members in this section does mean there is a slight dip in revenue from this group. Craft and Chat and the other Textiles groups continue to grow and the 3 extra days a month should bring in extra money during 2019/20.
4. Library was up but the Equipment hire and sales were down but there may have been a sale of a piece of equipment in the previous year, however equipment hire does need looking into by the new committee.
5. Fund raising Total; 100 Club have a profit of £106. There was no summer sale which has had a direct impact on the profit for this years “Sales” commission and the 2018 Christmas sale was down £32 on 2017. However the Sales Table held on Guild Days did produce £734 which is £301 up on 2017/18 figures. The commission from the Fleece Sales is also included in the Fund Raising Total. The total figure that the Fund Raising activities is down by on the previous year is £1,672.
6. Exhibition Income was from the Summer Exhibition from selling of teas etc.
7. The Subscription Total of £5,530 included 2019/2020 subs of £4,405 as they were taken in Sept/Oct. This does have a direct impact of the final profit figure of 2018/19 as it shows a healthy profit when in fact it should be recorded in the 2019/20 figures. It would be helpful to have the Year End date changed to 31st August so to have a more realistic figure for the year end profit/loss in future. This will need to be done at another General Meeting or next AGM. To be discussed further.
8. Courses/Workshops brought in additional income of £1,320, up on the previous year and a thank you to Dawn Thompson, Kathy Davis and Liz for their hard work in holding these courses.

Payments/Expenditure

1. Total Fundraising activities cost £1,346.63 which the bulk of it was commission from the summer sale.
2. Consumables Total was up by additional but that did include the fixture and fittings for the office in Studio One completed by Margaret Laurence.
3. Equipment Maintenance Total was slightly down on previous year.
4. Club 100 has given out £126 prize money.
5. Electricity is down on previous year due to a change in the supplier to Npower. This will continue to be monitored.
6. Exhibition Pay out £60 for various new displays to show off skills/sessions for Studio One and was instigated for WI visits. Margaret Laurence and Sarah Bond were mainly instrumental in these.
7. Association Fees are slightly up due to new members.
8. The only General Maintenance cost was the new wiring completed in Studio Three and Four £1,105.
9. Printing: Total was increased as there was a colour Newsletter produced for the Summer Edition.
10. The last of the weaving fees have been returned.
11. Rent Total was reduced this year by £1,500 to help with the new electric requirements and thanks goes to the four Wiltshire Guild Trustees for obtaining this.
12. Speakers: Total was slightly up on the previous year of £67, but continues to be a popular choice for Guild Days.
13. Courses; Total are the fees for the tutors holding the courses.
14. Journal; Purchases are down on the previous year.

Net Receipts/(Payments)

The total of £6,353.36 shows it as being a good profit for the year 2018/19 but the fees from this current year is included and without the rent rebate the “figure” would have only been £448 profit, which, although up on the previous year of £121, is still far short of the projected figure that may be needed to maintain Studios Three and Four future.

HSBC Bank Accounts as at 31st October 2019

Current £18,899.18

Deposit £3012.51

Cashbook as at 31st October 2019 after unrepresented chq and O/S lodgements £17,441.81 current.

Assets: There is now a completed asset register for all equipment on site and the total comes to £57,136.50

House Keeping

1. Can members that are Tax Payers please fill in the Charity Gift Aid form if they haven't already done so asap so they can be included in this year's claim? Forms in Studio One.
2. Milk: please use the Wilts Guild "Milk Book" to be found at the cash register in the village shop. Write in date/session name/amount. Please leave the milk in either studio One or Three depending on when the next session is to be held.
3. There is now a safe in the office for the deposit of any money collected. Please make a note on the brown envelopes date/session name/amount and any other donation money amount.
4. Lastly, please make sure you have the £3 door money to pay on the day and that it is legal UK tender. No more foreign coins unless they are worth a lot more than the UK £; might happen!

Yarn for the Soul



On a cool and wet morning recently Trish Gray received a warm & friendly welcome from Katie Mairis who has a shop in Silver Street, Warminster called [Yarn for the Soul](#). Katie is an agent for Ashford & what she doesn't have in stock, she can source for you.

Her shop opening times are: 10-2-30pm Monday to Saturday, or by appointment, the shop telephone number is: 01985 219 737.
Facebook/Instagram @ yarnforthesoul

Eds. It is always good to go to an actual shop if possible, but the link above opens up a rather lovely website where you can sign up for emailed newsletters and offers.

Textile Studio group projects

The front cover shows the group project which showcases some of the skills of the various groups who share the Textile Studios.

Sarah Bond says that both the Christmas Tree project and the jumper display are both works in progress and can be added to at any time.

Please ask Sarah for the templates and basic instructions for either project as everyone's input would be most welcome.

The jumper project is displayed in Studio 2 and you can spot some trees in this newsletter!



Sally Morley - Farewell and Thanks



Thursday 19th September was the last day of work in the Guild Garden for Sally. Jacqueline made a lovely cake and Sally was presented with plants, garden vouchers and cards. Sally has been a member of the Guild since it first moved to Steeple Ashton. She helped establish the Guild in its new home, has been a committee member, *the Guild cleaner, and for the last eight years has worked hard in the Guild garden.

The garden was first established by Auli and very grateful thanks must also go to her for all her expertise and advice on dyeing and dye plants.

Thanks must also go to Sally's husband (Mike), who has undertaken many electrical jobs for the Guild over the years and has also helped Sally in the garden from time to time.

They will both be greatly missed, and we hope they will call in for a visit when time allows. We particularly want to see Sally's wonderful handwoven bedspread once all the panels have been sewn together.

Thank you again for all you have done for the Guild and we would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Dawn on behalf of the Guild.

** Eds. We recall that in fact, Sally was the "secret cleaning fairy" as she had not wished this to be acknowledged. Thank you, Sally.*

Half price Tickets! – Whitchurch Silk Mill

[Whitchurch Silk Mill](#) will be offering half price tickets to the Mill between 3rd December and 16th February.

They need to be booked by the 18th December. For more information please check the website in the link above.

The Hampshire Guild Exhibition will be on until 5th January so this will be very well worth a visit.

Gill Cook - Outstanding Achievement Cup 2019



This award was inaugurated last year when Liz McCarron won it for her Certificate of Achievement awarded by the Association of Guilds of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers.

Gill Cook was nominated by three members for her work on lace spinning.

Kathy says: “My nomination for the Achievement Cup is Gill Cook for both her and her husband's contribution to the spinning of laceweight and finer yarn. Gordon has developed a specialised bobbin and Gill has produced some beautiful yarn and knitted

Shetland shawls. I find her passion for Shetland and spinning fine yarn both uplifting and inspirational. Her interest in this area of spinning is infectious and you can see how she has built her knowledge, through visits to Shetland and honed her skills over the last couple of years - working ever closer towards cobweb yarn. If Gordon's Ollaberry Laceweight bobbin takes off, they would both have made a significant contribution to the modern world of lace weight spinning”.

Trish Gray said: What a great idea this award is. Gill Cook’s hand-spun, hand knitted Shetland lace weight shawl, famous world-wide for being able to be threaded through a wedding ring is a work of art and skill which is a masterpiece. Gill is a hands-on from start-to-finish person and it is wonderful that she and her husband share in their love of Shetland and their sheep, which is another plus to be including family members in Guild activities”.

Jackie Shewring said: “For her outstanding spinning of Shetland wool and knitting her beautiful shawl”.

Trish Gray – shearing and showing fleeces.

Last spring Kath Steggall a graduate from one of Kathy's spinning courses contacted me enquiring if she could buy a Shetland fleece, Kathy having put her on to me. We don't shear until the lambs are at least a month old, usually in May. Although I begin to roo (pluck) any sheep showing signs of their fleece loosening & the new growth starting. This year I began in February, due to the change in temperature I suppose.

I suggested that Kath come to visit our farm & she could see the variety of different colours & staple length ahead of the sheep being shorn, or sheared as is said in these parts. So Kath & her husband came one sunny day & got to meet our gorgeous friendly woolly sheep.

They all have names, being pedigree, which I choose very soon after the lambs are born. Kath chose two fleeces from shearing ewes called Carnival & Becher. I asked Kath if she would like them straight after they were sheared or if she would like me to show them for her at the few shows were there are fleece classes. Kath said that she wouldn't be spinning until the end of the summer & that she would like that.

There is a huge amount of sorting, picking, britching & skirting has to happen before any fleece is presented before a judge, it involves endless hours, however the thrill to find a rosette of any persuasion attached to your fleece following the judging of dozens of fleeces from all of the wool breeds, is super & never fails to excite.

Kath's fleeces were successful, Carnivals I thought was unusual & might catch the eye; it did, winning a place each time it was shown. Becher's fleece was only shown once & joy upon joy it won 1st prize. Kath has already spun & knitted a very smart hat from some of the rooed fleece which she also bought.

Any Guild members are welcome to contact me and can do as Kath did, come ahead of shearing, meet the sheep and choose your fleece.



Instagram/Facebook trishshetlands
email: mrstrishgray@aol.com
Mobile: 07902 226603

My Exhibit at the West of England Festival of Textiles

“...Having agreed to weave an exhibit, I happily selected two fabric samples to inspire my piece. The first inspiration piece comprised of a range of samples by an unknown designer. The sample referenced as 63/186 came in 4 colourways, each using barberpole yarns with a slight adjustment of colour. I was also drawn to a piece designed by Pat Whitehead (below left) which had itself been inspired by a design by influential textile designer, Bernat Klein* (**Eds that is two references in one newsletter!*). The mixture of textured and coloured fancy yarns on a plain background provided the excuse for me to try to incorporate a lot of texture.

Here is a selection of wraps to help with fibre selection and proportions.



During the design stage, I continued weaving a range of twills and came across one that provided some interesting floats. I decided to use this as the lift plan as it allowed me to use a single weft of silk noil. I continued to work on the twill warp even though I was becoming seriously concerned about the closeness of the exhibition deadline. ...Finally I reached the point where I could swap warps. The winding

went quickly and smoothly and I was sure I would save a large amount of time by tying the new warp onto the old ...winding on took a lot of time as the warp was fairly sticky and somehow I had managed to cross a couple of threads....I started the scarf by weaving 8 picks of tabby, then moving onto the twill pattern before finishing with another 8 picks of tabby. Each end was



hem stitched. After weaving the first 10cm I decided to loosen the beat, otherwise the exhibit would not have been completed in time.”

Eds. for the complete article and much more see [Helen's blog](#)

Heirlooms Restoring Old Looms for Modern Weaving

There are no longer any manufacturers of looms in the UK, so buying a new loom means buying one from one of the loom-making companies abroad, which necessarily entails the carbon footprint and expense of moving a large and heavy object. New looms are also never cheap, so acquiring one this way as a newcomer to weaving probably isn't the most cost-effective, as most people outgrow basic equipment as they learn more and discover their particular area of interest, and find they want something more specialist.

A second-hand purchase can be a much cheaper way to acquire a loom while you are learning. Repairing something is rewarding, good for the environment, and quite possibly the best way to better understand how it works! Acquiring a much older loom that needs work done on it can mean the opportunity to own something with an historical connection. When you outgrow the loom, you can sell it and usually recover the cost of buying it and the money spent restoring it. Historically, there were several makers of looms in the UK. Some of the ones that are commonly seen available are:

Dryad of Leicester: this was a furniture manufacturer from the early 1900s and part of the Arts and Crafts movement. They are probably the most collectible looms because of their history, but the quality seems to be variable with some being very simple budget models and others more advanced.

Harris: a manufacturer in Kent that it seems mostly made table looms. Some of these are more complex with 8 or more shafts and the ones I've seen are well made and designed.

Weavemaster: a London maker. Most of the models I have seen for sale seem to be quite simple designs, often with only two shafts.

London School of Weaving: These seem to come up less often, but appear to be well made.

In addition to these and other brands, it's also common to find looms of all types with no maker's mark on them, probably made to order by independent craftsmen. The quality of them varies but some of them can be very well made.

When considering buying a broken loom to repair, the parts that are broken and how feasibly and inexpensively they can be replaced are worth considering. Most old looms will have heddles that are no longer serviceable – metal ones tend to rust in storage, and string heddles are just grotty regardless of how they've been kept, and most vintage looms at any rate seem to find their way to the market with not enough heddles left on them to weave anything. These are usually straightforward to replace. After this, tie-up and levers are easy to replace or repurpose, and shafts and treadles/lamms can usually be made inexpensively by a person with basic handicraft skills. The castle and the mechanisms that raise or lower the shafts are slightly more complicated but can be done if they are missing or just badly designed. The most difficult part to rebuild from scratch is the basic frame and the beams with the ratchet and pawl assembly.

Rust on metal parts of old looms is inevitable, but avoid anything with wormholes or showing signs of dampness or rot.

Sources of old looms include general second hand websites as well as the dedicated site **The Loom Exchange**, and word-of-mouth through guild members. Most looms, even large floor looms, can be disassembled and transported in a large car. Some sellers will agree to disassemble and post the parts. It is worth taking all the parts, even if some of them will obviously need to be replaced, so you have the broken pieces as templates.

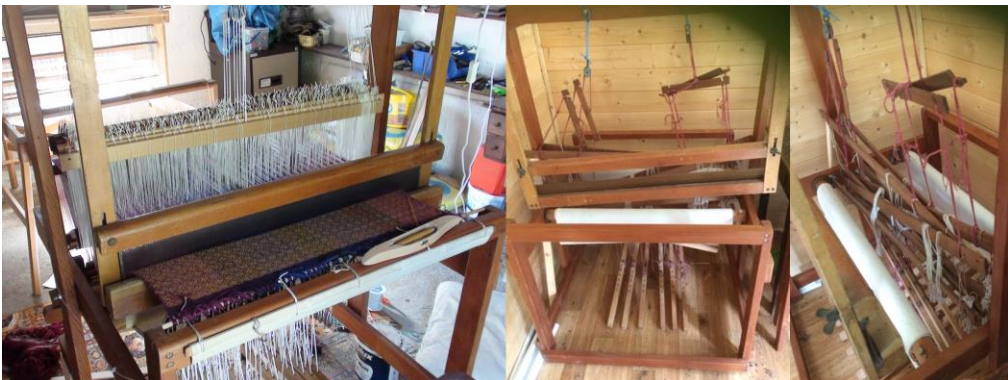
Looms fall into three basic types. **Table looms** and **jack looms** have either levers or pedals that work through a mechanism to move a shaft or shafts in one direction only, creating a shed between the static shafts and the raised or lowered ones. With table looms, generally one lever operates one shaft, but with a jack loom, a treadle can be tied to multiple shafts. **Counterbalance** and **countermarch** looms have pedals that are tied up in a way that causes every shaft to either rise or sink to create a balanced shed. Table looms are the simplest to understand and countermarch the most complicated.

If you're not sure where to start mending your loom, or you can't tell what type it is, it can be really helpful to come to the weaving studio at the guild and look at the looms there to get some more understanding of the different mechanisms, and the people there can also be very helpful in working things out. You'll also get to see the things being woven by people there, which can be educational and inspiring!

Once you have the basic frame cleaned and assembled, and know what type of loom you are working with and understand the basics of how its mechanism works, you should be able to mount the shafts on it. When replacing the heddles, consider what modern options are available and would work on the loom. **Texsolv heddles** will fit most floor looms with wooden shafts, and unless the shafts have fixed ends forcing them to be a particular height, which most vintage looms don't, they can usually take this type of heddle, and as they seem to be sought after on second-hand looms, using Texsolv is a worthwhile investment. The long heddles are for counterbalance and counterbalance looms, whereas the shorter ones are for table looms. Make sure you order a suitable length for your loom, as short heddles on a large floor loom will restrict the shed you can get. Looms that have metal shafts that are a rigid shape might need wire heddles, and you will need to measure the existing heddles to know what size to buy. However, if some of the shafts are missing or broken, and you are going to rebuild them, it is a good idea to build them to fit the nearest size of Texsolv heddles. Once the shafts and heddles are assembled, you need to attach the shafts to the levers or pedals. Table looms are reasonably straightforward to understand, with one shaft attaching to one lever on the front or side of the castle. With counterbalance looms, moving one or more shaft down always causes other shaft(s) to move in the other direction. Counterbalance looms usually have **lamms**, which on old looms are usually long levers looking rather like extra pedals, mounted under the shafts perpendicular to the pedals, and these act as 'dummy' counterbalances. Counterbalances are probably the most difficult to understand, as every shaft has either an 'up' or a 'down' tie and must be tied by one or the other to every pedal that is going to be used.

Hopefully after this, you should have a loom that is functional. Before using it, have a look at the shafts and test how the pedals/levers work. If something is sticking or not working smoothly, or the shafts are not moving evenly and becoming lopsided, it may be something has not been put together right. It may also be that the castle/mechanism just isn't very well designed, which sometimes happens. If this is the case, it's often possible to rebuild or re-engineer the loom so it works more efficiently, and studying the variety of other looms at the guild can help give you some ideas of how to do this. You will also quite likely have new ideas of how you can improve your restored loom after weaving your first project on it!

Here are two looms I have nearly finished repairing and their stories:
A 20" unbranded 8-shaft table loom with a stand. I was given this loom for free (apparently it was to be taken to the tip otherwise, which would have been a tragic waste!) and four of the shafts and levers were missing. It had an unusably small number of grotty string heddles on it. I decided to rebuild all the shafts in rust resistant aluminium to take Texsolv heddles. It has 100 heddles per shaft, meaning it can weave at up to 40 EPI using the full width. The design of the castle is not bad, with the shafts sliding into grooves like drawers. I re-engineered it a bit by spring-loading the shafts to make them operate more smoothly. The handles on the levers are made out of Prosecco corks, begged from friends and family members who drink alcohol. The beater was poorly designed and the reed in it was damaged and rusty and had a bad smell. I bought a new commercial reed and bodged a new beater for the time being, and will probably make a better one once I've woven something on it and got a feel for it.



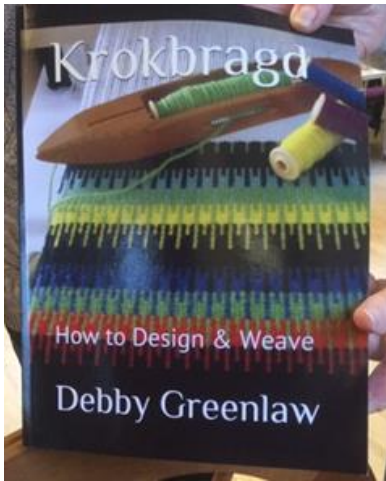
A 32" counter-march 8-shaft Dryad loom. This loom was completely unusable when I acquired it. Its previous owner had bought it to repair and unfortunately passed away, and it had clearly never been used, because it had been put together with too-small screws and the beams were on back-to-front so it wouldn't have held tension. It had four shafts with what was left of a small number of string heddles, and a weird and broken pulley assembly that suggested they had intended to set it up as a counterbalance, even though features on it such as lamms and pivot points suggested it was originally meant to be a counter-march. I decided to rebuild it with 8 shafts with the help of a friend who is a carpenter, and this entailed building copies of the existing shafts plus extra pedals, lamms, and pivots. It has some very good aspects to its design, for example, a brake release for the back beam that can be operated by a string threaded through to the front, so you don't have to get up to advance the warp, and then some other aspects which are not so good, such as handles on the inside of the beam, where the front one fouls with the shafts. I removed this one and I'm going to try to fit a better handle on the outside next.

Enjoy weaving on a loom with history, and if you do come across a broken loom and no time to repair it, please don't throw it away as someone else is sure to enjoy restoring it and giving it a new lease of life.



Eds. Thank you, Manda, for this article- I (Julia) have no idea how you managed to fathom how to put the jumble of pieces together!

Book Review: Krokbragd, How to Design and Weave by Debby Greenlaw



ISBN 9781796655469

Flo Beith is enjoying using this book and I must admit I'm sorely tempted too! (Harriette) It was also well reviewed in the recent Journal.

Krokbragd is a Scandinavian weaving technique which features repeated motifs. This comprehensive book brings together the traditional aspects of krokbragd with a fresh, contemporary approach to creating stunning textiles. The structure and design of krokbragd is explored on floor, table, and rigid-heddle looms. There are plenty of projects for inspiration.

Anne Lander's Shawl- and the winner is...



Kath Stegall got a splendid early Christmas present at the November Guild Day when she won the draw for Anne Lander's beautiful Soay handspun and woven shawl.

Anne made this from fleece from her own sheep, handspun and woven and donated to the Guild by her family.

Harriette and I admired Kath's beautiful handmade



baskets when she brought them to the November Guild meeting.

We are aiming to list more details about the course she went on and other courses in the March newsletter.

So don't spend all your Christmas money yet!

World Textile Day Saltford 5th October 2019



Julia and I went along to this and had to wait for the second sitting of [Isabella Whitworth's](#) talk, *Deeper than Dyeing*, as it was so popular.

Isabella began by explaining about her childhood attraction to textiles. She explained her family did not have a lot of money and her mother used to make clothes, often using [Bernat Klein](#) fabric. However, she had a great aunt who was wealthy and had many wonderful bespoke treasures in her house which Isabella was allowed to seek out while the grown-ups were chatting. On display was a wonderful dress which she had inherited from this aunt, demonstrating both the style and quality of her wardrobe.

In the 60s Isabella went to Southampton Art College when she was 15 for a two year foundation and here she really learned to draw. At the time tweeds seemed to be very dung-coloured so textiles weren't of great interest. She then went on to study graphic design at Canterbury, not Norwich, where she was also offered a place, not because of the quality of teaching or reputation of the establishment but because she wanted to be nearer the sea! Her subsequent work tended to concentrate on "function" and she initially went into publishing, illustrating Michael Murpurgo's first book: *"It never rained"*. This wasn't very satisfying so in 1986, pre-internet, she moved on to work on toy catalogues: ending up being a studio manager and having to write the rules for games (which sounded fun until she told us how they also had to play the games endlessly exploring every conceivable scenario and then deal with complaints or queries from the purchasers) .

She then decided that she would take some time out with her young son travelling to India and Bali where she began sketching costumes and masks. She began to realise how important the function of costumes were and this sparked her interest in textiles. Here she met [Cristina Formaggia](#) who taught her an enormous amount not only about the meaning and symbolism of Hindu and Balinese beliefs but also how to conserve the textiles.

Isabella had what appeared to be two gingham tablecloths displayed but she explained that these are very important to Balinese religion and how the black doesn't exist without the white and indicates the spiritual concept of good and bad existing together.

She later returned to the UK and in late 2007 was asked to look at a dye-related archive belonging to friends and which had been passed down three generations of the Bedford family, at one time chemists and dye manufacturers in Leeds. Most of it was late nineteenth/ early twentieth century. She recognised that the archive was of some importance, covering a fascinating period of dye history when natural dyes overlapped and were gradually replaced by synthetics. The process of sorting and listing the contents took several months and they were delighted when it was offered a home by the Leeds Archive Service.

While sorting the archive she became engrossed in the workings of the orchil trade, on which the early fortunes of the company were based. Orchil is a dye made from lichen and until the end of the nineteenth century was widely used to dye silks and wool various shades of purple. In order to understand how orchil was made she went to study in Spain with [Anna Champeney](#) who lives and works in Galicia and who has great knowledge and understanding of the material and the environment in which the local orchil lichen grows and thrives.

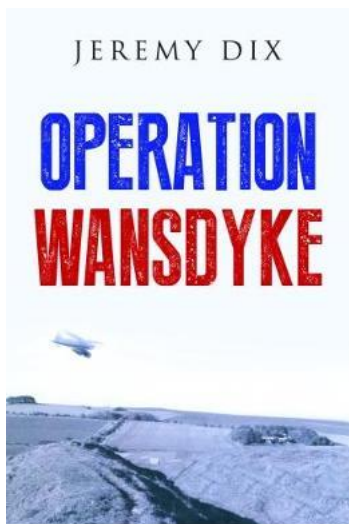
Isabella is now a world recognised authority on lichen and ancient dyes and has contributed to many publications including, most recently: *Microchemical Journal*, Vol. 150, November 2019 and was a contributor to *Dyeing Now: Contemporary Makers Celebrate Ethel Mairet's Legacy*, initially an exhibition involving international dyers who recreated many of the recipes in Mairet's 1916 *A Book on Vegetable Dyes*. Now a publication available from Ditchling Museum of Art and Craft

We thoroughly enjoyed her talk and would love to participate in one of her workshops in the future.

Harriette

Eds. The blog is very interesting! The link is at the beginning of this article.

Operation Wansdyke- a local story



At our last WI Meeting we were given a talk by a Mr Jeremy Dix.

The talk was about his childhood during the years of WW11 in [Bishop's Cannings](#) which is a village outside Devizes.

He has written a book entitled, 'Operation Wansdyke' - a work of fiction woven around that particular village at that time in history, but in talking about life in and around the village. The book is available at your usual suppliers for about £9.00.

Publisher: Pegasus Elliot Mackenzie Publishers

ISBN: 9781784653125

Jeremy happened to mention that the Marlborough Chalk Downs were swathed in vast fields of flax which was grown for webbing etc. on aircraft.

He also mentioned that the last flax factory was situated around the site of the old barracks in Devizes (which have now been converted into accommodation) and that the newly build housing estates around that area have been named after aspects of the flax industry.

Lyn Pybus

Eds. I am never one to pass up on a bit of internet research and oddly I could not find many references to flax growing in Wiltshire! I did find Flax Mill Park with some most unusual street names nearby; Oamaru Way – the only street of this name in the UK, streets with references to Coppers, Keepers and Moonrakers (smugglers), Spitalcroft, Roundway (a battle in the civil war) and a footpath named [Quakers Walk](#) and a couple of streets named after wild flowers. The town planners obviously had huge fun in naming the streets.

I did however come across [Flaxland](#) has been featured on the TV. Ann Cooper runs courses about how to process flax from her farm in Tetbury- well worth a look if you are planning spending some Christmas money in 2020.

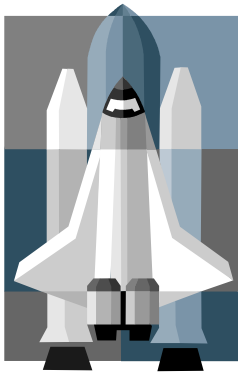
Julia

Toulouse-Lautrec and the Masters of Montmartre

Victoria Art Gallery, Bath

Exhibition 15th February to 26 May 2020.

We seem to have a theme of cross fertilisation of ideas in this newsletter. I am sure most people do not need an excuse to pop to a yarn shop or two in Bath, so a trip to this exhibition would be double treat.



Tools needed for Wiltshire Guild Weavers please

We need more shuttles, stick ones would be good but in particular could do with some ski shuttles if anyone is having a clear out as they are expensive to buy.

Also we need temples as well (for the uninitiated: these hold the edges of a piece of weaving firm and even).

If you have any, or can source any at a reasonable price please let Helen Robinson know:
helenrobinson1946@btinternet.com

Eds. Not the kind of shuttle illustrated. Nevertheless it is always good to aim high with your craft ambitions.



Crackers? Almost definitely.

Several years ago, in my quest to live more sustainably, I became increasingly distressed about the amount of disposable nonsense I was buying in order to host a traditional family Christmas. Over the years I have been steadily replacing disposables with items that get reused year after year. Our hand sewn advent calendar has been filled with sweets every December for 20 years, and the whole family keeps an eye out after storms for a suitable windfall to be dragged home and decorated as our “festive branch” that’s chopped up for firewood on 12th Night.

Although I’d made Christmas crackers in the past, they always seemed like a lot of effort for something that was then thrown away, but they did have the advantage of not being filled with little plastic charms and toys that would just get chucked. I have quite fixed views of the qualities a cracker should possess. They need a hat, a joke, a treat and a bang. I was delighted then to find a free pattern on Ravelry for a [knitted cracker](#) that pulls apart. The real triumph, though, is the [hat pattern](#) by the same designer – it’s comfortable and fits really well – they get worn all day long and don’t fall off into the gravy.

The crackers and the hats have been knitted mostly with bright acrylic yarn that I have been given by various people – it doesn’t take much yarn. I knit the crackers in the round on a circular needle (using magic loop technique) – I can show you how this is done at guild if you like, or [this video](#) shows you how to get started, although there are loads of other videos on this. Each year I add a cracker snap, an appropriate cartoon from Private Eye, a joke and a chocolate (the Green and Black’s miniature bars fit really well). This year will be their 4th year in our house and I can’t now imagine buying a cracker.

Be prepared for strange looks and jokes about having too much time on your hands.

Liz McCarron Heal

Eds. The pictures on Ravelry all seemed to be copyrighted- so we are all looking forward to seeing Liz sporting her knitted crown at the Christmas Party!

Guild Roles		
Chair and Programme Secretary	Margaret Laurence	07803 963229
	chairmanwiltsswd@outlook.com	
Vice Chair	Valerie Laverick	01380 870432
	valerielaverick@hotmail.com	
Secretary	Manda Rawlings	01225 807362
	secretarywiltsswd@gmail.com	
Treasurer	Erica Staxenius	07702727764
	ericastaxenius@live.co.uk	
Minute Secretary	Judy Lane	01225 776260
	jlcoasters@gmail.com	
Education Co-ordinator	Sarah Bond	07747443393
	14durnsford@gmail.com	
Outreach Co-ordinator	Janet Milner	
	mfb150@yahoo.co.uk	
Membership secretary	Helen Robinson	Contact by email
	Helenrobinson1946@btinternet.com	
Demonstrations secretary	Rachel Berger	
Health & Safety studios 3 & 4	To be confirmed	
Website and publicity	Susie Collyer	07967808571
	Susierichardson7@aol.com	