



Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Newsletter

June 2019

Amazing Xmas present

I've had a glass tank in my kitchen for the last ten years where my son has kept Fire Bellied Toads. Last summer the last of the toads died and, before I got rid of the tank, I decided that it would be a good place to keep some silkworms/moths as I had long wanted to hatch and grow these fascinating creatures. So at Christmas, when I was asked what I wanted for a gift, I asked for a silkworm breeding kit.

I had a romantic idea that I would simply pop the eggs into the tanks and enjoy watching them hatch and grow but it turned out



to be a little more complicated than that!!

The eggs arrived in a tiny plastic pot and they looked like poppy seeds, but a blueish colour. They can be kept in the fridge until you are ready for them to hatch and there are a number of things that are crucial to them hatching - temperature and humidity being the main things to get right. I set up a shelf behind my fire and spent a few days peering at a thermometer to check that I could keep the temperature high enough and constant enough. This project would have been a bit easier in the summer to be honest!!

My eggs took only five days to hatch into teeny tiny black worms. Over the next few weeks they gradually turned white and grew at an incredibly fast rate and they do eat ever such a lot (think of the very hungry caterpillar book). I fed mine on Chow (mashed up, preserved mulberry leaves) as there were no leaves available on the tree in the winter months. Listening to them eating was amazing and actually quite loud.

Before they spin their silk they get a little smaller and translucent and everyday there were less worms and more cocoons appearing in the box. It was about three weeks from my first cocoon until I got my first moth. They really are incredibly beautiful, a lot smaller than I was expecting and they don't fly. They also have no mouth and so they can't eat or drink once they are a moth and they only live for a few days.

They laid lots of eggs and I was so very excited that I'd managed to complete their whole lifecycle.

So I've reached the end of the livestock part of the project. I have 72 cocoons and a few that have not hatched out. It's not a massive amount of silk but it's MY silk and it's given me a massive appreciation of this beautiful fibre and these delightful little creatures. I've learnt so much and it's been so enjoyable. If anyone else fancies having a go at breeding their own silk worms then I'd be more than happy to speak further about it with you.

Jane Rouse

The Birthday Tapestry

This article tells the story of a beautiful tapestry woven by Jill with the help of the creative fingers of other Guild members!

It all started with a lovely invitation by Jill and David Carey to Jill's birthday party one September afternoon, over to the far east side of Oxfordshire.

All invited were very excited! But what do you get such a wonderful lady, friend and member for her birthday? The usual suggestions came to the mind such as plants for the garden, as Jill is a keen gardener, something bird related (do I say more?) or a day out but nothing seemed out of the ordinary. That was until one of our bright sparked members came up with a cracker of an idea!!!!!!

Now I am not sure how many of the members at last October's meeting, in which Jill ran "Tapestry Have A Go Day", really studied the awesome display Jill had put up to show the beautiful tapestries she had created over the years from simple to intricate pieces of work, large or small all seemed to have their place. Amongst this display was a tapestry titled

"THE GUILD INSPIRES US"!



This is where the story from virgin idea to this beautiful tapestry continues.

The cracker of an idea which was presented to the party goes was to create a box of wonderful hand spun fibres so Jill could indulge in her passion of tapestry weaving, brilliant! One member then very kindly offered to collect and packaged the yarn for us all, she was also the only one who saw all this fibre together prior to the party so none of us quite knew what to expect when Jill open the box of delights. Wow! Inside was a collection of delicious hand spun fibres so varying in colour, texture, thickness and fibre type that it brought awe to her and all those involved.

The next stage was over to Jill! We all wondered what she would create! We all felt that as she wove she would know that each and every one of us was by her side while she created the master piece. Voila! The said master piece was then displayed last October for all to admire and take joy in.

Thank you to Jill for creating something absolutely wonderful from our mixed box of delicious fibres. It feels like we have all had a little of ourselves woven into it!

Sarah Allan

My Project

I have a dream of changing my lifestyle and owning my own fibre animals and using their fleece, preparing it, dyeing it, spinning it and making something with it. I wanted to take my crochet a step further, and see if I could learn to change fibre into yarn, good enough to use!

I first met the Oxford Weavers Spinners & Dyers Guild in June last year at The Wild Fair at Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Everyone was so welcoming, I felt immediately at home. Then Janet invited me to take a seat and actually give spinning a go. Within seconds I was hooked. The next time I met the Guild was at Stanton St John, I received such a warm welcome from people that I had already met and encouragement from people I didn't know - I signed up there and then as a Member and immediately rented an Ashford Traveller from them.

I appeared with the Guild at a few shows over the Summer, including CountryFile Live, showing members of the public how easy it was to make irregular yarn on a spinning wheel and yet how much fun it was to keep trying to make it consistent. By August I had purchased my first spinning wheel and by October another wheel, a fold-up Kromski Sonata, so I could take my spinning on the road.

When the Chairman's Challenge of "Change" was announced on September 15th 2018, I really focused and decided to make enough yarn to create a simple crocheted 4-granny square poncho. Concentrating on changing the gorgeous fibre colours into spun, full of texture, yarn rather than a complicated crochet pattern. I also took part in Ravelry's BritSpin in October and produced over 1,609 metres of double plyed yarn in 4 days - most of which is in the poncho. I even tried spinning Alpaca for the first time too! I am looking forward to



continuing to work on "change" in 2019, maybe changing a whole fleece this time into yarn. Maybe even learning to dye and blend the fibre along the way, and of course, continuing to change and improve my spinning and plying with support from my husband Colin, and the help and guidance from all of the members at the Oxford WSD Guild.

Thank you to everyone for the fabulous roving and batts that you made and that I purchased which have allowed me to spin and create this poncho:

Louise J Summers-Matthews

Art Weeks 2019

Several of our members took part in Oxfordshire's Art Weeks this year. Their exhibition, hosted at Anthea Clarke's home, showcased their skills with wool, transforming it mainly through weaving into amazing and beautiful items. There were colourful scarves, cushions, throws and rugs; they had also spun and dyed most of the yarn used. It was interesting to hear about what inspired their work, for example Lyn Selwood's gorgeous rugs were her reflection on the colours in the land- and sea-scapes of our northern islands. I was particularly intrigued by Dominika Luscombe's wonderful take on deflected double weave which gave her work a patchwork effect. I also loved Carol Thorpe's beautiful rug woven with Jacob's fleece, spun by Bob, and Anthea's colourful cushions (most of which had been sold by the time I visited) and finally, Sarah Allen's wonderfully spun skeins helped show the origins of their work. It was all very inspiring and gave me plenty of ideas of ways to carry my own weaving forward. Thank you.



Liz Mitchell

Free Style Weaving Workshop.

On the Sunday after a busy AGM at Guild in March, a number of the members met at Forest Hill Village hall to part take in the much more enjoyable past time of weaving!

The day was to involve weaving with a much freer form of construction than most weavers usually take, to delve into the idea of weaving by not restricting one's self to any colour, fabric, texture or design.

The workshop was being led by Weavers who are both members of the guild and the East Oxford Weavers Barn, Anne Addyman, Carole Thorpe and Lyn Selwood. Anne who has been a weaver for many years took the lead by explaining where she had started weaving:-

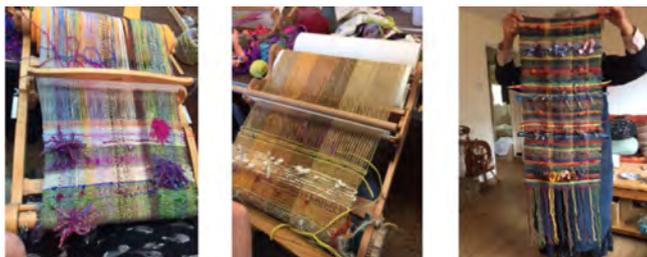
"I immediately fell in love with all the textiles in Japan when I first went there to live in 1973. I started to collect Kimonos and became interested in how they were woven and constructed so began researching into everything I could about them.

One of my friends took me to an exhibition of the Yokohama Saori group and I had a go with them. Inspired I bought a tiny rigid heddle loom and took some lessons at one of the tutor's house, learning how to Saori weave.

Later on I joined Janet Phillips weaving class in Oxford that took me into all the other areas of weaving on multiple types of looms."

Anne, Carole and Lyn had brought in both samples of Saori work Anne had collected and their own articles on free form weaving. Anne went through numerous items explaining the work and what was possible. The ladies had also brought in a quite a

few looms of varying sizes and types already warped and ready to have a go, to show any loom can be used for this type of weaving from an Inkle loom to a four shaft to a child's rigid heddle.



It was then up to us to go forth and weave! Well, the hall was at full capacity and as the photos will show there were definitely varying looms brought in by members all warped and ready to go. It was great to see how participants did as asked and just let go, exploring all the possibilities their fibre choices, warp and loom would take them. We were able to delve into stash brought in by the ladies and we all enjoyed sharing the bags of interesting stuff other members brought too. You would watch your neighbour and realise that you had just the right colour of fibre that would suit their weaving more than yours and offer it as they would do the same back to you.

The whole day was an experience and a half especially for me as only just finished my 1st weaving a week or so before hand. Everyone created marvellous weavings and no one was the same as the other. We were encouraged by the 3 ladies as they came around helping us to try different textures as we went from adding loops to stuff sticking out to adding sparkle!

I think I can say on behalf of all those who took part that the whole day was enjoyable, educational and inspiring. There definitely is no limits to weaving now!

Thank you Anne, Carole and Lyn. The photos tells the story better than I can by their visual display!



Sarah Allan

Hilltop Cloud's gradient spinning - two takes

As a subscriber to Hilltop Cloud's fibre clubs I was really looking forward to attending Katie Weston's Gradient Workshop. As a beginner spinner I signed up for the workshop with some trepidation. I have one style of spinning (short forward draw) and one style of drafting (lots of pre-drafting and spinning from one end of the fibre braid with no variation).

We started the day learning how to spin singles with no pre-drafting and less twist. We had the choice of some of Katie's beautiful gradient dyed BFL. Katie said we had to spin a single with intention for it to remain a single otherwise we may end up with too much twist. A slow ratio and short forward draw created a single that didn't fall apart. I wrote on the tag of my finished skein 'fast hands, slow treadle', which was the opposite of my usual spinning style

Next we tried chain plying, another way of ensuring the gradient remained true but with a balanced yarn, unlike singles. Those of use who were new to chain plying practised on some undyed BFL, taking a sample of the gradient fibre home to practise. Chain plying requires plenty of twist and Katie showed us how to ply in large loops. The finished effect worked perfectly to show off the gradient but is definitely an art to master.

We moved on to 2 ply yarns. We split a gradient down the

middle and spun both parts. When it came to plying Katie showed us how to match the gradient by breaking the yarn at colour changes to avoid barber polling. The overall effect gave a clear gradient and there was little yarn wastage in matching up the colour changes.

We then learnt how to manipulate a gradient braid by breaking it down into individual colours and spinning it in the order we chose, bearing in mind the colour wheel. Katie encouraged us to redesign the fibre we had and even leave out the colours in the braid we didn't like.

For our last exercise of the day we did combination drafting to learn how to blend gradient with three colours – starting with one colour and then adding the next colour about a third of the way before the end of the first colour, leading to a lovely blended transition in colour.

Finally we ended the day looking at how colour theory applies to plying and the choice we can make in choosing colours that blend or contrast.

At the end of a really busy and lovely day I came away with a good understanding of how to spin gradients. Lots of new spinning techniques and a more confidence in my spinning ability.

Katie was a great (and patient!) teacher and I think we all thoroughly enjoyed her workshop.



Melanie Odell

We gathered at the Forest Hills Village Hall ready to learn some new techniques with the talented Katie Weston from Hilltop Cloud. Having bought many a beautifully dyed braid in the past and just stroked it because I was afraid to 'mess' it up, this was the day we were going to learn how not to 'mess' it up but to achieve different finished effects to make the most of the fibre. Katie introduced herself to us and suggested we make a coffee and spin some plain fluff for ten minutes to settle both ourselves and our wheels down, ready to begin. Her entire teaching method was one of good instruction mixed with a calm approach and lots of humour for good measure. Katie explained we were going to learn five main techniques. Gradient Singles, Gradient 2 ply, Chain Ply, Braid Dissection and Combination Drafting. Each technique was expertly explained and I picked up some great tips that will improve my spinning no end. I found the scariest thing we did to be Gradient 2 ply, when you have spent time spinning your precious braid the last thing you want is to pull some out and discard it but as Katie proved, sacrificing the odd yard saves the finished yarn. Whilst spinning Katie kept a close eye on us, imparting hints and tips and even doing some wheel maintenance!. Her knowledge was endless, she was kind enough to share some of her sources with us and gave us advice on equipment. Each technique produced a sample to take home to wash and set the twist. I added labels to my samples to remind myself about each one. An excellent day with a talented tutor and in good company.



Jacqueline's washed skeins.
Gorgeous!

Wendy Gale

Meeting Reports

March 2019: AGM and members' exhibition: This was a very well attended meeting and we all felt glad for the extra space at Beckley. A new committee were elected (see below). We discussed the unexpected increased charges for this lovely hall and it was generally agreed that the extra cost was worthwhile if we could afford it, which we can at present.



There was also an amazing display of work, once again showing what talented members we have, many keeping very quiet about their skills! It is always so interesting and awe-inspiring to see what everyone has been up to, setting the bar very high in most cases. Its good to have something to aim for.

March 2019: Workshop free weaving with Carole Thorpe, Lyn Selwood and Anne Addyman. See separate piece by Sarah on this very successful workshop.

April 2019: Have-a-Go-Day Tablet Weaving with Anne Hughes Anne did an amazing job with Have A Go at Tablet Weaving. Her extensive preparation was evident with 8 Inkle Looms warped up and ready to go with the fabulous packs of tablets that she had made from old playing cards. Her samples were inspiring and she

had patterns and instructions all copied and ready to go. 14 lucky ladies were taught this art over 2 sessions. We cant thank Anne enough for all of her hard work and remind ourselves yet again how lucky we are with the talented members of our Guild. *Chris McLean*

May 2019: Talk by Kate Weston, Hilltop Clouds: This was a most interesting and informative talk. Kate took us through the whole process of dyeing her beautiful gradient fibres. She was incredibly generous with details of each stage of the process, so those of us who took notes could go home and try her techniques for themselves. She also brought a variety of colours and fibres to tempt us into buying - I have a lovely wool/silk/linen mix waiting to be spun.

May 2019: Workshop Gradient Spinning with Hilltop Clouds: (see previous page)

Soft Engineering: Textiles Taking Shape

Four talented artists in yarn came together to present this exhibition at Whitchurch Silk Mill. They are all inspired by nature and man-made structures and exploit the physical properties of different yarns and fibres. Their textiles take shape through the interplay of raw material and structure resulting in spontaneously emerging shapes. Weaving conjures up flat curves, uses high twist yarns to produce 3-D shapes, and knitting in rib makes pleated shapes. All are a world away from our normal idea of weaving and knitting. Well worth a visit (closes on 23rd June). If you can't make it, I have the exhibition booklet which you are welcome to borrow.

Liz Mitchell

Dates for your diary:

OGWSD Programme 2018/2019

2019

June 15th Fleece Sale : Wychwood Spinners. Sarah and Chris will be supplying hand picked fleece for sale. **Plus** Talk 'All About the Angora Rabbit' : its wool, spinning and carding. Samples available

July 20th Guild day out at Diana's farm with Allan Brown. Harvesting, preparation and use of nettles, mini competition using nettles

August No meeting

Sept 21st Talk 'An Introduction to Natural Dyeing ' Judy Hardman

Sept 22nd Workshop Natural Dyeing : Judy Hardman

Oct 19th HAGD Fair Isle, Steeking and Cable Knitting : Linda Whiter/Chris Maclean

Nov 16th Talk 'The History and development of sewing machines' : Paul Verney.

Nov 17th Workshop tbc

Dec 21st Xmas Meeting

Jan 18th Talk on textile conservation : Alison Lister

Feb 15th HAGD Beyond a Granny Square : Louise Summer-Matthews

Other Events

- Soft Engineering: Textiles Taking Shape, Whitchurch Silk Mill, until 23 June
- Multaka: Connecting Threads. Pitts Rivers Museum, Oxford. until 30 September 2019
- Weavers of the Clouds: Textile Arts of Peru, 21 June–8 September 2019, Fashion and Textile Museum, London Website: www.ftmlondon.org
- West of England Festival of Textiles: 6th–28th September 2019. Website: www.trowbridgemuseum.co.uk
- Woolfest: 28-29 June 2019, Mitchell's Lakeland Livestock Centre, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0QQ. Website: woolfest.co.uk
- Fibre East: 27-28 July 2019, Redborne School and Community College, Ampthill, Bedford, MK45 2NU. Website: fibre-east.co.uk

Committee (until AGM)

Chairman	Chris McLean
Treasurer	Kate Prinsep
Secretary	Jacqueline Smee
Membership Sec.	Jenny Butler
Outside events	Chris Crowley
Members	Louise Summers-Matthews Pauline Travis Sue Clegg

Other responsibilities

Sales Table	Kate Prinsep / Caroline Goss
Guild Equipment	Anne Hughes
Librarian	Linda Whiter
Newsletter Editor	Liz Mitchell
Website	Anne Hughes

Notes from the Editor: Thanks to everyone who has sent me items for inclusion. Please keep them coming.

To catch up on events between newsletters, check programme etc, visit our web site www.oxfordwsd.org.uk or Facebook. E-mail to newsletter@oxfordwsd.org.uk or give me your copy at a Guild meeting.