



Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Newsletter July 2023

From the Chair

I'm certain that you are all finding fabulous fibre projects for warmer weather. It's not quite the right time of year to put together a blanket or knit a big jumper. Elizabeth Zimmermann (in her Knitter's Almanac) suggests that this is the time to make gloves and socks ready for the cooler seasons. They're small projects that don't sit in your lap and make you too hot.

We've enjoyed varied talks and activities over the past few months:

- In April, Ellen Moore shared her work with materials that would otherwise have ended in the bin. I was inspired by the jacket that she had made from old jeans.
- In May, Janet and Sandie gave us the opportunity to visible mend and embellish damaged, but much loved, items and Pauline shared her expertise with nalbinding. I now have a project involving a jumper that I love but which suffered a laundry mishap.
- In June, Delia Salter talked about her time in Iceland, the inspiration from the landscape and how she uses naturally dyed Icelandic wool to create knitted and felted pieces.

We welcomed a couple of visitors in June, and one of them asked if our Sales Table is always so good. I was great to be able to say "Yes". Remember, one person's de-stash is another person's treasure.

I'm sorry to miss you all in July and looking forward to meeting up again in September with a great Show & Tell of all your amazing creativity.

Stay busy and productive

Kate Gardener

Recent meetings – more information

Ellen Moore, who gave the talk in April, is an engaging young weaver based in Oxford. Her current work involves experimental weaving using plastic packaging waste from Green Roots coffee shop in Oxford where she works. She is interested in using household waste in the creative process.



Using mercerized cotton for her warp and strips of clear plastic for the weft Ellen's pieces show an interesting interaction of plastic with light. The warp is often unevenly spaced, the see-through qualities of the plastic highlight these undulations and produce a lovely sheen to the fabrics. Her advice to the group was to observe your surroundings and the materials available to you, even if you think they are ugly they can be transformed with a creative approach.



Pippa Purnell

HAGD in May



A selection of things Janet bought to use for visible mending

Nalbinding with Pauline Shelley

Until I saw Pauline's amazing array of Nalbinding items on the Guild display table, I had never heard of it. It looked fascinating.



I questioned whether I really needed to take up another craft but as it only involved adding a needle to my stash, I was very pleased to be able to have a go with her. It was



difficult at first to get the hang of it. I was all thumbs! Pauline was very patient as she had to keep an eye on every move. The most difficult part after mastering the stitch was keeping the tension even. The smoothness of the yarn she gave us to start with helped a lot as I have since tried with other yarns and see that it makes a difference when trying to keep an even tension. Pauline also showed me how to splice the yarn when adding. You could not tell there was a join. I now have some beautiful wooden needles thanks to Sandy's husband and can make

some scarves for my little creatures as you see from the photo! Thank you - Pauline!

Anne Addyman

Pauline can only take 2 people at a time. Generously she has said that she is happy to help anyone during any guild meeting

Delia Salter came to our June guild meeting to give us a talk on her work inspired by her residency at the Blönduós Textiles Centre in Iceland in 2019.



She brought various knitted pieces to show us along with felted bowls, some of which had been dyed with natural materials foraged in Iceland.

Delia's process is to visit a landscape, writing down her thoughts, emotions and observations whilst there, and using these to guide her whilst working, she also takes lots of photographs. Her knitted pieces are created using many different sized needles within the one piece, creating areas of differing density and texture, they are often felted afterwards too.



I visited a very inspiring exhibition in January in Alton put on by Delia and 3 other textile artists that were on the residency with her, Annette Mills, Jenifer Jones and Tara Kennedy, there will be another exhibition in April 2024.



Pippa Purnell

Carve Your Own Turkish Drop Spindle,

The Workshop was run by David Knight and Janet Farnsworth; and with additional expertise provided by Bob Field and Carole Thorpe, at Stanton St John village hall on June 25th.



David had a wonderful array of hand tools set up when everyone arrived. After an initial health and safety talk, we were shown 3 different ways of using our Mora 12 carving knives to produce different effects.



Choosing from pieces of pre-slit wood we shaped the two arms of the spindle, removing all sharp edges, next came drilling and chiselling the necessary holes so that the two arms and the spindle could slot together. The shaft of the spindle was created by using a disposable chopstick sanded down at one end to fit the spindle. Chopsticks are naturally tapered which is important in making sure the spindle arms don't drop off the end! For the final part of the day Janet had brought in a lovely selection of fleeces for us to try out and assisted in showing us how to use our spindles. It was a wonderful day that ended too quickly!



We had 3 members attending from other guilds which was lovely. Daisy and Ruth from the Wiltshire Guild are involved in a really interesting project where members create a garment or item completely from scratch from materials produced and processed entirely in the South West, they are intending to incorporate yarn made with their new

drop spindles, more information about the project and exhibition is here

<https://www.wiltshirequildswd.org/exhibition-2024>

If you are interested in getting involved in green woodworking the Oxfordshire Bodgers meet once per month at Foxcombe Wood, just outside Oxford at Board Hill. More details at <https://www.spooncarving.uk/oxfordshire-bodgers.html>

Pippa Purnell

National Trust's Heritage and Rural Schools Centre

If you were unable to attend Janet and David's workshop, they are running it at the NT's Centre in Coleshill on 23rd September. I was invited to the official opening of the centre in May. It is a fascinating place developed in a 19th century "model" farm. Some of the courses cover the skills needed to maintain old buildings. For example, the old cattle pens are used for courses on lime plastering. I ran a weaving course there last Autumn and have another in this year's programme. I am also looking forward to attending a printing course. For more information go to

[Heritage & Rural Skills Centre Oxfordshire | National Trust](#)

There is a good café at the centre and it is a great area to explore.

Angela Pawlyn

Washing Fleece

Following the article on "Fleece Sorting" in the last newsletter, if you are not going to spin in the grease, you will want to wash your fleece ready for processing for spinning or fibre crafts. As before I can only give you some ideas and processes that I use.

There are few considerations that will guide you to the method of washing you will want to use.

1. Where you are going to wash your fleece.
2. The size of said fleece large or small. (Kg)
3. Whether I want to process one whole fleece in one go. (Me! Usually yes!)
4. The quality of my fleece whether it is a super soft Shetland or a bouncy Jacob.

If I have a chance before I wash my fleece I will soak it over night to loosen any dirt but this is not always necessary it just depends if you think a fleece needs a head start. (Spin dry before starting washing sequence see method below in the washing section).

Once you have chosen the fleece you are going to wash, already pre-sorted, you can start by gathering the equipment you need to wash your fleece.

My equipment list.

1. Buckets to wash fleece in plus a spare to help between washes. (Bucket size to suit the job to hand)
2. Washing liquid. I use Fairy green normal washing up liquid for volumes and normal

washes. Unicorn Power scour for fine and precious fleeces. It is up to you, you will find the one that suits you, your budget and your purpose.

3. A spinner of some sort. For large quantities I have a spin dryer and for small a salad spinner.
4. Laundry nets. Especially when you are doing large quantities or your washing machine. (I will say more about this at the end)
5. Plastic garden sieve that fits your spare bucket.



Large fleece. If I take a nice sized Jacob fleece I will split it down in to two. I will fill two large 39lt flexi tubs with as hot water as I can from my boiler and add the washing up liquid, around 100ml for first wash per bucket. I will then place the fleece into the water and push it down so the fleece is fully covered in the soapy solution. I then

leave it to stand for 20-30 minutes.



Next step is to remove the fleece from the washing bath and I place it straight into a laundry bag I have in a spare bucket with the plastic garden sieve sitting on top to help drain the worst off.



I then place the fleece in my spin dryer and spin until no water comes out of the spout. I repeat wash cycle again but with less washing up liquid say 50ml. (If still dirtier than I would like maybe a full 100ml but this doesn't happen often).

Lastly, I do two rinse washes as above but omitting the washing liquid.



Once the last spin has happened, I then dry my fleece spread out on a wash stand or whatever suits for the time of year and space in the house. Even the spare bed has had fleece over it!

Small Fleece.

The method is the same as above if you only want to do small amounts, just tailor it down to the amount you are washing. Therefore, smaller buckets that you can

handle in the sink or your bath, less washing liquid and salad spinner.

If you have that special fleece and you want to use Unicorn Power Scour, which I do, they have more specific instructions. After deciphering from American weights to English it works out at

1. 500gm of fleece
2. 1 tbsp Unicorn Power Scour
3. 8 litres of hot water.

Remove after 20 minutes and rinse twice more in hot water. Spin between with which ever method suits you. Again if I need more of a scour I will repeat first step a second time before rinsing but again this happens very rarely. Dry as you see fit.

Washing Machine?

Yes! You can wash in your washing machine. What you have to consider if you use this method is the type of fleeces you are wanting to washing. I only wash fleeces that are more down like such as Speckled Face Beulah, Jacob and Southdown. I do not do longwools, kempy type fleeces like Herdwick or of course the soft fine ones like Shetland and Soay.

Next, I would find out which is the best cycle on the machine to be used by trying some fleece I am not too worried about. Firstly, I always place the fleece inside a laundry bag this is because the bag will tumble rather than the fleece and usually two bags in the machine, not over stuffed so the inside fibre is washed. On my current machine I put it on to a wool wash and actually put it to its highest temperature but lowest spin. In my machine I either use Ecover non bio normal liquid wash or Unicorn (again follow Unicorn instructions for machine). On my old machine the delicate wash was gentler but definitely not on my newer type it felts fleece. After washing the fleece and its set out to dry, I then give my machine a super-hot wash with some washing soda to clean my machine if I am worried about washing clothes next.

*Note. There are some other methods for washing super fine fleeces like putting them in locks in net pockets but as I have never yet done this

maybe someone who has can help with this wash method. Usually superfine merino types.

I hope that has helped in the next stage of processing your fleece. Any questions you can always ask me at Guild, as happy to help in your fibre journey.

Also note - I just want everyone to know that most of the water from my washing goes on to the garden. The pre-soak is fab as it has nutrients! The first soap wash does go down the drain but the next goes on the lawn and the water goes on the garden. It is up to you how you use your waste water and your situation!

Sarah Allan

Show and Tell

The show and tell table is proving very popular. It's great to see work in progress as well as finished items.



Heather Banyard's weaving on one of the looms she found in a cupboard at Braziers Park.



Helen's Scarves



Pippa's experiments with unusual fibres including leek, spider plant and banana.

Alice Fox

A friend told me about her Instagram account. Like Pippa she weaves with lots of fibres including dandelion stems and bindweed. She has runs On-line workshops and has written a book called "Wild Fibres". Go to [Home | Alice Fox \(bigcartel.com\)](#) for more information. Her Instagram also lead me to the [Textile Study Group](#). Lots of innovative work.

The Guild 1971 to 1979

I included some key points about the first Guild which folded owing to lack of numbers in the June 22 Newsletter. David Nutt's second booklet covers the initial years of the current Guild. Phyl Wager was the driving force in re-opening the Guild and initial meetings were held in either her house or Patricia Baines's in Oxford. In 1975 a room was hired in the Old Fire Station Arts Centre to house equipment, but it proved to be too expensive. From September 1978, meetings were held in the Women's Institute Hall in Middle Way. It cost £6 for three hours, with an extra £1.25 for the kitchen. The Guild continued to meet there until it moved to Stanton St John in 1998.

Many thanks to David for providing such an interesting record.

Angela

Programme

The workshop in July with Alison Ellen (knitting with overspun singles) has been cancelled owing to insufficient bookings

16th September - Guild HAGD with Anne Hughes, bobbin lace.

21st October - Guild

Debbie Tomkies will talk to the guild about how to create a dyeing record and to how experiment with dye.

22nd October Debbie will run a **workshop** on Speckle Dyeing at Stanton St John Village Hall. from 10am to 4pm, No previous experience of dyeing needed. £50 (£55 for non-members), plus £5 pp for materials on the day. If there are not enough attendees it will be cancelled by 21st September.

12th November -

James Perry 'Long Draw James' will run a workshop on woollen preparation and long draw spinning at Stanton St John Village Hall. £55 (£60 for non-members), plus £6 pp for materials on the day. If there are not enough attendees it will be cancelled by 5th September- which is before our Guild meeting.

18th November - Guild

HAGD with Angela Pawlyn, weft faced weaving on rigid heddle looms.

16th December - Guild

Christmas lunch and Chair's Challenge.

Outside Events

29-30th July
Summer Wool Festival
Amphill, [Summer Wool Festival](#)

23rd August -17th September
Exhibition by Kennet Valley Guild WSD.
West Berkshire Museum, Newbury

2nd-3rd September
Southern Wool Show
Newbury Racecourse
<https://www.southernwoolshow.co.uk>

15th October
Bucks Guild is hosting a Friendship Day. Details will be on their Web site later.

3rd-5th November
Abingdon Craft Fair. There will be space for two members from either Oxford or Kennet Valley Guilds to demonstrate spinning and let people have a go. It will be next to Angela's stall and weaving demonstration area.

Further details and information on wider events can be found on Journal Website [Diary \(journalwsd.org.uk\)](#)

There has been lots of information about outside events on the Guild's WhatsApp Group. If you want to be included in the group email Kate on chair@oxfordwsd.org.uk

Committee

Kate Gardener - Chair
Kaye Davis - Treasurer
Mel Odell - Secretary
Pippa Purnell - Programme Secretary
Amanda Henriques - Membership Secretary
Pauline Travis - Catering
Anne Hughes - Library and Website

Other responsibilities

Sales Table - Sarah Allan
Newsletter Editor - Angela Pawlyn
External Events Co-ordinator - Janet Farnsworth
Guild Equipment - Anne Hughes

From the Editor.

Many thanks to the contributors to this issue.

The deadline for next issue is 6th October. No need to wait until then to send me input. Please email to newsletter@oxfordwsd.org.uk.