



Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Newsletter April 2026

AGM (March meeting)

This was Kate Gardener's last meeting as Chair. Sarah Allan and Felicity Record were also retiring from the Committee. They were all presented with a gift (including flowers) and a card from the members.

Sally Crawford was elected as Chair, Karin Piggot as Secretary (to continue the role she had been filling for the last few months) and Sarah Williams as a member of the committee. Tamara Cartwright-Loebl and Helen Allen were also elected as Programme Secretaries having been co-opted last year.

Mike Foster, Liz Roberts, Anne Hughes, Angela Pawlyn, were re-elected to continue in their current roles.

From the Chair

It is with some trepidation that I take on the first newsletter as your new Chair.

Before I introduce myself, warm thanks are due to outgoing Committee members. First, a huge thank you to Kate for her dedication chairing the OGWSD over the last 3 years. She will be a very hard act to follow. Sarah A. has also retired from the Committee. Recently she has been running the Sales Table, but she has had various roles before that and I would like to take this opportunity to recognise her service and thank her. Huge thanks also to Felicity R for her time on the Committee. Sarah W has joined as Outside Events co-ordinator and already has a busy line-up – fingers crossed for a year of sunshine and no wind!

I became interested in spinning in 2024 because an old friend came to dinner. She has a croft in Scotland and keeps Hebridean sheep whose fleeces have no commercial value. For reasons I can now no longer explain (wine may have been involved), I promised I would learn to spin and make her a garment from her own animals. It has taken much dropping of spindles, swearing at spinning wheels, and discovering that mid-winter is not an ideal time to wash and dry a whole fleece (sorry about the pervasive smell of wet wool, family), but I finally produced yarn - and socks! The next challenge will be to develop my dyeing and weaving skills.

I joined the Guild that Summer. My first encounter with the Guild was at an outside event at The Rollright Stones. I was made to feel very welcome, and was deeply impressed by the skills and friendliness of the team. At Guild meetings it is a joy to be with an amazing group of talented and creative people, generous with their expertise and time, and always ready to teach and share knowledge.

Although I expected to contribute to the running of the Guild in due course, I little anticipated that my first role would be as Chair. It's a steep learning curve! But it is also an honour, and I look forward to working with you (and learning from you) as we take this wonderful Guild into the future.

Sally C

Recent events

February meeting

Talk: Berbers, Knots and More.

One of the great strengths of our Guild is the sharing of skills and experiences, and our very own Tamara and Helen gave the February meeting talk on their April 2025 trip to Morocco.



Illustrated with colourful slides and a table full of interesting items, the talk transported us to the countryside between Marrakesh and the High Atlas Mountains, and a world of the native Siroua sheep, natural dyeing with henna, rug weaving and, of course, the

Berber knot.

Tamara and Helen learned natural dyeing and rug weaving techniques at Atelier Talasin in Ait Ourir, a women-led textile studio in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains. Tamara explained that while the indigenous non-arab people of the area are more properly referred to as 'Amazigh' ('the people' in their own language), the Berber knot is still proudly called the Berber knot. It was fascinating to hear about how the studio was aiming to preserve the ancient art of using this knot to make rugs, and to process and dye fibre to make textiles in a sustainable manner that respects both the environment and the living heritage of the local crafts.

The Berber knot is more complex, skilled and time-consuming to make than other knots such



as the Turkish knot, but is very durable and gives a specific character and pile to the carpets made by the artisans practising this heritage craft. In a modern economy that demands mass production and cheaper products it is challenging to sustain the time and respect required for creating textiles using traditional skills and materials.

It seems that since their visit in April 2025 the Atelier has closed, although ex-members continue to promote and teach their natural dyeing and weaving skills. They have joined a co-operative called Anou (theanou.com) which links up groups from different villages across Morocco, each preserving the local traditions and bringing them to a wider market.

Helen passed around items they had brought back from Morocco with them to illustrate the talk, and afterwards we were able to examine some samples of dyestuffs and examples of weaving using the Berber knot, as well as a very sturdy rug beater.

In the context of the current initiative by the AGWSD to identify and record living heritage in the UK it was timely to hear about such a specific and potentially endangered skill as the Berber knot and the attempts to ensure its survival.

Karin P

January meeting: De-stash Sale

The sale took a total £1052.50 – about £180 of which was added to the Guild account. Many thanks to Sarah A, Kate G and Chris S for organising the Sale.



Outdoor Event at Hill End (8th April)

I enjoyed my first visit to Hill End on their Family Day. I was surprised to see that we had a wooden Gazebo to set up our display



Lots of visitors had a go at spinning with Janet F and Sally C



Karin P and Sarah W were very busy helping children to weave on small cardboard looms. Some also wove on "fish frames"

Isabella was also busy letting people have a go at inkle weaving and braiding as well as helping Karin and Sarah when it got very busy.



I enjoyed looking after a Sarah W's 4-shaft loom and my rigid heddle loom which was set up for weft faced weaving. Two boys did some excellent weaving on them. It was useful having both to explain the different warp spacing needed for weaving pictures/rugs and fabrics. My cord maker was useful for doubling with lengths of spinning done by some of the children

The next outside event is also at Hill End at their Fennell Festival on Saturday 6th June. It will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of Hill End so it is likely to be very busy. The team will need more people so do talk to Sarah if you can come.

Angela P

See page 5 for other Guild outside events

Lace Weaving with Charlotte Grierson

On 5th and 6th March, I attended a lace weaving course with Charlotte Grierson at her studio in Deptford, London. She began by introducing us to 6 forms of lace weaving which were Huck Lace, Swedish Lace, Spot Bronson, Atwater-Bronson, Mock Leno and hand manipulated lace.

Huck Lace,



Swedish Lace



,Spot Bronson



Atwater-Bronson



Mock Leno



Hand manipulated lace



Each form of lace is governed by a set of rules which can be tricky to understand. Fortunately, Charlotte had set up looms for each of us to weave samples of these types of lace and in doing so, certain things became clearer. On the second day, she introduced us to 2 further forms of lace – bead leno and doup leno – and for these, she showed us how to set up the looms as the threading is more complicated as one has to thread the warp threads through either beads or doups (leashes in the manner of an inkle loom) in addition to the normal heddles. After struggling with the hand manipulated lace weaving, it was easier to appreciate these additions! Towards the end of the course, Charlotte explained about profile drafting which I found difficult to grasp – particularly in respect of Huck Lace and its rules but I hope I will have the opportunity to go on a further course with Charlotte soon to improve my pattern drafting in general.

Sarah W

Show and Tell

Isabella had three items on the table in January:

Log Cabin blanket in fluffy acrylic yarns.



Merino scarf all woven with Malabrigo Merino Rios and Worsted mixed. The pattern for both scarves is a point twill from Strickler's Book of 8-Shaft patterns (p.28, no 97),



Merino and wool scarf. Isabella ordered the wrong amount of yarn so she added cream wool from her stash to the Malabrigo Merino she used for the blue scarf.



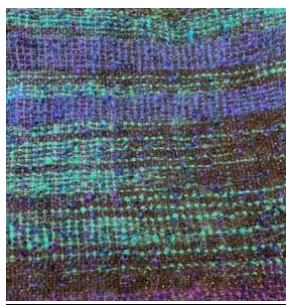
Karin's 100% Alpaca Dressing gown: Janet had been given some Alpaca fleece following an outside event, and I took some in return for a donation to the guild. I wanted to make a handspun/handwoven garment that would be true to the characteristics of the natural alpaca fleece and decided on a dressing gown. It is very comfortable and cosy.



Norwegian red tassel hat - a 'Melt the ICE' hat as worn by protestors in Minneapolis - made from hand-spun Portland wool (Mike), dyed using food colouring and knitted with a US knitting pattern (Rhonda).



Sarah W had three items in February
This shawl was woven in plain weave on a floor loom using the two shuttle method as per log cabin weave. The warp is of mixed yarns - boucle and cotton and wool. The weft is also mixed - mainly mohair.



This hat was knitted from some pink dyed wool which was plied with cream wool from an unknown sheep. The pattern was from an old magazine.



The green scarf was woven on an 8 shaft Ashford Table Loom from 17/2 lambswool obtained from Uppingham Yarns. The pattern was taken from the VAV magazine.



Janet F's
Embroidered Brooch using handmade felt



Angela P's experiments with using her badly spun silk for weft faced weaving. 4epi works well with wool but she found the silk packed down too much. She wove more pictures with the warp set at 6epi which were better. However, she thinks wool works better.



Programme

April 18th Guild

Nicole DeRushie will talk about Bog Fashion – Recreating Bronze and Iron Age Clothes. She is an historian and fibre artist who has studied textile finds in bogs in north and western Europe. The talk will centre on the many skills prehistoric people developed, and the variation of style and fashion across the region and period. She will have copies of her book for sale,

May 16th Guild

Chris Seers will talk about Alpaca and run a HAGD on how it is processed and spun.

June 13th Workshop

Flaxland will cover the preparation and spinning of flax as well as its history.

Only five members have signed up so far so we need more if it is to take place

June 20th Guild

Show and Tell about the Flax workshop. Angela P will be bringing some of her rigid heddle looms for members to have a go on.

July 18th Guild

HAGD with Anne Hughes
Have-a-go at weaving a narrow band using a backstrap setup.

September 19th Guild

tba

September 26th Workshop

Indigo "Pay and Play" with Helen A and Tamara CL

October 10th Workshop

Sally Pointer Introduction to prehistoric textiles she weaves her talk through the activities which include braided belts and cordage and the use of plant fibres, bone needles, foraged hackles, flint knives.

October 17th Guild

Report and Show and Tell about on Sept and Oct workshops

November 21st Guild

Talk by "Outside Dyers". Details to follow

December 19th Guild

Christmas Lunch and Chair's Challenge!

NB: All workshops will be at Stanton St John Village Hall

The Guild will be demonstrating at

Saturday 6th June - Hill End Fennel Festival - a Family orientated day

Saturday 27th June - Bloxham Steam Fair

Monday 31st August - Rollright Stones Open day

Sunday 20th September - Coombe Mill to be confirmed

(The West Oxford Fun Day in July has been cancelled)

Other Events of Interest

Until 14th June: Foraging Connections

An exhibition displaying a collection of work created using foraged plants, transformed through ancient techniques such as cordage and weaving, to reflect the raw beauty and cyclical nature of the natural world, that is both ephemeral and enduring. Project with local children, based at Wytham Woods and Hill End.

www.modernartoxford.org.uk

Until 31st July: (Extra)ordinary: woven art exhibition

Winner of the Brookfield Properties Craft Award 2026, Darcey Fleming, exhibits some of her woven forms created with baler twine in this City of London gallery space.

www.brookfieldproperties.com/en/our-approach/events/

7th June Introduction to Natural Dyeing

www.theoutside.org.uk/upcoming-events

13th to 25th July British Tapestry Group's 20th anniversary exhibition

Morley Gallery, London

Details and information on events further afield can be found at Journal Website

[Diary \(journalwsd.org.uk\)](http://Diary(journalwsd.org.uk)) and at

<https://beingknitterly.co.uk/uk-yarn-festivals/>

These links are provided as a service and do not constitute an endorsement by the OGWSD.

Committee

Sally Crawford - Chair

Karin Piggott - Secretary

Mike Foster - Treasurer

Liz Roberts - Membership Secretary

Anne Hughes – Library, Website

Angela Pawlyn - Newsletter Editor

Tamara Cartwright-Loebl - Programme Secretary

Helen Allen - Programme Secretary

Sarah Williams – Outside Events

Other responsibilities

Lyn Wymer - Equipment

Emma Pilley and Helen Allen -Sales Table

Janet Farnsworth - Outside Events

From the Editor.

Many thanks for the contributions to this newsletter.

I aim to take pictures of all the Show and Tell items. I will include them if I receive the accompanying description. Please either email to newsletter@oxfordwsd.org.uk. or put them on the Guild's What's App page

The deadline for next issue is 6th July.

No need to wait until then to send me input.