



The Devon Guild
of
Weavers, Spinners and Dyers



NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2016

Chairman's Chat

I must be getting old because I'm beginning to sound like my mother! Where has this year gone? Time is speeding up, I swear, and I dream of owning a Tardis so I can time travel. Admittedly this year has been a strange one for me, having had a bad fall in March and broken my hand, which meant all the things worth living for were impossible. (Ok, there are other things well worth living for as well as craft, but you know what I mean.)

It has taught me one important thing: **Do what you want to do while you can do it.** Housework can wait – go spin. You only get one shot at this life; it is not a rehearsal; dusting does not come with a lifetime achievement award; you will not be remembered for a spotless house (well, you will, but not necessarily in a good way). You just never know what life will throw at you tomorrow, so go and dig out those fibres you have stowed away for 'when you have time' and spin them *now*. Warp up your loom and get weaving *now*. That boring coloured yarn that you do not really like? – dye it *now*.



Just a few of the bookmarks on display at Killerton

On another tack entirely, huge thanks and congratulations to all who helped to organise the exhibition at Killerton, congratulations to all who had items accepted for display and congratulations to those who were awarded their Certificate of Achievement, especially our very own Brenda Lawrence and Paul Ashton (whose enormous grin of delight has probably still not disappeared). Finally, thank you to committee for all their hard work and thank you all for being splendid members of a jolly good 'club', without whom our efforts would be in vain.

Jenny Arnold

What has the Guild been doing?

Saturday, 11th June

Talk and demonstration: Producing fibre for spinning art yarn

Janet Philips of The Threshing Barn

Janet was one of the most interesting speakers we have had this year. She gave us many tips and ideas on how to prepare all sorts of different materials to create distinctive art yarns. The techniques were quite easy for anyone to attempt but very effective. Janet used the drum carder mainly for blending. She didn't particularly use hand carders and preferred to simply use combs for opening out the fleece.

Ideas amongst the many she spoke about included:

1. take white fleece and prepare a batt on the drum carder. Take off carefully and lay out flat. Place silk noils randomly over the batt, fold lengthways to make a sandwich and put through the drum carder again. You can use angelina and triblobal nylon in the same way.
2. layer the fleece on the drum carder, place ends of knitting wool onto the drum by hand, add another layer of fleece. Split the batt lengthways again and spin in the same direction as the knitting yarn was placed on it.
3. place different coloured layers on the carder, perhaps white, green, yellow and split lengthways. Draw out carefully lengthways and put through the carder again.
4. Place for example blue and white in stripes side by side on the carder, larger amounts at each end with thinner stripes in the middle, fold and blend.
5. horse shampoo is excellent for cleaning fleece.
6. do not overheat silk when dyeing as it will lose its shine.

These were just a few of the ideas Janet explained to the group, just enough to whet the appetite for the following day's workshop, which was on how to spin the prepared fleece to create art yarn incorporating the ideas mentioned above - silk cocoons, pre-felts and many other unusual add-ins.

Notes taken by **Jaqueline Hitchen**

Saturday 9th July

Open Day and Fleece Sale

Once again we welcomed the finest fleece our local farmers had to offer, including Jacob from Bovey Tracey, Texel Cross, Alpaca, Mohair and of course lots of hand-dyed and blended tops. (See the website for a list of some of the sellers).

The fleece sale this year was expertly organised by Sue Heathcote. She already has several sellers wanting to come again next year. We all, of course, bought far too much of the irresistible goods on display. But had a great time!



super spinnable fleece on sale

A Thank You from Margaret

(Margaret's husband, Tom, passed away just over a year ago in 2015)

I would like to thank members of the Guild for making it possible for me to attend Guild meetings and the spinning club in Uffculme.

The friendship of you all has helped me through the first year since I lost Tom, and I appreciate it so much.

Margaret Graham



Margaret serving a selection of delicious cakes at the Fleece Fair

8th - 18th September

Threads in Time, National Exhibition at Killerton House

Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Being a relatively new member of the Devon Guild, I had never been to one of the National Exhibitions before, and I had no idea what to expect when I turned up to steward at Killerton House. I was in for a treat, not only was it a pleasure to talk to the many visitors who had arrived to view the exhibition, but I took time to look for myself and was blown away by the quality and variety of the exhibits. I loved the way that the pieces were displayed throughout the house, it was a treasure trail from room to room, with new delights around every corner.

The skills on show in the various items were amazing, weaving at the highest levels of expertise to produce stunning garments, rugs, cushions, bolts of cloth and hangings. I particularly liked the Japanese Hapi Jacket by Sue Foulkes from Durham in a striking red silk twill, it was stunning. Ros Wilsons Tree of Life woven tapestry was full of decidedly

exotic looking creatures and Patricia Mills Summer Border had me smitten with its colours and textures, and I would happily have lived with these hanging on my walls given the opportunity to run away with them!

Our Devon Guild entry Flora and Fauna Garland, was charming with its multitude of of creatures and flowers - well done to all the people who had contributed and spent hours putting it all together. There were literally hundreds of bookmarks in the Library in all shapes and sizes, displaying a myriad crafts and techniques - some fun and funky, others simple, stylish and exquisite.

Many of the entries had been dyed by their creators, as well as being spun, woven, knitted or felted by them - there were also the skeins of beautifully dyed yarns, and a very quirky fun exhibit of woven tea bags made from handspun merino and bamboo, dyed with natural dyes.



Pam's entry of dyed yarns



Japanese Hapi Jacket

All in all it has inspired me to 'do better' and try to improve my craft, but has also left me feeling very humbled by the expertise on show.

Sheilagh Robson



Superb weaving techniques on display

The Devon Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers Collaborative Project

What now seems a long time ago we were sitting in a committee meeting wondering what on earth we could do for our Devon Guild collaborative project. Jane suggested the idea of knitting Devon's flora and fauna, attaching them to a garland and draping it around a stand. This evolved into using only Devon bred fleece and miniaturising everything to go on it - not easy.

The Guild rose to the occasion as usual and got out needles, fleece, food dyes, ordinary dyes and Kool-Aid from America (don't drink this stuff!). We knitted mice, badgers, a bluetit, a beautiful dove, detailed butterflies, toadstools, chickens, bunny rabbits, nest with little eggs, a cheerful-looking spider, a horrible slug, holly and ivy and many varied and colourful flowers to name just a few things. Amanda Hannaford kindly lent us her wicker form called Alan, and with the garland draped round him he was the perfect woodland lady. He/she had obviously also been to the seaside as we had shells, starfish and seaweed attached to him as well.



Collating the items



Final version



Close-up of the knitting

Isabelle did the main work of creating the garland, old tights stuffed with slightly smelly Devon fleece, Amanda sent round emails imploring people to knit and suggesting patterns on Ravelry, Chris and Sarah ended up putting it together, Nick having stabilised Alan with two bags of out of date flour and a crossbar. Sarah's expert eye created the final pleasing version at Killerton.

The knitters included: Brenda Lawrence, Brenda Patten, Jae Burgin, Jane Yarrow, Chris Johnson, Amanda Trick, Margaret Graham, Paul Ashton, Norma Sanders, Anne Lickiss, Mary Mallett, Linda Drage, May Bowsher, Cris Crisford, Jill Bond, Sarah Johnson, Jo Williams, Pam Brown. *(Please give your name to Amanda or Chris for the website if you have been missed off this list).*

Chris Johnson

22-25 September 2016

STITCHING, SEWING & HOBBYCRAFTS SHOW – WESTPOINT - EXETER

The Guild stand at this year's Stitching, Sewing & Hobbycrafts Show at Westpoint was a slightly more pared-down version than usual, with the emphasis on highlighting striking colours and designs rather than "making the most" of every available surface. Jane Yarrow, Jane Alexander and Jenny Arnold did a fabulous job ... the backdrop of indigo-dyed throws, shawls and yarn immediately caught the eye of passers-by who were drawn in to explore the other exhibits, watch the spinning and carding and chat with the demonstrators.

It's the third year I have demonstrated at Westpoint and, I think, the busiest ... Sheilagh, Maggie and I were all kept on our toes by the sheer level of interest and enthusiasm! Fibre-related crafts are having something of a renaissance at the moment and the slow but steady rise of people interested in learning to spin, weave and dye seems to continue.

Judging from

comments on Thursday morning (and, I'm sure, more made to other demonstrators during the rest of the show) we may well have enticed a few new members into our welcoming clutches!



Amanda Trick

The Collaborative Project for the National Exhibition at Killerton from the Somerset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers



This project from the Somerset Guild was probably the most amazing item in the Exhibition. It took the Guild 15 years to make and was a stunning tapestry of different towns in Somerset. This photo can only give an idea of the marvellous craftsmanship involved.

Poems sent in by Mary Mallett, authors unknown.

THE CRAFTSMAN

He hopes that you will understand,
The beauty of things made by hand,
That you will feel the mystic spell,
That every craftsman knows so well.

By potter's kiln, or lathe, or loom
In shed, or attic, or spare room,
He adds a certain magic touch,
Creating things he loves so much.

Not simply made of wood or stone,
Not for financial gain alone,
But made with patience, love and care,
That others may his pleasures share.

He does not measure time by days,
He labours long whilst others laze,
From misty dawn to setting sun,
Until he feels his work's well done.

So if you buy the craftsman's wares,
You're buying from someone who cares,
He'll sell you charms that never fade,
For everything has been "hand-made".

*(Poem found amongst the belongings of
Mary's dear friend, Margaret Silcock)*



Knitted daffodil from the collaborative project

**Oh! I am a beginner spinner - or
"Never lose sight of your end"**

Now I was told by me friend I'd like it
"It's easy" she said with a grin
And I was whisked off to meet all the ladies
who agreed they could teach me to spin.

So with great trepidation I entered
in a hall full of wheels and clatter
I thought this craft was quiet and sedate
not full of excitement and chatter.

So I sat tentatively down in a circle
and a wheel was shoved under me bench
Now someone slapped in me hand some
greasy stuff,
they called it fleece, they were right, what a
stench.

So I combs and I brush quite contented
and I watched all the bits hit the floor
Then something jumped out and it crawled up
me leg
And I quickly shot out of the door.

With me back all hunched up I was determined
Me head throbbed and me hands were like clay
at last I succeeded, it was spinning,
Now the damned thing was going the wrong
way.

Now I've managed to spin up me first bit of
fleece
twas full of pigtails and barbed wire - and twas
coarse
So I knitted a jumper for me husband
Who said "it's nice dear and it looks great on
me horse".

The shelves are all packed with wool and stuff
And cupboards are all filled to the brim
Me husband complained he could do with more
room
So I'm going to get rid of him.

Housework is getting a thing of the past
and me stove is beginning to rust
I haven't the time to cook and clean
so take away life is a must.

Me husband has had enough of this mess
so he's packed all his bags - he is leaving.
Well, I'd have more room, and I did understand
for I'd announced I'd be taking up weaving.

Saturday 10th September

Talk: Heather Firby of TOFT Alpacas

This talk was slightly changed from that advertised as Heather had left TOFT Alpacas to concentrate on developing her own designs here in Devon. Her interest is in sustainable, traceable knitwear, handmade in Devon. (<http://www.woollymindedknitwear.com/>)

Heather originally studied textile design at the Chelsea College of Art. While there she tried out various specialisms and finally decided on knitting as her main course of work. Her time at college was extremely productive and she showed her work in various exhibitions in Europe, for example Paris and Florence and several projects in Finland.

Why wool? Because it's versatile, natural, sustainable, biodegradable and hard-wearing. It's a natural insulator, but suitable for both hot and cold weather. It can be ethically and locally sourced. Heather mentioned Prince Charles and his Campaign for Wool - an acrylic and a wool garment were buried and when dug up some time later, the wool had degraded but the acrylic was still there!

Heather showed her collection, all made using different breeds of sheep and sourced from different Devon farms for their different colours and quality. They are carded and spun by hand and then machine knitted. A main focus was in re-using waste, everything can be used, some packaged for people to spin and felt and further on in the process, added to weaving. Coldharbour Mill at Uffculme has proved helpful in the process from her graduate days and otherwise she uses her trusty knitting machine in her small studio in Tiverton.

Recently Heather has branched out into making knitted jewellery with gift cards to match.

At the end of the talk Jenny congratulated Heather on her enthusiasm for innovative ideas and design and offered the Guild's encouragement for everything she was doing.



crocheted chamomile earrings



Devon scene at Little Whitehall Farm
Chris Johnson



Coldharbour Mill, Uffculme

Focus on the Guild's Weavers

Early days spinning and weaving

Having learned to spin a few months earlier, I joined the Guild in November 2011. It is still a challenge to improve my spinning techniques and the quality of my work; the help from Guild members and workshops have been invaluable.

Many years ago I learned lots about textiles and weaving and the different weaves. My admiration knew no bounds when I saw weavings produced by Guild members. I never thought I would be able to weave. The looms I'd seen in books looked very daunting - all those heddles, strings and pedals and goodness knows what! I thought it was way beyond my ability, so never gave it another thought.

In March I was admiring Jacqui Hitchen's beautiful spinning (- she had recently learned to spin). She then said she had been weaving before and was wanting to sell her loom. 'I wish,' I thought. I was easily persuaded to look at her loom - it was not a large, chunky or an unmanageable looking one, but a table top one - an Ashford's Knitter's Loom, and in a few short minutes, I was persuaded that I could learn to weave when I realised the simplicity - and the scarves she had woven on that loom. I bought it there and then and it was the best buy of the year.

Once home - Ashford web site on line with easy-to-follow demonstrations on u-tube - yarn - dining table ... and I was weaving. I loved it!



The very next month, Helen Brotherton's 'Rigid Heddle Loom' workshop got me into a new area of weaving, using the pickup stick, which hugely enlarged my repertoire. With my loom, Jacqui gave a couple of very good Rigid Heddle weaving books,

and I have since bought *'The Weaver's Idea Book'*, which has been immensely helpful. Weaving has given me many enjoyable hours of weaving with challenge, irritation, pleasure and satisfaction.

If you need a little persuasion to try weaving, the Guild has one you can borrow! (Aside - one of my hobbies is genealogy, and I am amazed that many of my ancestors going back nearly 400 years, on both parents' sides, were weavers, spinners, hat makers, felt makers (for hats), indigo planters and manufacturers! - I think it must be in the genes or blood!).

Sue Heathcote

Weaving members of the Guild



Julian weaving at the Devon County Show

Bruce makes and sells his peglooms (or he will do when he gets round to it).



Bruce and pegloom



Sarah and pegloom



Nick's weaving of the Devon flag
Isabelle's weaving won a trophy at the last Evaluation Day. This type of weaving looks time-consuming, but beautiful.



Committee Now Serving

Chairman:	Jenny Arnold
Secretary:	Amanda Trick
Treasurer:	Paul Ashton
Programme Secretary	Christine Hart
Events Co-Ordinator:	Jane Yarrow
Newsletter Editor:	Chris Johnson
Membership Secretary/Journal:	Sue Clowney
Fleece Fair Co-ordinator:	Sue Heathcote
Webmaster:	Amanda Trick
Committee Members:	Norma Sanders
	Sheilagh Robson