



Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Newsletter January 2024

From the Chair

Happy New Year!

I want to start by saying a big “Thank you” to everyone for their support and kind words over the past few months when things have been tricky and uncertain. In particular, I would like to thank Mike for agreeing to be Treasurer. It now feels that we are back on track and I’m looking forward to seeing what 2024 will bring.

Whilst I’m on the subject of roles within the Guild, we will be looking for a new Secretary and Membership Secretary to take over from Mel and Amanda respectively from the AGM in March. Two members have come forward and offered to take on each of these roles but there is always room on the committee for anyone who would like to help make the Guild a success. Lyn has already taken on Equipment Coordinator, and thanks again to Anne for her work on this in the past.

I really enjoyed seeing your responses to the Chair’s Challenge in December. It was lovely to see how you used our core skills in different ways to reflect the Holiday theme, and to show your work in progress. The journey is just as thought provoking and inspiring as the final destination.



Also at the December meeting, we celebrated a milestone birthday for one of our long-standing members, Bob. It’s difficult to know what to give the man who has everything but you can never have too much washed fleece! Happy 90th birthday Bob, and may there be many more.

I’m looking forward to the De-stash Sale at the January meeting. Have a sort out and bring along your pre-loved items so that you can make space to refresh your hoard of goodies. Remember one person’s stash is another’s treasure.

Thank you again for your support through 2023.

Kate



Members enjoying the delicious spread at the December meeting. Many thanks to those who were involved in the organisation.

The Chair’s Challenge



Left to right - Sarah Allan’s dyeing inspired by the Cornish coastline; Sarah William’s weaving capturing the colours of the sea and beaches in Northumbria. Sareh Allan’s “Texas Crochet Bag” partly made in the USA.



Left – Lyn Wymer’s weaving using yarn spun while on holiday in Yorkshire, merino/silk dyed by Coastal Colours
Right - Felicity Record’s flax (see page 4)



Left and back centre. Jumper and Adam and Eve made by Janet Farnsworth.

Front Centre – Liz Roberts. Machine knitting inspired by a holiday in Venice. Mostly naturally dyed.

Right – Caroline’s knitted samples for weaving a long gilet for holiday evenings. (experimenting with plying hand-spun yarn)

I am sorry that I missed some items in the display. If I missed yours, I would like to include a photo in the next Newsletter (Ed)

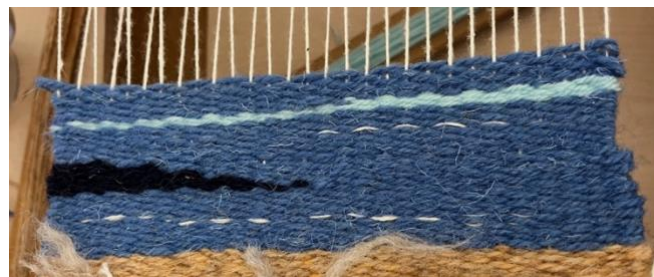
The sales table was for presents



HAGD in November;

I really appreciated the opportunity to ‘Have a Go’ at weft faced weaving in November. Angela set up a good range of rigid heddle looms and provided a selection of different types of yarn for weaving. She made some suggestions to get us going and responded to our individual choices, giving technical and aesthetic guidance whenever we needed it. With her encouragement, I discovered how satisfying weaving is and I’m inspired to do some more - which, I suppose, is the point of Have a Go Days.

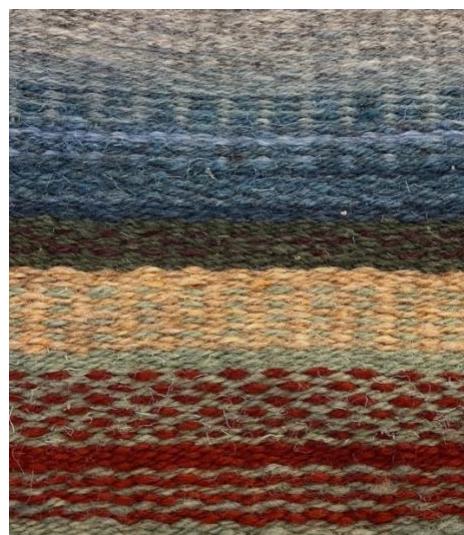
Liz Roberts



Mike focussed on techniques for weaving pictures.



Helen experimented with patterns using two colours as well as finding out how to do “meet and separate” neatly!!



Liz also experimented with patterns as well finishing with a sky

Longdraw James

James Perry’s Longdraw workshop was an amazing day where beginners and experienced spinners were all equally engaged. James began the day by passing round a whole selection of samples he had brought to demonstrate the difference in feel of different preparation techniques to produce different yarns: worsted, semi-worsted and



woollen. We also got to feel of a variety of different fibres and the effect that a different preparation and spinning technique might have on them.



I'm going to attempt an explanation of Longdraw spinning:

- Ideally you sit side-on to your wheel and draft across your body rather than pulling towards you as is usually the case.
- Once you have the wheel spinning and the fibre attached you start with both hands held close together, your left hand will be in front (if right handed) guiding the fibre, your back hand holds the bulk of the fibre loosely, like holding a bird.
- You then pull your back hand right back across your body with your fingers controlling the amount of fibre let through. Holding in this position your front hand will then moderate the twist that you will allow into the drafting zone of the fibre.
- Once you have the required amount of twist your front hand releases the yarn and your back hand moves towards the orifice of the wheel allowing the yarn to wind onto the spindle. You then pull your back hand right back across your body again to repeat the process.

It works like magic! We had a go at spinning from a whole variety of different fibres that James had brought in so that we could feel how different fibres spin, as well as spinning from combed tops and carded roving, spinning from the fold, spinning from the cloud ie unprocessed fibre, as well as creating and then spinning from rolags.

James was a very engaging tutor, explaining through demonstration but also coming round the group frequently to give encouragement and advice to everyone.

Pippa Purnell



Pippa Purnell

October

At the Guild meeting, Debbie Tomkies talked about how to create a dyeing record and to how experiment with dye.

Her workshop followed on the Sunday.

Workshop on Speckle Dyeing

Having been given the Debbie's dyeing workshop as an early Christmas present from my sister (Sarah Allan). I arrived on the day feeling a little bit nervous as although I can hand dye yarn, I am very heavy handed. After taking our places, Debbie put us right at ease by stating we were here to have fun and nothing is wrong. Debbie gave us a brief background on herself and how she ended up doing what she loves, followed by a synopsis of what the day had in store, and asked what we all wished to get out of it.

We started by splitting into groups of two and three, and choose two colours from a premixed colour pallet, measuring out different percentages of the two liquids to get a large array of different tones. Wow who knew!



Then we went on to different speckling methods. No one wanted to stop for lunch as the day was flying by.

After a short break we looked at the items, pictures etc we had brought. Debbie then pointed us to a couple of Apps where we could scan our items and see the colour palette the Apps suggested.



I had a faded hydrangea head and I was blown away by the colour options.

Before we knew it, it was time to pack up. I was not the only one to remark that it had gone way too quickly. Debbie has a wealth of knowledge and did not mind at all that we bombarded her with questions. I would definitely recommend her workshop to all whether you have prior experience or not. Sign me up for the next one please.

Annette Gregory

Little Looms on OverDrive

Did you know that the *Little Looms* magazine from Long Threads Media is now available online for free



on OverDrive? You can borrow any magazine for 3 weeks and they don't count towards your borrowing limit. Also available on OverDrive: *Handwoven, Spin Off, Piecework, Quilting Arts*, along with many knitting, crochet and art magazines.

Go

to oxfordshire.overdrive.com/library/magazines to see what's there.

To access OverDrive you need to be a member of any of the Oxfordshire libraries. Go to oxfordshire.overdrive.com and log in with your library card and pin number. If you don't know your pin number you can go to any Oxfordshire library and ask a member of staff for it. Not a member? It's easy, and free, to join online at oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries

Many other county libraries also offer the same service on OverDrive.

To access OverDrive on your phone and tablet, you will need to install the *Libby* app. *Easy Weaving with Little Looms* is a perennial favorite. By popular demand, it will now be available by subscription. Each issue will have the mix of 18-22 projects, techniques, and features you love, expanding the focus on fundamental weaving skills, creative inspiration and innovative applications. Each issue is designed to have something for beginning and more experienced weavers. In

addition to the core subjects of rigid-heddle and pin-loom weaving, *Little Looms* regularly includes projects and articles about tapestry, tablet weaving, and inkle weaving.

Anne Hughes

Flax course

In November I embarked on a two-day course at "Flaxland" to learn all about Flax/linen with Simon and Anne in Stroud. [Flaxland - Uk Natural Fibres](#)

Five of us were led kindly through the story of flax, modern farming, sewing flax, harvesting, retting, rippling, scutching, heckling, making a sliver and then spinning using a distaff. What ancient names we met and spinning from a distaff definitely felt like being part of a scene from the sleeping beauty.

Simon grows flax on his farm in the Cotswolds and he is always looking for alternative



ways of promoting its' use as a natural fibre. He showed us a coracle and a kayak made of flax fibre and resin, and amazingly a bicycle frame where the flax fibre replaced the glass fibre. He told us that recently people are becoming more interested in flax for ropes, sailcloth, fishing nets, and boat production because fewer chemicals are needed in the process, unlike plastic decompose eventually, and flax is hypoallergenic.

Historically linen/flax can be traced back to the Bronze Age and during the time of the Egyptian Pharaohs mummies were encased in amazingly fine linen cloth, sometimes as many as 30 layers. Murals have shown that it took 3 women to spin the very fine yarn for this linen cloth. Nowadays only machines can produce it at that fineness using wet spinning.

Simon took us through the whole process starting with the flax fibres from the summer which had been cut and laid on the ground to rett (get mouldy), before being stoked in bundles to dry. It has to be sown densely so that the fibres are long and no weeds grow between them so no weed-killer is needed. I believe that Anne and Simon sow their seeds by hand!

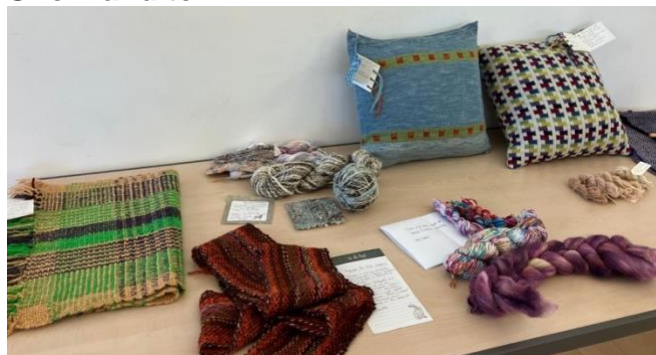
Armed with very rough flax fibres we pulled the seed heads off (ripping). Then we bashed/stroked and hit them on wooden planks (breaking). Using Simon's machines, we scraped the fibre (scutching) and then combed it using a gradually diminishing size of needles that we pulled the flax through (heckling). Amazingly we ended up with a beautiful sliver of silky blond yarn so different to the coarse fibre we started with. It was hard work but incredibly satisfying



Spinning, entailed spreading the sliver at 180 degrees on a work bench and tying it onto a distaff made using magazines folded around a plastic cone. I was so glad that I had spun before. We all soon learned that the distaff had to be at just the right height to pull the flax down, and it was definitely a two-hand job, spinning S.

I ended up with a beautiful ball of linen yarn, a small loom I had warped to produce small samples, and a new set of friends from all over England and Wales who had joined me for the course.
Felicity Record

Show and tell



November's table included some of the lovely results from Debbie's workshop in October.

2024 Programme

20th January Guild

De-Stash Sale.

It is back ladies and gentlemen

Declutter your cupboards and suitcases, boxes and selves. We can take any craft items including equipment but and this is a big BUT everything must be packaged where needs be, no loose balls or it gets messy, clearly labelled with price and seller's full name.

When you price your items two things come into play

1. If you don't want to take it home reasonably price it.
2. The guild as usual takes 12% commission.

Sarah Allan

17th February Guild.

Janet Farnsworth is going to give us a talk about the Biology of Colour Perception, based on a lecture she gave when she worked at the Textile Conservation Centre. It covers how we see colour, why colours look different under a variety of lights, and mixing dyes to an exact shade along with examples of the record keeping needed.

16th March Guild AGM

April and May Guild meetings to be confirmed. Roger Sheldon is coming to one of them to give us a talk about making a tapestry using all 71 of the wools listed by the British Wool Marketing Board, some of which were harsh and difficult to work with. Hopefully there will be a talk about dyeing fleece and spinning at the other meeting.

15th June Guild

Susan Foulkes, The Durham Weaver, a talk about Sami Band Weaving and Culture based on a visit to Jokkmokk in Feb 2020 and the Sami winter market which has been held for 400 years and was where the Sami people could trade goods with merchants. 'Jokkmokk is a small town in Swedish Lapland. It's known for the centuries-old Jokkmokk Winter Market, an annual event that draws thousands for handicrafts made by the indigenous Sami people.

Sunday 16th June Susan Foulkes Workshop, Sámi Band Weaving with 9 Pattern Threads

Participants will weave patterned band weaving using traditional patterns. They will use the backstrap method with both a standard heddle and a Sunna 9 pattern slot heddle.

Booking details to be sent out soon.

20th July Guild: Sarah Allan will give a talk followed by an interactive session based on all things spinning wheel: how to choose the right spinning wheel: how to maintain your spinning wheel correctly; how to utilize all the features of your wheel correctly. We hope to have different types of spinning wheel brought in for members to try, and for Sandie to bring in her Great Wheel.

21st September Guild: We are hoping to organise a guild open day and to bring in as many members of the public as possible.

19th October Guild a talk by Frances Pritchard 'Textiles and Clothing in London 1150-1450'. Among the most evocative items to be discovered by archaeologists are the scraps of silk and wool and other fabrics that signal so eloquently their owner's status and concerns.

We will hopefully be having a talk from Anne Addyman and Sarah Williams based on the basics of looms.

Further workshops are at the planning stage. Possibly two workshops from Anne Hughes: Bobbin Lace and Tablet Weaving, and one on wild weaving.

Outside Events

23-25 Feb
Unravel
Farnham Maltings, GU9 7QR
[Unravel | Farnham Maltings](#)

Until 3 March
The Fabric of Democracy: Propaganda Textiles from the French Revolution to Brexit
[Andy Warhol: The Textiles | Fashion and Textile Museum \(fashiontextilemuseum.org\)](#)

Until 31 March
Beguiling Beni: Safflower Red in Japanese Fashion
www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/beguiling-beni-safflower-red-in-japanese-fashion

Until 14 April
Double Weave: Bourne and Allen's Modernist Textiles
www.ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk/event/double-weave/

27–28 April 2024
Wonderwool Wales
[Wonderwool Wales - The UK's Premier Wool and Natural Fibre Show](#)

Further details and information on wider events can be found at Journal Website [Diary \(journalwsd.org.uk\)](http://journalwsd.org.uk) and at [UK yarn festivals: dates and details for 2024. \(beingknitterly.co.uk\)](#)

Committee

Kate Gardener - Chair
Mel Odell - Secretary
Mike Foster - Treasurer
Pippa Purnell - Programme Secretary
Amanda Henriques - Membership Secretary
Pauline Travis - Catering
Anne Hughes - Library and Website
Sales Table - Sarah Allan
Outside Events – Janet Farnsworth

Other responsibilities

Newsletter Editor - Angela Pawlyn
Equipment -Lyn Wymer

From the Editor.

Many thanks for the contributions to this newsletter.

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