



Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Newsletter June 2022

From the Chair

OGWSD AGM Saturday 19th March 2022

This year we were able to hold our AGM in person during our March meeting. The meeting was well attended and some people sent comments ahead of time if they were unable to be there.

After staying on an extra year as Treasurer because of the pandemic Kate Prinsep stepped down. Kaye Davis was unanimously voted in as the new Treasurer. The meeting voted for the rest of the committee to remain.

The committee's proposal for this year's membership fees was ratified; for 2022 the fees will be £40 split into two payments for single members and £60 split into two for joint members.

A rise to £50 for membership fees in 2023 was agreed.

General news from the March meeting

We finally managed to raffle the Hilltop Cloud goods Katie Weston gave us in lieu of commission when she had her pop up shops at her talk and workshop before the pandemic and we raised about £45.

Alison Meakes and Anne Hughes are going to run the library and will be doing an audit to update the database.

Sarah Allen has taken on the Sales Table which will now run regularly. Sarah asks that you clearly label all items with your name and the price and a short description. Commission is payable on all items.

Jenny Butler thanked all those who donated yarn for her church's knit and natter group – who were able to make some lovely



blankets for a rehab refuge for people trying to detox from drug and alcohol misuse.

Sue Clegg

Three recipients with their chosen blankets

Our guild meeting on Saturday 21st May offered two Have a Go sessions.

Dorset Buttons with Rosie Wyatt

A great opportunity to have a go at making Dorset Buttons

Dorset Buttons have an interesting history. They were made during a period of 200 years and became a valuable source of income for the residents in Dorset. Abraham Case a Cotswold man and professional soldier, set up his button business in Shaftesbury in the 1600's. The business grew and in the 1700's, around 700 women and children were employed making buttons. The materials they used were horn, bone, fabric, wool and later, wire rings. It seems that it was a lucrative business and by the end of the century, 4000 were employed around Shaftesbury and 3000 in the Blandford area.

Later, the invention of machines, led to the Dorset button industry's slow decline. In the early 1900's a lady named Florence, the Dowager Lady Lees, was responsible for saving the art of



making Dorset buttons. Today they have become. Heritage craft and many people enjoy making them as a hobby.

My efforts to make one of these, were eventually rewarded, with a little help from others, and something resembling a Dorset button was produced. (The photo is not mine!) I will say though, I really enjoyed making one even though it was far from perfect. The repetitive action of stitching this tiny gem, was an extremely calming and relaxing way to spend the day. I definitely will be making more. Thank you, Rosie for your patience and guidance!

For further information on Dorset Buttons, there is an excellent website; henrysbuttons.co.uk You can learn more about the history plus there is an Etsy shop where all sorts of Dorset button making bits can be purchased.

Pauline Shelley

Tablet Weaving with Anne Hughes

The lovely Anne had set up a gaggle of her inkle looms for us to have a go on. What a fantastic opportunity to try my hand at the mesmerising craft.

Anne had warped up her inkle looms with a variety of designed for us all to try and Cath, Amy and I jumped at the chance. We had such fun. Even though my inkle moves were just 4 forward and the same back, looking at my finished piece it seems that, despite my 55 years I need to perfect counting!

I cannot express how much I love the finished effect of tablet weaving and have signed up to Anne's full day course on the Sunday after the June meeting.

Sam Austin



Anne explains -

Tablet weaving is a technique that has been around since before the Iron Age, its origins lost in time. The tablets are usually square with four holes, one in each corner, and are used to manipulate the warp as you weave. There is a myriad of weaving

techniques that can be achieved with tablet weaving, and it is an art practised in many countries all over the world.

Shibori workshop

In March I attended a shibori and indigo dyeing workshop organised by Fran Reilly. But I never met Fran Reilly because, sadly, on the day she was suffering with covid and so the workshop was more than ably run and taught by her sister Mary Harlow, who is a textile historian and usually runs the days jointly with Fran. As we were a group of only five, Mary was easily able to manage us on her own and to share her very considerable knowledge and experience.

There were many examples of different ways of stitching and the resulting patterns for us to look at and we were each provided with a lovely

high quality fine wool scarf, a cotton bag and smaller draw string bag to work on. All other materials and tools were provided too.



There are so many ways to stitch and manipulate fabric to provide resistance to the dye so we had to make quick decisions about how to work, following Mary's instructions, if we were to be ready for the afternoon's dyeing. That concentrated the mind! We all spent the morning stitching and folding industriously while Mary prepared the indigo dye baths. I spent nearly all my time working on my scarf as I didn't want to rush and spoil it, so my efforts with the two bags were a bit rushed and experimental.



Lunch was soup and bread, both home-made and delicious, plus a cheese board and fruit.

Then the dyeing. I had done quite a lot of indigo dyeing before but each time I marvel at the "magic" of the beautiful blue shades that emerge from that slightly greenish yellow scummy looking pot!

Everyone got to dye all their pieces, with more than one dip where desired and there was a great array of results, so that we could learn from each other's chosen method of manipulating the fabric. It was a good day in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, was well-run, and good value at £95, I felt, which included the scarf and bags to dye and lunch.

And oh, I forgot to mention the cakes! Fran and Mary run other natural dyeing workshops.

<https://www.franreillytextileartist.com>

Amanda Henriques

Showing sheep at the South Suffolk Show

Our family have kept sheep here at Chilton Grounds farm for four generations, but it has only been in the last few years that we have built up our flock of Wensleydales, a native breed renowned for their long and curly lustrous wool. On Sunday May 8th, at first light (5am), we loaded our chosen two, and set off to Ampton Racecourse, Bury St Edmunds, our first proper show. All entries were expected to be halter trained and well behaved. We had low expectations of success.

The girls born on the farm last march were entered into a class for females from any longwool breed. Somehow, we just about managed to keep them under control and were placed first and second, we were thrilled.

Winners of the classes then went on to further rounds of judging and finally, a supreme, inter-breed show champion was chosen; it was Chilton Wendy. We couldn't quite believe it and arrived home with a bag full of rosettes and five cups, including the main show cup, awarded the animal with the highest points total from the cattle, sheep, pig and donkey classes.



We have really enjoyed forming Chilton Wensleydales, have already sent their wool to 30 different countries, and have recently produced our own yarn for knitters and weavers so they can share in the natural beauty of Wensleydale wool.



Diana Bird

What an excellent result - Congratulations (Ed)



Another of the blankets made by Jenny's knit and natter group for Howard House. (It has since been amalgamated with another community mental health service within Oxford)

Pre-history of the Guild

David Nutt's four booklets about the history of the Guild are a wonderful resource. They are available in the Guild Library or in digital form. The first booklet covers the predecessor to the OGWSD,

The Oxford Guild of Handloom Weavers was set up in 1961 by a group of weavers who met at a weaving course at the technical college, including Phil Wager who became a long-term member of OGWSD.

The Guild met monthly on a Monday afternoon with a programme of talks, covering spinning and dyeing as well as weaving. Some were given by members but they also had some high-profile visitors, notably Ann Sutton and Theo Moorman. As the subscription was a guinea a year, I wonder how they afforded them! They did not have to pay for their meeting place, "St Michaels House" which was a bonus.

The Guild folded in 1966 because of falling numbers. David's second booklet describes how some of the members including Phil Wager as well as several newcomers to the area set up OGWSD in 1971.

Editor

A policeman pulled up a car speeding because he could see the driver was knitting; Pull over" he shouted "No" said the driver... "a scarf !!!!!"

Sarah Allan

Programme update:

Thanks to Rosie and Anne for organising the two HAGD Sessions at our May meeting. ! We are looking forward to needle felting bunting with Cath Smith at our June meeting and, for those that have booked, a re-run of the Tablet Weaving workshop with Anne Hughes, which was much-requested, on the following day.

Future talks and workshops are in the pipeline, with a good representation across our craft areas, and a mix of talks and HAGDs. More to be announced soon...

Survey responses have been very useful and interesting, based on what members have described and suggested, it will be really exciting to structure a programme to appeal to this. We are at the stage of confirming with the committee and getting speakers and workshops arranged with those delivering them and booking them in. Once this is done, we will produce the printed calendars again so that members can see what is coming up throughout the year.

Alison Meakes

Spinning Song

Wind the bobbin up
Wind the bobbin up
Pull, Pull, Clap Clap Clap

Wind it back again
Wind it back again
Pull, Pull, Clap Clap Clap

Point to the ceiling
Point to the floor
Point to the window
Point to the door

Clap your hands together
One two three
Do a roly poly and put your hands upon your knee

Janet Farnsworth

Linen Edition of the Journal of WSD

The summer edition has interesting articles on growing flax, spinning it and weaving with linen. One of the articles is on-line ([Home \(journalwdsd.org.uk\)](http://journalwdsd.org.uk))

Outside Events

Works in Silk by Robert Ely
Until 3 July
Whitchurch Silk Mill,

An exhibition by Linda Brassington relating to indigo-dyed textiles in Georgia.

Until 31 July

Crafts Study Centre, Farnham

30-31 July

Summer Wool Festival,

Bedfordshire - used to be known as Fibre East –

Wychwood Forest Fair

31 July

The Guild will be demonstrating

Southern Wool Show

3-4 September

Newbury Racecourse

Heallreaf 4

A touring exhibition of international hand-woven tapestry.

13-24 September

Oxmarket Gallery, Chichester,

1-12 November

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

Information on wider events can be found on Journal Website [Diary \(journalwdsd.org.uk\)](http://Diary(journalwdsd.org.uk)) and at <https://thefeltbox.co.uk/dates-for-wool-and-fibre-festivals/>

Committee

Sue Clegg – Chair

Kaye Davis - Treasurer

Mel Odell – Secretary

Alison Meakes – Programme Secretary

Amanda Henriques – Membership Secretary

Chris Cowley – External events co-ordinator

Sam Austin – External events co-ordinator

Pauline Travis - Catering

Other responsibilities

Sales Table -- Sarah Allan

Website -- Anne Hughes

Newsletter Editor--Angela Pawlyn

Library - Anne Hughes and Alison Meakes

Technical Support - Anne Hughes

From the Editor.

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed. The deadline for next issue is 6th September. No need to wait until then to send me input. Please email to newsletter@oxfordwdsd.org.uk