

## PREFACE

.....THE YEAR IS 1991.....Forty years since Devon Guild was founded, and I thought I would collect together (as far as I could), the salient facts year by year, before they get lost in the mists of time. Using early copies of the "*Quarterly Journal of the Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers*", our own Minutes, and later our 'News Letters' I have aimed to record the names of the Officers, Committee, membership numbers, subscription, and any other events or matters of interest.

It is a loose leaf collection. There are many blank pages after 1992, and may I suggest that perhaps future Chairmen or Secretaries will have time to keep the record going. Also, if any relevant facts come to light which I have omitted, space has been left on each page for more entries.

The Guild holds a set of '*News Letters*' which include more details of the projects mentioned briefly here.

Slides and photographs are also available.

Eileen Seddon  
Chairman 1984-1988  
President 1988-199

Moor Cottage  
Shobrooke  
Devon  
December 1991

## INTRODUCTION

The Arts & Crafts movement of the 19th century generated a surge of interest in spinning and weaving all over the country. Craftsmen in their scattered groups needed a medium through which they could communicate. As early as 1853 a Guild was formed (nationwide) - thought to be the first since the demise of the old mediaeval guilds. It published a "*Weavers Journal*", and in which, it is said Queen Victoria (a keen spinner) was also very interested. There is no trace of it after 1903.

In 1931 several Guilds formed an Association, and their Journal was called "*The Quarterly News*". A Summer School and also an exhibition were held in 1934. Unfortunately, this Association failed to survive the 1939-45 World War II, but in 1947 there was a suggestion that counties be encouraged to form Guilds, with Dorset being the first so to do, in that year. About this time a group of weavers, spinners and dyers in Devon shared occasional meetings with Somerset, where a Guild was formed in 1950. In September 1951 Somerset minutes report the "last joint meeting with Devon, prior to Devon forming its own Guild".

I can find no record of this actually happening, but, as will be seen, Devon "as an existing Guild" represented by L Sandeman-Allen was involved at a meeting in November 1951 - leading to the launching, in March 1952, of the "*Quarterly Journal of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers*" and, from February onwards, Guild meetings had been organised, so our founding must have been sometime in late 1951.

Early meetings were held in Exeter, in Waterbeer Street, Little Dellers in the High Street, Queen's Terrace near the Clock Tower, the Social Centre for the Blind, and at the St. David's Institute. Fewer than six meetings a year were held in the first few years.

Subsequent meeting places were in Wynards Alms Houses which by 1973 had ceased to be alms houses and housed a number of city non-profit making organisations.

Fond memories of the 5 years spent there are often expressed by older members.

In 1978 increase in membership forced a move to the nearby Friends Meeting House, where we had a cellar (somewhat damp, regretfully) in which was stored the library and various items of Guild equipment.

By 1983 a further large increase in membership made another move necessary, and we all settled down happily in Burkett Hall in St. Loyes School of Occupational Therapy in Topsham Road, Exeter, enjoying the extensive grounds, the car park, use of extra rooms and a very reasonable rent!

Owing to redevelopment at St. Loyes, we were forced to move again in 1989 this time to the spacious accommodation at St. James' High School, Beacon Lane, Exeter - and an unreasonable rent!

Following Dorset's earlier lead, several Guilds were formed and, in May 1951 a preliminary meeting in connection with the launching of a Journal was held during an exhibition of weaving in Bristol. A few months later, in November, a Council of Representatives of existing Guilds (see below) met in London, the spade work being done by a Miss Dorothy Luke of the Somerset Guild.

A small committee was appointed to produce a "*Quarterly Journal*" of which the first copy was issued in March 1952, with many good-will messages from people prominent in the crafts - including one from the Worshipful Company of Weavers (the oldest of the City of London Livery Companies), whose toast at banquets is:

*"I give you the health of the art and craft of spinning, weaving and dyeing, root and branch, and may they flourish forever"*.

During the Autumn of 1952, the Council of Representatives met again. They received a report from the Journal Committee, and discussed the possibility of forming a 'Council of Federation' to serve all Guilds. It took some years to collate the opinions of the growing number of Guilds but, in 1956, our then Chairman L. Sandeman-Allen, chaired the committee which formed the 'Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers'. It was at this time that Devon joined the Association.

The ten founder member counties of the committee which launched the "*Journal*" were:

Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucester, \*Hallamshire & District, Kent, London & Home Counties, Somerset, Staffordshire and Warwickshire with Worcestershire.

I should like to have enlarged on many of the items mentioned - but where to stop? Many first class craftsmen have been, and are, members of our Guild, but I have kept to a minimum mention of personalities (apart from the names of Officers) - again - where to stop?

And where can I stop thanking people who have helped me in compiling this 'history'. Older members have racked their brains for me, some have lent me early News letters, and my brother-in-law Athos Angus (not even a member), has somehow translated my awful typing into this lovely layout you are now reading.

I have tried to verify the facts mentioned, and I hope my sources were accurate. Please don't hold me responsible! - but please alter anything which may later prove incorrect.

My personal impression of the early days is of a group of very accomplished weavers, anxious to share knowledge and experience with a keen interest in spinning and dyeing, and throughout, a sense of common loyalty to the Guild in furthering the aims of all Guilds which are:

*"to encourage and maintain integrity and excellence in craftsmanship  
to foster a sense of beauty of material, texture, colour and design.  
to provide opportunities for interchange of information, for enlarging knowledge at holiday schools, for demonstrations, lectures and library facilities.  
to co-operate with other Guilds having like aims"*.

Eileen Seddon  
December 1991

\*Hallamshire later became the Southern District of the West Riding of Yorkshire. It is now South Yorkshire.

1952

Chairman: Mrs Sampson  
Secretary: Miss Violet Pellow, The Old House, Chudleigh, Devon  
Treasurer: Mr George Chitty  
Committee:  
Subscription:  
Membership: March 70. September 97.  
Events:  
February: A two-day spinning school.  
March: Business in connection with the Royal Agricultural Show at Stover, Newton Abbot, to be held in July.  
Speakers: Mrs Susan Bosence of Dartington on "*Colour & Design*"

Other speakers during the year were Mrs Clews; Mrs Pearce; Miss Young (International Wool Secretariat).

Devon was one of ten Guilds instrumental in launching the "Quarterly Journal of the Guilds of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers". The first issue appeared in March 1952. Price 1s.6d (7½p) per copy or 4/- (20p) per annum

Mary Jarvis (still a member in 1992) joined about this time.

This report appeared in the third issue of the "*Quarterly Journal*":

#### THE ROYAL SHOW, NEWTON ABBOT

by G. E. DICKINSON

In a picturesque corner of Stover Park, set apart for voluntary organisations, was the marquee of the South-West Counties' Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, organised by Devon and Somerset.

The marquee, lined with dark willow hurdles up to the eaves, with furnishings of chairs, tables, stools (for the spinners) and baskets specially made of the same Black Mole withy lent by Messrs. G. Musgrave and Son of Stoke St. Gregory, Somerset, formed a unique setting for the exhibits.

The work of some sixty members was skilfully arranged; the beautiful colour schemes, a particularly attractive feature, delighted numerous visitors from home and overseas. Much of the work was of outstanding quality and original design.

Demonstrations of weaving, spinning of wool, flax, dog hair and Angora rabbit fur and spindle spinning, given by members from Devon, Dorset and Somerset, were continuous throughout the four days. They were staged on a platform raised eighteen inches from the ground and framed with two foot withy hurdles, in the centre of the marquee, so that the public were able watch the demonstrations from all angles. Stewards and demonstrators were very generous in giving information, answering innumerable questions and helping visitors in every way.

Members of the staff of the Wool Marketing Board, who visited the Guild stand, expressed keen interest in the spinning demonstrations and in specimens of vegetable-dyed fleece and yarns. Numerous photographs were taken by the Press and for the records of the Royal Society and reports appeared in the various daily papers.

The Guilds were honoured by a surprise visit from Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal the Princess Mary, who expressed great appreciation of what she saw. She spent a considerable time looking at the exhibits and was specially impressed by the colours used by the weavers in their work and by a fine Shetland Shawl spun and knitted by a member. She was very pleased to see such work was still being done.

It was also most gratifying for the Guilds to be complemented on their stand by the Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society.

1953

Chairman: Mrs Sampson  
Secretary: Miss G Lory, Dunmore Cottage, Dittisham, Devon  
Treasurer: George Chitty  
Committee:  
Subscription:  
Membership:  
Events:  
February: Two-day weaving school. Tutor: Mrs Malcolm of Somerset Guild.

1954

Chairman: Mrs Sampson  
Secretary: Miss G Lory  
Treasurer: George Chitty  
Committee:  
Subscription:  
Membership: Over 100  
Events: June 2-5 Exhibition in tent at Bath & West Show at Whipton

Mr L Sandeman-Allen, a member of Devon Guild, chaired a committee appointed by the ten founder Guilds of the "Journal" to set up an "Association of Guilds"

1955

Chairman: L Sandeman-Allen (Mrs Sampson retired and became President)  
Secretary: Mrs Goord, Higher Brimley, Bovey Tracey, Devon  
Treasurer: George Chitty  
Committee:  
Subscription:  
Membership:  
Events: Open Day at Kenn Potteries by invitation of Phyl Shillinglaw and Lucille Clarkson.  
Exhibition at Devon County Show (adverse weather! - what's new? - Ed)  
Margaret Barron joined the Guild (later to become Chairman)  
In October the Guilds' Council of Representatives held a meeting in London and it was resolved to form the *Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers*. The Chairman of that Committee was our Chairman L Sandeman-Allen.

1956

President: Mrs Sampson  
Chairman: L Sandeman-Allen  
Secretary: Mrs Goord  
Treasurer: George Chitty  
Committee:

Subscription: raised to 10/- (50p)

Membership:

Events: Members went to Taunton to attend a talk given by  
Mr Robert Patterson (Curator of York Folk Museum) on the  
*"History of Wool"*

First meeting (in London) of the *National Association of  
Guilds of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers"*

Devon Guild joined the Association.

1957-1961

The Minutes of meetings and AGM's for this period are missing. The information has been gathered from other sources and cannot be totally relied upon.

1957

President:  
Chairman: L Sandeman-Allen  
Secretary: Mrs Goord  
Treasurer:  
Committee:  
Subscription: 10/- (50p)  
Membership:  
Events:

1958

President:  
Chairman: L Sandeman-Allen  
Secretary: Miss W M Finn, 66 Torbay Road, Paignton, Devon  
Treasurer:  
Committee:  
Subscription:  
Membership:  
Events:

1959

President:  
Chairman: Mr Bolton  
Secretary: Mrs Goord  
Treasurer: L Sandeman-Allen  
Committee:  
Subscription:  
Membership:  
Events:

1960

President:  
Chairman: Mr Bolton  
Secretary: Mrs H M Haslam, 5 Brookedor, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot  
Treasurer: L Sandeman-Allen  
Committee:  
Subscription: 10/- (50p)  
Membership:  
Events: Purchased Petty Cash book for 1s.9p, Receipt book for 1s.11p and records of accounts appeared for first time!

### 1961

President:  
Chairman: Mr Bolton  
Secretary: Mrs K H White, Elmwood, 7 Richmond Road, Exmouth, Devon  
Treasurer: L Sandeman-Allen  
Committee:  
Subscription: 10/- (50p).. Hire of Hall for the day 12s.6p (62p).  
Membership:  
Events:

To return to the Minute Books.....

### 1962

President:  
Chairman: Miss Enid Gaskell (who joined the Guild in 1961, after having been Chairman of Warwickshire Guild)  
Secretary: Mrs Cropper, 16 Berry Avenue, Paignton, Devon  
Treasurer: L Sandeman-Allen  
Committee:  
Subscription: 10/- (50p)  
Membership:  
Events: Eight meetings a year held in members' homes, (except AGM) approximate attendance 18.  
Cash-in-bank: £38. 4s. 3p (£38.21½p)

### 1963

President:  
Chairman: Enid Gaskell  
Secretary: Mrs Cropper  
Treasurer: Mrs Lock  
Committee: Mrs Bolton, Mrs Haslam, Mrs Lock, Mrs Goord, Miss Tucker, Miss Norton, George Chitty and Mary Jarvis.  
Subscription: 10/- (50p)  
Membership:  
Events: A News Sheet was prepared and issued by the Chairman. Four copies per annum cost 2/- (10p)  
*"Quarterly Journal for Weavers, Spinners & Dyers"* 9/- (45p) per annum  
Samples of work were exchanged between Guilds for interest and comment.  
Mr Dixon-Wright (first class spinner, weaver and dyer) was paid £4.10s for his talk plus £3. rail fare from Worcester.  
A suggestion for a meeting was of a day on the moors collecting dye-stuffs - (lichens??!! - Ed)

## 1964

President:  
Chairman: Enid Gaskell  
Secretary: Mrs Cropper  
Treasurer: Mrs Elinor Willis  
Committee: Margaret Barron, Mrs Haslam, Mary Jarvis, Miss Norton,  
Ruby Weighll, George Chitty.  
Subscription: 15/- (75p) plus 2/- (10p) for the "Newsletter"  
Membership:  
Cash-in-hand: £12. 7s 9d (£12.36½p)  
Events: The first course to be held at Dartington Hall, Totnes  
arranged by Enid Gaskell and Leonard & Dorothy Elmhurst  
of Dartington 20-23 October. Course run by Hilda Breed  
(Weaver). Tuition and residence £7.  
The "Newsletter" contained much useful information for  
weavers and in Issue No. 4, a crossword puzzle.

## 1965

President:  
Chairman: Enid Gaskell  
Secretary: Mrs Cropper  
Treasurer: Mrs Willis  
Committee: Margaret Barron, Mrs Haslam, Mary Jarvis, Miss Norton,  
Ruby Weighll, George Chitty, Mr Cropper.  
Subscription:  
Membership:  
Cash-in-hand: £27. 8s 9d (£27.43½p) Fee for an afternoon talk £2.  
Events: Present at the AGM held at St. David's Institute, Exeter  
were the Officers and one member. There could be no  
election of Officers, so they and Committee continued as  
before.

## 1966

President:  
Chairman: Enid Gaskell  
Secretary: Mrs Cropper  
Treasurer: Mrs Willis  
Committee: Margaret Barron, Mrs Haslam, Mary Jarvis, Miss Norton,  
Ruby Weighll, George Chitty, Mr Cropper.  
Subscription: £1. 6s 0d (£1.30p) including the "Journal"  
Membership: 36  
Events: L Sandeman-Allen died during December.  
Dartington course:  
Theo Moorman - Tapestry  
Mrs Cusack - Rugs