



Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Newsletter November 2021

From the Chair

We have all faced a lot of challenges since March 2020. Many of us felt the loss of not being able to meet as a Guild for 18 months. We kept in touch as best we could – by email, round robins and Zoom meetings. We tentatively had our first real life meeting in September 2021 after 18 months apart – and even with masks and a few other restrictions it was wonderful to come together again. I loved seeing everyone's makes on the round robins during the pandemic – but what a joy it was to see so many of them and be able to get up close and even handle some of them, at our October meeting. Thank you to everyone who shared throughout the pandemic and at the meetings.

For now, we are cautiously expecting that we will be able to meet in the upcoming months, however, we are aware that this might change at short notice. We don't want to book speakers and workshops yet because of the uncertainty, so Alison, our Programme Secretary, is arranging for some Have a Go Days, which we have always enjoyed. If you have any ideas for HAGDs do let us know.

Just a reminder that as well as some fun things happening at the December meeting we will hold a short, one item, Extraordinary General Meeting to set the subscription level for 2022.

We will keep you updated on plans, meetings, and, if necessary, cancellations via email and the WhatsApp group. As things are at the moment please do check your email/the WhatsApp group each month before you set off for Guild just in case we have had to cancel. If you want to join the WhatsApp group let me know and I will add you – you can email me on chair@oxfordwsd.org.uk

*Sue Clegg
OGWSD Chair*

Round Robins as a 'lifeline'

During the 18 months that we were all in lockdown, Sue Clegg managed to complete 76 'Round Robin' news / chat / keeping in touch emails. Through this medium we were able to share our creative crafts (with lovely photos), ask for opinions and advice on things we were stuck on, generally keep up to date, and also share our trials and woes as well as any thrills and joys that might have come our way. For many of us, this was a bit of a 'lifeline' – and certainly kept the Guild connected and vibrant. At times, seeing the Round Robin in the inbox, felt a bit

like being a child again and 'Bunty' or 'Jackie' arriving through the letterbox!!

It was with heartfelt thanks to Sue for these Round Robins, as well as the committee members who had worked so hard to negotiate and organise our return to Beckley Village Hall, that the Guild members grouped together to give all the committee some flowers as a token of our gratitude and love. These were presented to them at our first Guild meeting in September.



From left to right: Chris, Alison, Mel, Kate, Sue and Pauline

That first Guild meeting was such a delight. It was a beautiful day, so many people sat outside spinning and knitting, chatting and catching up. It was just wonderful to all be back together again.

Jenny Butler

Holding the Guild Together.

All of Sue's Round Robin chats were all written as if we were sitting together, putting the world to rights. I'd like to take credit for it, but although I told her about a bulletin which I had done some years ago, to keep a group informed, I didn't think she was about to take it on board. Well, Sue did for all those months without missing a beat. Informative, interesting, funny at times, some sad times noted 'here's what I've been doing' articles from many other members too ... all put together in open letter form to help keep our wonderful OGWSD together in this difficult time.

So Sue from Carole, I and all those who enjoyed and contributed and met up at the excellent monthly zoom gatherings, here is a big hug and thanks for all you've done to keep the guild going on from strength to strength.

Bob Field

Display of lockdown work

At the October meeting the tables in the Foyer were covered with a lovely range of member's work. Two hangings particularly caught the Editor's eye. One was this tapestry by Amanda Henriques. She writes "The idea behind my tapestry is that of



elements changing through the piece. The changes are: the disintegration of a formal pattern (order into chaos), colours mixing and colours fading to undyed yarn. I spun the Lincolnshire longwool weft and dyed it with indigo and Kemtex acid dye. I like the robustness and lustre of the

longwool. I used a cotton warp.

I have other tapestries on the same theme and it is one that I continue to explore"

The other hanging was made by Sarah Allan. She writes:

The hanging was inspired by a stain glass window of an apothecary and his wife with all the natural herbs and sheep surrounding them in the church at Caldbeck, Cumbria. It is stunning and well worth the visit if you are in the area.

Most years (excluding the pandemic) a small group of us go on a spinning/fibre week. Each year we set ourselves a challenge usually small, sometimes it can be completed during the week sometimes like it's a longer process. This one, during a week linked to Woolfest in Cumbria escalated!



We bought a Cotswold x Ryeland fleece "Ovaltine" in various natural shades of light grey, at the show's large fleece sale. We did manage to wash it at our accommodation but decided to bring it back to Oxfordshire to dye in natural shades, which we duly spent a lovely day doing. The aim was to come up with something that reminded us of the colours or literally any single item from window. Thus, it sat unspun for a long time.

Forward a few years and a challenge by another fibre group to create a 12" square (knitted, woven, etc) for a future project by March 2000 made me return to the fibre. I spun the fibre dyed with madder, cochineal, weld and onion skins plus over-dyes and started creating my 12" taster pre pandemic but continued on and just let it gradually grow into my finished piece.

I had no pre conceived ideas of how the colours would come out or in which order, I was trying very hard to not be a Libran! It was only when I got so far

up, I decided to put in the wheel to represent my favourite craft.

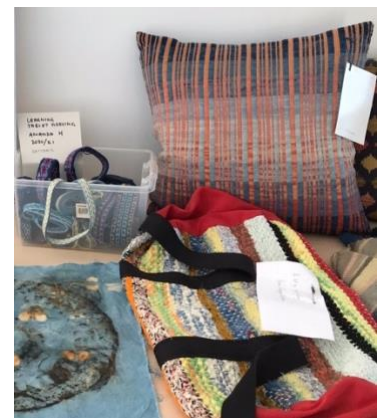


Now what to do with it? I knew I wanted to hang this piece of work but being knitted it would droop so I needed to back it! There was plenty of yarn left so I decided to weave a backing which included the straps to hang it with.

The rosettes were from the Melton Mowbray RBST sale where they have wool finished item classes. My

wall hanging came first in its class and champion over all.

Some more views of the display



I would welcome more photos of the display for future newsletters or of any other member's work. If you particularly like a piece of someone else's work, please persuade them to send me a picture and with an explanation of the inspiration for making it.

Angela

One of exhibits at "Threads in Sheds"



The Exhibition at Whitchurch Silk Mill showed work of the British Tapestry Group.

Spinning from Scratch, Making your own spindle and then using it.

A few years ago, I joined a wood bodging group. To my delight, because it meets outside, it was able to meet once restrictions started to lift. Bob Field can tell you far more about wood bodging than I ever could.



I made a wooden spoon or two and then wanted to make a drop spindle. I talked about it with David Knight, who runs the group and he talked to spinners at Wychwood Forest Fair about the key features of a drop spindle.



As a result, at the next bodging meeting, he produced a prototype, which I have copied three times. It spins beautifully.



David also runs short courses and suggested that we do two sessions at the Eynsham Craft Evenings. The first session was carving your own spindle and I taught spinning at the second session

As we used takeaway chopsticks for the central shaft the most difficult bit was carving the mortice joint. David's preparations included some pieces with the mortice joint already made, but the faster carvers made their own. Everyone finished their spindles within the two hours.

Two weeks later I turned up with brown and white wool: washed and carded, washed but not carded, and unwashed, and started to teach. I warned them about the dangers of unwashed wool, but even so

David chose to use it. He intends to make a strap by braiding his yarn.

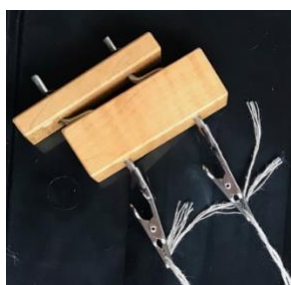
They all picked it up very quickly and I was able to show them how to ply hand spun on a drop spindle. Some people were very keen on getting a smooth thin thread and others embraced the thick and thin enthusiastically.



I think they all enjoyed it, I certainly did.

Janet Farnsworth

My favourite gadgets



You may well have seen me using my **cord twister** to finish off weaving. It was a lovely present from a former member. Mary Jarvis. When I started weaving lots of scarves, I told her that twisting the ends was uncomfortable because of my arthritis. A

few days later I was delighted to receive it by post.



I also love using this **niddy niddy** which I bought from Jane Deane at guild workshop some years ago. It is so much easier to use than the normal ones because it is shorter

Angela Pawlyn

Do let me have photos and text about your favourites for future newsletters. They could be types of fleece, weaving patterns, books etc, etc as well as gadgets.

I have the **Guild 4 Shaft loom**. It is warped up for a twill sampler. Please contact me if you would like to try it out.

Angela

Outside events in 2021

As I'm sure you know there have been very few events in 2021, but I went to two, thanks to Sarah Allan who organised the demonstrators, the gazebo, the exhibitions, you name it.

The first was **Wychwood Forest Fair**, which is a good combination of selling and demonstration stalls. It was a bit smaller than usual this year. They put all the demonstrators in the same area, which was great. Lots of like-minded souls doing things with their hands.



Janet, Sandie, Cath and Amy busy spinning

The group included Carole and Bob as well as Sarah. We were opposite two different willow weavers and next to the wood bodging group I also attend. We were not able to offer 'have a go' sessions because of the risk of proximity during a pandemic but there were plenty of interested people coming and looking and asking questions.



Cath did a great job in suggesting people come to the Guild, making everyone feel that it would be great fun and a real opportunity. One of my wood bodging friends later asked if he could come to learn crochet at the Guild. Spinning may have felt a step too far but he wanted to join such a dynamic group. The book stall was as good as ever and amazingly cheap this year. If you haven't gone to the Forest Fair, I really recommend it.

The other event was spinning at a **Steaming Up Sunday in Blenheim Saw Mill**. Originally it was a steam powered sawmill providing timber for the Blenheim Estate, now it is a charming home for steam engines, turret clocks and other historic artefacts. There were Morris Dancers and lots of textile stalls, patchwork, rag rugs, crocheted hats, scarves and little dolls. Not forgetting the tea stall with homemade cake and the burger stall. We all had a great time chatting to each other and to interested members of the public and the no proximity rule meant that Sandie, Sarah and I got a lot of spinning done. If, like me, you have geeky friends interested in Victorian engineering or turret clocks it's a great place to go.

Janet Farnsworth

Committee

Sue Clegg – Chair
Kate Prinsep - Treasurer
Mel Odell – Secretary
Alison Meakes – Programme Secretary
Amanda Henriques – Membership Secretary
Christine Cowley – External events co-ordinator
Sam Austin – External events co-ordinator
Pauline Travis - Catering

Nb Sam and Amanda are not in the photo on page 1. It would be good to have a photo of them in the next Newsletter as after so long with no meetings faces are less familiar

Other responsibilities

Sales Table -- Sarah Allan
Website -- Anne Hughes
Newsletter Editor--Angela Pawlyn

From the Editor.

Firstly, many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this newsletter at short notice.
Secondly, I have discussed with Sue and we have decided that we will only print copies for those who are not on email. I have used a larger font size to make it easier to read on screen. I have also aimed to reduce the resolution of pictures so that the document is not too large.

Finally, and just as important, please let me have input for the next and future issues. I have made some suggestions to develop themes in this issue but anything WSD related would be very welcome. For example, I would find advice on good places to visit and tips on washing fleece very usefyl. Please email to newsletter@oxfordwsd.org.uk. Deadline for next issue is 6th February