



# Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

## Newsletter

April 2017

### The William Morris Gallery

On a dull and cold February day, I decided to visit The William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow East London ([www.wmgallery.org.uk](http://www.wmgallery.org.uk)), following a friend's recommendation.

I have always admired William Morris' work, especially having



visited Kelmscott, near Lechlade last summer.

William Morris was born in Walthamstow in 1834 and his family lived in Water House, now The Gallery, between 1848 and 1856. The Gallery is run by very friendly and helpful volunteers and it is free to visit. It is in a beautiful Georgian House built in the 1740's, and the rooms have been arranged into several galleries.

The William Morris Gallery is the only public gallery devoted to the life and legacy of William Morris, designer, craftsman, writer, poet and political activist.

Inside, the galleries hold a collection of William Morris furniture, embroideries, tiles, stained glass, carpets, tapestries and wallpapers made by his company William Morris & Co.

The collection is beautifully presented, and very informative with videos showing dyeing (Morris liked to use plants for the colours he used in fabrics and wallpapers) and block printing, a technique he used for his fabrics and wallpapers.

There is a lovely tea room in the gallery, which overlooks Lloyd Park, which used to be the grounds of the house, so I ended up spending several hours there!

I came away having learnt a lot about William Morris, an extraordinary man, and for anyone interested in craft, I would highly recommend a visit.

Irene Wrigley

### Loom bench

I found some instructions for building an adjustable loom bench, and the comments from others on the web seemed to be



very favourable. So hubby was encouraged, cajoled and asked if he'd make me one. Here is the result which I'm delighted with. He used bits of wood that he had hanging around (so mostly pine), worked out some measurements from the on-line link, made some modifications (as always!) by making firmer 'feet' and beefing up the bracing strut. He produced it for Christmas day! The 'handles' mean it is easily moved around, and the adjustable seat is via simple wing nuts, so dead easy. The seat can be made to slope, rock or simply be firmly flat, due to the arc of the seat supports (see photo).



Here it is, set by my floor loom (the loom was set up and modified with help from Carole & Bob - for which HUGE thanks!)

The link to the website: <http://www.weavolution.com/group/home-built-equipment/yet-another-home-built-loom-bench-it-rocks-21408>

[another-home-built-loom-bench-it-rocks-21408](http://www.weavolution.com/group/home-built-equipment/yet-another-home-built-loom-bench-it-rocks-21408)

Jenny Butler

### Yarn & Wine pairings

It sounds quite bonkers but there is a list of yarn and wine pairings on the website The Woven Road in their blog The Lush Skein ([www.thewovenroad.com/blog/thelushskein](http://www.thewovenroad.com/blog/thelushskein)). It is American, so the yarns and wine are almost certainly not available here, but you'll get the idea. I know many of you spin with a glass of wine by your side, so enjoy!

Suggestions for UK wine and yarn pairings are welcome..

## Quick method solar dyeing using food paste dye

This is a wonderful method to use with children (as long as they are kept away from the boiling water/hot oven)). You will need Kilner jars with lids, clean fleece (long locks work well) or undyed yarn, food paste dye (liquid dye does work but not so well), citric acid, a kettle, a small saucepan and an oven.

- Set the oven to 80°C, put the full kettle to boil, and boil another 1 pint of water in the saucepan
- Dissolve 2 tablespoons (30ml) of citric acid in the saucepan water
- Fill each jar with dry fleece/yarn, don't pack too tightly unless you want some areas undyed.
- Put some blobs of dye on the top using different colours - about three small blobs is usually sufficient
- Pour on boiling water from the kettle to about 3/4 full - the dye will filter down with the water, top up with the citric acid solution.
- Put on the lid, there's no need to seal, place on a baking tray and put in the oven for 30 minutes.
- After 30 minutes, remove and rinse the fleece/yarn; if there is still dye in the jars, you can use it to dye another lot of fleece/yarn.



This method also works for single colours if you dissolve the dye paste in the acidic water first and then add the fleece/yarn.

Liz Mitchell

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## My cord maker

My first one, which broke recently after much use, was the best present that I have ever received. Shortly after giving up full time work so I could spend more time weaving, I developed arthritis in my hands. I had told Mary Jarvis (a former member of the Guild) that the only problem I had was making cords to finish my scarves and she sent it to me. I bought a second one when I mislaid mine temporarily which did not work as smoothly but the one I bought recently is as good as the first one. They are



made by Leclerc and are available from Frank Herring in Dorchester (in Dorset!). I could not find it on their Website so ordered by phone.

I have found them very useful when letting people have a go at weaving as they can take the cord away with them. I had two balls of sparkly yarn at Christmas Craft sessions at the Vale and Downland Museum in Wantage, so that the cords they made also looked good hanging on a Christmas Tree.

Angela Pawlyn

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## Andean Plying

I found this on the web recently and thought you might find it useful, if you don't already know it. An alternative to your hand is a paperback book and lollystick (the book must be large enough for you to put the yarn bracelet on your wrist once its wound) [rosemaryknits.blogspot.co.uk/2006/08/andean-plying-bracelet-simplified.html](http://rosemaryknits.blogspot.co.uk/2006/08/andean-plying-bracelet-simplified.html).

Editor

Did you ever have a bit of yarn left on a bobbin after plying? There's too much to throw it away, but not enough to go through the hassle of splitting it between two bobbins. Andean plying is a quick and easy solution.

No extra tools are needed. Just use this simple technique in wrapping the single around your hand, forming a yarn bracelet, and you're ready to ply.

1. Tie a slip knot, and put it over the little finger of your left hand.
2. Bring the yarn from the little finger over the back of your hand.
3. Form a loop around your middle finger by bringing the yarn toward the palm, between your middle and index fingers, and back up between your middle and ring fingers. Now you're back at the back of your hand.
4. Bring the yarn toward your thumb and around the wrist just below your thumb, and over the wrist just below your palm, and around the little finger.

Now you have made a complete circle around your hand, with a loop around your middle finger. Repeat steps 2 to 4, wrapping loosely until you have wrapped all the yarn from your bobbin.



5. Remove the loops from your middle finger, being careful not to lose the ends of your yarn as you let the yarn bracelet drop to your wrist.
6. Remove the slip knot from your little finger and tie it to the loose end you have just finished wrapping.

Now you are ready to ply. Just join the knotted ends of your yarn from your yarn bracelet to the leader on your bobbin and you're ready to go. You will be plying the strand from the outside with the strand from the inside of your wrist bracelet, as they unwrap from around your wrist.

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### Wymer's & Co

An exciting new venture offering tuition and supplies for handspinning and other textile related crafts.

14A West End  
Witney, Oxon OX28 1NE  
01993 402468

[www.wymers.co.uk](http://www.wymers.co.uk) (coming soon)  
[www.facebook.com/wymersandco/](https://www.facebook.com/wymersandco/) for latest news and posts.

## Whitchurch Silk Mill

Last week I visited Whitchurch Silk Mill on the River Test in Hampshire on my way down to the South coast. It was well worth the stop.

A mill has been on or near the site since at least the 11th century; the current mill was converted to silk production in 1817 by silk weavers from Spitalfields in London, the heart of the British silk industry at the time. This Georgian water mill still weaves silk using the 19th century machinery and is the oldest silk mill in the UK still in its original building. It's a gem of industrial heritage. Under various owners since then, the Mill has woven ribbons, serge, silk linings in 22 colours for Burberry and, during World War II, silk for insulating cables. Later, the Mill wove black ottoman and satin for lining legal gowns and even, it was said, cream silk for a scarf, tie and handkerchief for the Kray brothers.

On the top floor, up a rather rickety staircase alongside the moving belt which transfers motion from the river to the winders, is where all the winding processes are carried out. It was mesmerising to watch the bobbin winders and the great warping mill whirling away powered by the River Test. The silk arrives at the mill in dyed hanks from a silk



processing company. The hanks are then wound onto bobbins, up to about 50 at a time set on two pairs of bobbin winders. After winding, the bobbins are transferred to the creel ready for winding the warp. The enormous warping mill (giving warps of up to 30 yards!) defies my imagination - how on earth do you get warps of this length onto a loom without a tangle, especially when they are being threaded at up to 200 threads per inch. The warps are beamed directly from the warping mill and the beam can be dropped through a hatch down to the weaving floor below! Also on this floor are the quill or pirn winders transferring silk from the bobbins for the weft, again this is a machine capable of winding many pirns at the same time.

On the weaving floor, to save having to rethread the loom for each new warp, the new threads are individually twisted or tied to the old warp behind the reed, wound on and then tied to the front beam. Sounds straightforward but when there are up to 10,000 threads, it is unbelievable.

This is a fascinating mill to visit, although it was disappointing not to be able to see the looms up close as the public can only look through a window and the finished cloth is out of sight. If you are tempted to visit, the mill will close at the end of August for refurbishment which will last nearly a year.

Liz Mitchell

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## Meeting Reports

**January 2017: HAGD: Finishings** with Angela Pawlyn, Sarah Allen, Lyn Wymer

### **Weaving** (Angela Pawlyn)

*Taking off the loom:* It is a good idea to weave a few rows with scrap yarn before taking the weaving off the loom and it is important to release the tension before cutting the warp. As soon as I have cut the warp ends at each edge, I tie a group with a reef knot to secure them. If the weaving is wide I will make more temporary reef knots at intervals

*Securing the ends:* With *balanced (fabric) weave*, I normally use either twisted cords or tassels tied with overhand knots. To make the edge stronger I swap the ends as shown in this photo. The



twisted cords can be made by hand. It is important to twist them in the direction of the ply. I have a cord maker which makes the job quicker (see separate article). These methods can also be used for *weft faced weaving*. There are many other ways of securing weaving, so do look at the weaving books in the Library.

A good one is hem stitch. It needs to be done while the weaving is on the loom

*Finishing balanced weaves:* Washing evens out the weaving and, if it is woven from wool, a bit of felting makes the structure more secure. I wash in hand hot water using wool/silk detergent, pulling the fabric diagonally (need to demonstrate!!) along its length, rinse and then spin dry. Once dry, I iron on wool setting (even for silk). For the expert view see *Cloth Finishing* in *Journal 260* (Winter 2016) p28

**Spinning** (Sarah Allen). Sarah helped many of us with setting our hanks of yarn. Firstly, we soaked them in warm sudsy water for about 20 minutes, then they were rinsed in several changes of water. Finally, we tried various methods of removing as much water as possible: wrapping in towels then twisting as tightly as possible, or treading on them. Other methods were flicking the hanks to shake out the moisture, or snapping between a pair of hands. The hanks were then hung to dry unweighted and all looked and felt (and smelled) amazing.

**Knitting** (Lyn Wymer). Lyn demonstrated her way of blocking to set the shape of knitted items. She has an ingenious use for a children's large foam jigsaw, it forms the perfect base for pinning out the knitting. Lyn blocked a curved garter stitch shawl - gently pinning out without stretching too much, making sure not to pull out of shape. A piece with straight sides was also blocked using machine knitting wires to make sure the sides are kept perfectly straight. Then Lyn held a steam iron above the blocked pieces, not making contact with the knitting, just letting the steam penetrate, finally leaving the items to dry completely before unpinning.



This was such an interesting and useful meeting.

**February 2017: "Cycles in Handcraft - a brief look at domestic handcraft from the practice of spinners, weavers and knitters in the 18th Century through to the present day" - a talk by Jill Shepherd.** Jill gave an exuberant talk on textiles in the home. She ranged from the earliest times of woven textiles through history to the times of our childhoods focusing on the decoration of textiles. The embroidery of textiles has been something routinely learnt by girls, regardless of their social status, and was usually exquisitely executed. Unfortunately textiles tend not to survive long term though Jill handed round a wonderful selection of cloth for us to discuss. It was interesting to see how the linen cloth softens with age. While Jill did not specifically talk about any of our core skills, this meeting did make me think of the possibilities of enhancing my own woven fabric with stitched threads.

**Workshop "Spinning for a Purpose"** with Jill Sepherd. We explored a range of spinning methods with the end product in mind. Jill demonstrated different ways of feeding the fibre for spinning. Very many of us were amazed to find that we had been

holding our fibre much too tightly and that it was possible to spin with no grip on any part, just using our digits as support; this was a wonderful enlightenment and release for our poor thumb joints. Jill also helped with suggestions for our own projects. A worthwhile workshop and after a bit of practice I now have a new way of spinning in comfort.

Liz Mitchell

**March 2017: AGM and display of work.** The Guild's AGM was a well attended, very positive meeting. There are a few changes within the Guild. Sadly we said goodbye to Lyn Wymer who is standing down as Secretary and leaving the Committee. Lyn has carried out the role with great skill and dedication, doing a fantastic job and we all wish her well with her new venture 'Wymer's and Co'. Hopefully Lyn will join us again at our meetings soon, thank you Lyn from all of us. Irene is standing down from running the Library. Many thanks to her from us all. This will now be managed by Linda Whiter. Chris will no longer be managing the sales table but I believe Rosie will continue to oversee it.

Thank you Chris, we've appreciated both you and Rosie managing this for us. Carole has stored and managed the Guild equipment for hire for a long time but will no longer be doing this (she wants her garage back!). We asked members to take equipment home to store between us as storage hire costs are expensive and we have quite a lot! Anne Hughes will update the Guild equipment list on the website and oversee the hiring out of equipment. Thank you Carole, much appreciated by us all and we hope you've found your garage again!! We welcome Claire Blackburn to the Committee and I will take on the Secretary role. No other changes to the committee or roles.

We have an interesting and varied programme lined up for the next year, thanks to Rebecca's hard work. The little card with the forthcoming programme will be available for the April meeting and the programme is also on the website and in the Newsletter.

We're doing OK money wise and would welcome suggestions for speakers/workshops/ideas etc from members.

Jacqueline Smee

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## Dates for your diary:

### OGWSD Programme 2017/2018

**22nd April: 3D Knitting HAGD, plus spinning hints and tips**  
*Janet Farnsworth and Linda Whiter* Learn how to make amazing 3D knitted shapes, including pots, with Janet Farnsworth. A great opportunity to do something new with your fancy handspun yarns, or to use up all those oddments or samples we all have lying around. Linda Whiter will also be on hand to offer tips and techniques for spinning for knitting; the difference between woollen and worsted yarn and which is better for cabling; spinning for socks etc.

**20th May: Blending and Spinning Vegetables Fibres HAGD**  
*Linda Whiter and Janet Farnsworth* Using drum and hand carders, participants will be able to try preparing a variety of vegetable, seed and leaf fibres (supplied), making small batts and spinning with them if there is time. Participants may be asked to contribute towards cost of fibres.

**17th June: Fleece Day** Our regular fabulous event with a cornucopia of fleeces for sale, plus demonstrations of our crafts.

**15th July: My Journey with Textiles** *Rod Owen* Rod will be talking about his journey with Japanese and Peruvian textiles, how it all came about, how it developed into a real passion, and where it has taken him (Rod has recently published a book on Peruvian braids, so clearly it has taken him far!).

### No August meeting

**16th Sept: Silk Day** *Angela Pawlyn* Morning: have a go at making "paper" from silk cocoon strippings using the natural gum in the silk. Afternoon: short talk on "Silk Variations" using handling packs, covering difference between reeled and spun silk yarns, types of silk available for spinning, types of silk fabric (taffeta, organza, crepe satin). Samples of degummed cocoons and silk

caps will be given to spinners to try

**21st Oct: A History of Witney Blankets talk, plus Stash Sale**  
*Keith Crawford* A talk on the processes, the history and the people of this famous local industry.

**18th Nov: Needle Felting HAGD** Details TBC nearer the time

**16th Dec: Christmas meeting**

**20th Jan 2018: 'Threads of the Indus'** *Seher Mirza* - A talk about a project with a group of women in Pakistan that led to unique jewellery created from the collaboration of their design and craft skills.

**17th/18th Feb 2018: Talk** *Debbie Tomkies of DT Craft & Design* (Saturday)

**Workshop 'An introduction to Dyeing' (Sunday)** Suitable for beginner to expert, including making sample cards for immersion dyeing, hue/saturation and colour blending, dip-dyeing, handpainting, simple self-stripping and low-water immersion.

**17th March 2018: AGM** plus Show of Work and afternoon tea

**21st April 2018: Narlbinding** Talk plus HAGD, *Pauline Shelley*

### Other meetings 2017

June 23rd-24th, Woolfest, Cumbria ([www.woolfest.co.uk](http://www.woolfest.co.uk))

July 8th-9th 2017, British Wool Show, Thirsk, N.Yorkshire ([britishwool.net](http://britishwool.net))

July 29th-30th 2017: Fibre-East, Redborne School and Community College, Flitwick Rd, Ampthill, Bedford MK45 2NU [www.fibre-east.co.uk](http://www.fibre-east.co.uk)

August 13th-20th 2017: AGWSD Summer School. Brochure online [www.wsd.org.uk](http://www.wsd.org.uk) or email [summerschool@wsd.org.uk](mailto:summerschool@wsd.org.uk).

August 26th-27th 2017: South West Wool Fest, Exeter University, Devon

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### Committee

Chairman	Helen Richardson
Treasurer	Janet Farnsworth
Secretary	Jacqueline Smee
Membership Sec.	Jenny Butler/Linda Whiter
Programme Sec.	
Website	Anne Hughes
Members	Jane Rouse, Claire Blackburn

### Other responsibilities

Sales Table	Rosie Wyatt
Guild Equipment	Anne Hughes
Librarian	Linda Whiter
Newsletter Editor	Liz Mitchell

### Notes from the Editor:

Thank you to everyone who has sent in pieces for inclusion in the Newsletter, it is wonderful to receive these. Please keep them coming as I'm running out of ideas.

As before, if you have something to include but don't want to write the piece yourself, let me know and I will help you. To catch up on events between newsletters, check programme, or read our blog, visit the Guild web site [www.oxfordwsd.org.uk](http://www.oxfordwsd.org.uk). This newsletter and some earlier ones in full colour are available there.

Copy: Items for the next newsletter MUST reach me before **7th July 2017**.

E-mail to [newsletter@oxfordwsd.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@oxfordwsd.org.uk) or give me your copy at a Guild meeting.