



Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Newsletter

September 2017

Different spins on the same fleece:

As you may have seen at the April meeting, Linda Whiter has knitted a series of samples to investigate different spinning and plying techniques on the same fleece. The samples were all knitted with the same needles, stitches and rows in stocking stitch with a central cable.

Linda had spun and plied the fleece using 6 different techniques: a 2ply and a 3ply woolen yarn, a 2ply and a 3ply worsted yarn and a 2x2ply cabled woolen yarn and a 2x2ply cabled worsted yarn. Linda's verdict is that the cabled yarns give the best stitch definition but feel much coarser, while the 3ply



gives better stitch definition than the 2ply because the yarn is more rounded. Finally, the worsted gives more stitch definition than the woolen spun but the woolen spun is softer.

I expected there would be some small difference between them all, but was amazed by the range that was produced. It was clear that each sample should be used for a different purpose. The worsted 2x2ply cabled gave a very solid fabric with no drape and the cable pattern stood out well; you could imagine a sweater made with this yarn would effectively keep out the cold and possibly even the wet. At the other end of the scale, the 2ply woolen was soft and drapery, the cable almost flat, this would make a lovely garment to wear next to the skin or a cosy shawl. I also noticed that the different spins resulted in different tensions.

Thank you to Linda for carrying out this experiment. It is something that all of us spinners will bear in mind when we are planning our next project.

Liz Mitchell

P.S. Linda has produced an informative sheet comparing woolen and worsted spinning which I shall put into the next issue of the newsletter.

AGWSD Summer School 2017

Just about a year ago I enrolled in the Certificate of Achievement in Tapestry... since taking up tapestry weaving about four years ago I wanted to take it up a notch, and the CoA provides the motivation to do that.

As with any qualification the value is in the journey, nevertheless there is only one opportunity to get assessed, and that takes place during the AGWSD Summer School. I'm making slow progress – why hurry when you're having fun? – but I went along this year to check out the standard of work, how much space was allocated to each person, and how people were presenting their work and supporting information.

There were 10 submissions this year and I was pleased that this included two for tapestry so I was able to compare their different presentation styles. They were both rated "credit", but the displays were quite different.

Using rather more space than the other submissions, these 12 samples (right) have been mounted and are presented together with ring binders that contain notes, such as inspiration and design ideas. The project piece is a cushion cover and matching fire screen.



By contrast most of the samples in this submission (left) have been stacked neatly in a small box giving pride of place to the wall-hanging project piece. The notebooks had lovely design sketches and were a

work of art in their own right.

The other submissions were Spinning (7) and Weaving (1).

This shows the Weaver's presentation, which was awarded a



distinction. The finely woven shawl is the project piece with the inspirational photographs posted behind, and the binders containing the sample work.

As an unexpected bonus one of the CoA's tapestry mentors was invigilating while I was there, and as I had two completed samples with me, I was able to get some instant feedback. It was clear that first and foremost I should be demonstrating technique, with design being a (slightly) less consideration. I also got some suggestions as to how I might present my portfolio given the space limitations and the task of the assessors.

Sadie Page

Out & About with the Guild this Summer

I have attended three events this year and I think that is all we have been to. I cannot get to each one and unless someone else takes on an event we do not make an appearance. That said we had a great time at all the events.

Festival of Nature, outside University Museum, Oxford: The weather was kind and we had plenty of children and adults interested in having a go at spinning and weaving. Most of the people who wanted to have a go at spinning were children but there were a number of knitters who were fascinated. Jonathan's loom attracted a lot of notice.

Spinning and Weaving at Countryfile Live: We had a great time, BBOWT provided a tent within their wildlife area, which was next to the river. I am not sure I have ever spun in such a lovely location before. Despite the hordes of people crossing the river it seemed idyllic and peaceful. Mind you the tent got a bit crowded when it rained. We sat on hay bales, very rustic, one bale just long enough for a spinner and a learner.

Angela and Sadie did weaving demonstrations which were also greatly enjoyed. Several members brought drop spindles to demonstrate but only the dinosaurs wanted to learn that way, everyone else was happy to do a bit of spinning on a wheel. I think they saw the trouble he was having, those short arms do not lend themselves to new crafts. We also had a small display of hand spun goods and a rather good exhibition of the various stages in a project from raw fleece, through carded wool to spun fibre



Teaching dinosaurs to spin at BBC Countryfile Live!

and knitted garment. There were enough of us that everyone had time to wander around and see some of the rest of the show, which was huge. I had a talk to another spinner and looked in on some farm animals and bought some venison but Helen went on the zip wire, on the river in a coracle, tried food, and all sorts of things as well as doing her stint demonstrating and then coming back to help clear up. I had a great day and I think everyone who helped also had a good time.

Wychwood Forest Fair: This was our last outing and sadly it rained all day. Our tent was looking impressive and there was a wonderful display of hand spun goods and yarns and informative exhibits. Luckily there were quite a few of us and we had great fun, spinning and chatting between the demonstrations. Once again it was the children who enjoyed having a go at spinning and weaving but there was a good interest from adults also. By the end of the day we were getting cold and thankfully the Fair decided to pack up an hour early.



Finally, Coombe Mill at Woodstock has asked us to demonstrate at their open day on 17th September, so for some people that will be the next event. However there are always more requests so keep an ear out for them at business meetings.

The more members who attend, the more fun it is for everyone and you get the bonus of free entry to the events and parking!

Janet Farnsworth

Pop-Up Handspinners

The Pop-Up Hand Spinners, Carole Thorpe, Sarah Allan and Chris Seers, are friends and members of the Oxford Guild Weavers, Spinners and Dyers who are passionate about wool and fibre and all things "fleecy". We especially love the wool that comes from the Rare and Native British Sheep Breeds and as you may know the UK has the most diverse types of sheep fleece in the world, with over 50 native breeds from the likes of the Grey Faced Dartmoor to the Blue Faced Leicester and Shetland, to the up and coming new breeds such as Bowmont.

We source all our fibres from local small breeders and farmers, helping to sustain these important enthusiastic breeders therefore enabling other spinners and fibre artists to try these wonderful fibres. We supply whole or part fleeces, raw or washed. The aim is to cater for all in our service, which also includes trying to locate the wool you just love and cannot get your hands on!

Our Etsy shop www.etsy.com/shop/wychwoodspinner lists our fibres, quantities large or small and volume by request. Keep an eye on the website (popuphandspinners.co.uk) for events we will be attending or holding. Lastly we will also visit spinning groups to run a British Breed Taster Day with Tips and Anecdotes for making fleece preparation easy.

Sarah Allan

Several Guild members recently enjoyed a wonderful day with the Pop-Up Handspinners. There was an enormous range of fleece available for us to sample spin and buy and I'm delighted with the coloured Ryland and Llanwenog I bought. This is such a lovely way to try new breeds without buying a whole fleece. Also I must not forget to mention the superb hospitality - as much tea and coffee as we wished and some lovely tasty cakes. Thank you.

Liz Mitchell

Phyllis Butcher - donation

A few months ago the Guild received a lovely donation from the family of Phyllis Butcher. Mrs Butcher, a keen spinner, lived in Wheatley and had recently died. We received a couple of wheels, bags of fleece and other spinning items including a board she had made showing the various British fleeces she used at her spinning demonstrations.



Phyllis Butcher & family at Horton Steam Fair 1988

The Committee decided to give the wheels to members who didn't have their own wheel and who had children, in the hope that Mrs Butcher's skills are passed down to another generation. The bags of fleece were brought to one of our meetings for members to help themselves.

Thank you to the family for this lovely donation which will be appreciated by our members for many years.

Editor

Meeting Reports

April 2017: 3D Knitting HAGD. Janet Farnsworth set up a wonderful array of colourful wool and needles, some even with the knitting started, for us to play with. We were shown how to create 3D shapes using double-ended needles, very awkward initially and my arthriticky fingers fumbled but I could see that the technique was an interesting one to add to other knitting skills (I will try to put Janet's instructions into a future issue of the newsletter). Janet also brought along a selection of items she had made including the amazing anatomically correct Adam & Eve! Linda Whiter has been exploring the best way to spin yarn for different uses. She brought along knitted samples that demonstrate the difference between woolen and worsted spinning from the same fleece (see separate article).



May 2017: Blending and Spinning Vegetables Fibres HAGD with Linda Whiter and Janet Farnsworth. This meeting took many of us outside our comfort zone of wool. We had the chance to try a range of plant fibres, including flax, rose, bamboo, hemp. Using drum and hand carders, we made small batts and rolags and then tried spinning from them. The carding was fun and we all tried various combinations of fibres. Some fibres were soft and slightly sticky while others slid through your fingers alarmingly and at the extreme opposite, linen was hard and coarse. I tried a blend of linen with soft rose; the rose did make spinning a bit easier but I still found it difficult to control. This was a most enjoyable and worthwhile experience and I no longer feel wary of these plant fibres.



During the meeting the Chairman thanked Sarah Allan for all her work on behalf of the Guild in recent years and presented her with a gift to mark the Guild's appreciation.

June 2017: Fleece Day. This took place on a very warm, sunny day and I think most spent the day outside enjoying it. There was a wonderful selection of beautiful fleece and prepared fibre to choose from, carefully sourced by our experienced Guild members. As always they were more than happy to share their expertise and advise on choice. The sales table was full of very tempting things to take home, a lot of it made by members of the Guild. Members brought in examples of their spun, woven and knitted items for the exhibition and also items they wished to sell creating a wonderful display of the skills of Oxford Guild members. We were also treated to the secrets held inside a felted pebble created by Claire for a book she is making. It was interesting to see how she had developed her ideas and the skills she needed to learn to create it. There were opportunities to learn the basics of spinning and weaving on wheels, drop spindles and looms plus solar dyeing which produced interesting results and could be explored further. It was lovely to see children trying out these traditional crafts and enjoying themselves in the sunshine.

The Festival was a little less well attended than in previous years but was very much enjoyed by all who did make it and those who came to visit our Guild. We had very nice feedback on how welcoming and friendly we are, which was great to hear, and how talented our members are!

We owe thanks to everyone who helped to make this a lovely day! *Jacqueline Smee*

July 2017: My Journey with Textiles Rod Owen. Unfortunately Rod was unable to give his planned talk as we failed to get his computer and our projector to see each other. However, Rod had brought along with him a wide selection of braids and braid making looms to give us a flavour of his work. He was joined by Terry Newhouse Flynn who collaborates with Rod and was visiting

from America. In the morning we were all able to have a go with the looms and talk to Rod and Terry about their work. Later he and Terry gave us an impromptu talk about their work. It was interesting to learn how cultures from around the world found ways of making the braids that were essential for fastenings, as handles for bags and baskets and as ties. Hopefully Rod will return to visit us soon and give his talk about his journey with textiles.

Wymers & Co.

Earlier this year Lyn Wymer took a big breath and stepped into her dream - Wymers & Co. makers' studio was born. For years, out of her passion for hand spun yarn and all things wool, she had had the desire to create a space for people of all ages to develop their passion for crafts and making. Now a family run business involving 3 generations, Wymers & Co. is a place to be inspired to find your inner passion for all type of making.

Lyn has been hand spinning yarns for over 35 years, giving her decades of experience of transforming fleece into quality, tactile items through a range of creative craft techniques including spinning, knitting, weaving and felting. She now has a wonderful studio, painstakingly renovated by her son James, with even the furniture and fittings being created by hand.

Initially Lyn is offering tuition in handspinning and fibre preparation, as one-to-one lessons, weekly classes and day workshops (see website for details of current lessons). Classes in other textile related crafts will follow in due course, to include weaving, needlefelting, crochet, sock knitting, rag rugs, embroidery, slow stitching and handstitched patchwork.

Currently Lyn has a selection of handwashed rare breed fleece and her handspun yarn for sale, as well as some lovely dyed and blended batts, together with a carefully chosen range of commercial yarn, including Hooooked and West Yorkshire Spinners. There is also a small range of Ashford spinning equipment and tools.

Wymers & Co. (www.wymers.co.uk) is at 14A West End, Witney OX28 1NE. Opening hours are subject to change, depending upon workshops and outside commitments. Please phone (01993 402468), or e-mail (info@wymers.co.uk), to find out if the Studio is open before making a special journey.

Lyn has made a fabulous space in which to learn to be creative with all things wool and is a joy to visit.

Editor

Making a Weaving Guide

A weaving guide is a long strip of paper (till receipt rolls from stationers work) pinned to one edge of the cloth on the loom and marked with the finished weaving length of your project. Cut the paper a little longer than the required total length of cloth, mark the start, measure off your length and mark the end point. Pin to the cloth with 2 long pins, initially one at the start and then again at the fell after you've woven about 4"; these pins then leapfrog over each other as the weaving progresses (the paper isn't wound on with the cloth). If the unpinned ends get in the way, simply roll them up and fasten with a paperclip. The guides are also useful if you need to make a repeat cloth or repeat designs within the length of your cloth; you can mark on the paper where colour or pattern change occurs and then use the same strip for subsequent weaving. Also, they can make a good record of all your projects.

Chairman's Challenge 2017

It's that time of year again; yes it's the Chairman's Challenge and this year after much discussion, laughter and merriment (at the Wychwood Fair!), a small group of us have come up with this idea - to use the lyrics of "The Christmas song" sung by Nat King Cole to create a Christmas present for a friend or loved one. For those who don't know which song I mean, it's the one that starts, 'Chestnuts roasting on an open fire'. My apologies to anyone who doesn't like this famous festive song! Anyway, I am hoping that the lyrics and sentiments of the song will inspire you to create something Christmassy, wintery, beautiful or even down right quirky!

I will go into more detail at the September meeting of the Guild and will give out copies of the lyrics and some ideas to get your creative juices flowing.

Helen x

Guild Sales Table

At every meeting we have our Sales Table. Its home is in the far corner of the room. On (and often under and around!) the Table you will find a range of wonderful things for sale, and most have been made by our Guild members. There are usually wonderful skeins of hand spun wool, batts of beautifully blended fibres ready for spinning, felting or whatever, pieces of equipment that members no longer need, books, knitted and woven items and lots of odds & ends. Any member can bring items to sell for a small commission to our Guild of 10%.

So, do not forget to visit the Table when you come to meetings, Rosie and Caroline will be delighted to see you.

Dates for your diary:

OGWSD Programme 2017/2018

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 *Keith Crawford* A talk on the processes, the history and the people of this famous local industry. **Plus Stash Sale**

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 Events

2017

Llandovery Sheep Festival 23-24 September
(llandoverysheepfestival.co.uk)

Shetland Wool Week 23 September – 1 October, Shetland
(Shetlandwoolweek.com)

The Knitting and Stitching Show 11-15 October, Alexandra Palace, London (theknittingandstitchingshow.com/London)

Stitch Fest 4-5 November, Totnes, Devon (stitchfest.co.uk)

Festiwool 11 November, North Herts College, Hitchin (festiwool.com)

Winter Woollies 26 November, Nanpantan, Leicestershire (winterwoolies.webs.com)

2018

Unravel 16-18 February, Farnham, Surrey (craft.farnhammaltings.com/portfolio/unravel-festival-knitting/)

The Spring Knitting and Stitching Show 1-4 March, Olympia Central, London (theknittingandstitchingshow.com/spring/)

Spring into Wool 7-8 April, Leeds (springintowool.co.uk/)

Wonderwool Wales 28-29 April, Builth Wells, Powys (wonderwoolwales.co.uk)

The Handmade Fair 11-13 May, Ragley Hall, Warks (thehandmadefair.com/ragley)

Wool@J13 12-13 May, Penkridge, Staffs (wool-J13.uk)

Leeds Wool Festival 2 June, Leeds Industrial Museum (leeds.gov.uk/Museumsandgalleries/pages/armleymills/Wool-Festival.aspx)

Woolfest 22-23 June 2018, Cockermouth (woolfest.co.uk)

The British Wool Show dates to be confirmed (britishwool.net)

Fibre East 28-20 July, Ampthill, Beds (fibre-east.co.uk)

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/ Caroline Goss
Guild Equipment	Anne Hughes
Librarian	Linda Whiter
Newsletter Editor	Liz Mitchell

Notes from the Editor:

Thanks to those of you who have given me articles to include or made suggestions for items, this helps me to fill each issue and it's a lovely way to pass on your ideas, tips, comments and thoughts. Please carry on finding interesting items. To catch up on events between newsletters, check programme or just see what is going on, visit the Guild web site 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 **2nd December 2017**.

E-mail to newsletter@oxfordwsd.org.uk or give me your copy at a Guild meeting.