



Newsletter of the Berkshire Guild of Spinners, Weavers & Dyers

BERKSHIRE YARNS

No. 150

Summer 2017



The Spinning Group outside Charvil Hall on a hot day!

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER.

Dear Members,

Working as a gardener I find I'm aware of seasons and patterns across the year in a way I never was, working in an office. I can often repeat the same job all week: trimming hedges & shrubs, or summer pruning, or trimming Wisteria.

I've noticed patterns and seasons in my crafting too. There are the obvious ones like all the fibre shows that flow across the spring and summer (along side the flower shows) and the June fleece day that causes me to drag out all my fleece stash and start washing, carding, processing, so that I can spin more.

I tend to spin more in the spring and summer when the weather encourages outdoor work and weave in the winter when I'm not working and can get stuck into a project; and of course I always want to knit hats and mitts when Autumn comes.

Do you have seasons, or patterns to your crafting life? What are they?

Happy crafting

Roz Jones
Chair

MEETING AND WORKSHOP REPORTS

Afghan Adventure – Amanda Hannaford

Before giving a workshop on Spinning Short Fibres, Amanda Hannaford came to give an illustrated talk to the Guild's meeting on 21 May. She recounted her experiences in the winter of 2015, when she went to teach a group of women in Kabul to card and spin cashmere. She explained that the goats from which the fibre comes are reared in Afghanistan but most of the fibre is exported. Local women could already spin coarse wool coloured with natural dyes for carpets, but a small project, called Qaria Cashmere, had been set up to help some of the poorest women to earn money spinning the much finer cashmere.

The project approached the National Association of Guilds in the UK for help in finding a teacher and Amanda volunteered, despite the uncertain political situation in Afghanistan and the fact she had only been on one short flight before. After some experiments beforehand, she decided the best results would be achieved by teaching the women hand carding and the English Long Draw method of spinning. She had a young woman interpreter, who spoke excellent English picking up the spinning terms very quickly, and use of a local carpet factory, which was spacious but very cold. She began by teaching the women to card rolags using short staple wool, stressing the importance of making good rolags. From there they rapidly progressed to cotton, which was readily available, much cheaper for practising and similar to cashmere for spinning. When they finally moved to spinning the cashmere itself, they produced excellent yarn. During the time together they all sat on the floor on carpets, ate their meals together and became friends over the two weeks Amanda spent with them, giving her presents to bring home with her.

Jacquie Kavanagh

June Fleece Day

The committee and Carol had worked really hard providing us with a fantastic array of fleeces. The variety of long wool fleeces was amazing and I spent a very pleasant hour looking, feeling and smelling the different types of wool. It was interesting to hear how to choose a good fleece and what to do with it when you have taken the plunge and bought one. It is one of the strengths of the guild that we have such a wealth of information available from our more experienced members and they are always happy to help. Carol gave us an insight into the differences and uses for the various long wools and how to tackle spinning them. Mary showed us how to use the combs, making it look very easy. This was very deceptive, as members found, when they had a go. The price of a fleece has risen especially for the long wool fleeces but I think that they

are still very good value and the farmers deserve to get some profit. Those members who didn't manage to get to the guild meeting last Saturday missed a real treat.

Gaynore Fletcher

'Achieving reliable and repeatable colour from natural dyeing' Workshop

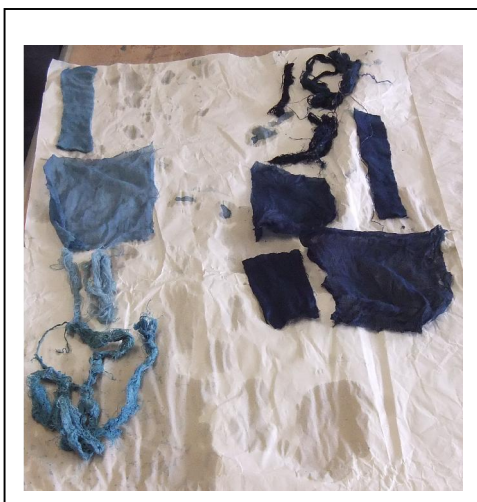
7 BSWD members attended the Sunday dyeing workshop run by Penny Walsh following on from her talk Saturday at the July guild meeting. It was a busy day with lots to do.

We made up 4 different mordants. Alum, copper, privet and nettle. We also made up dye baths of indigo, buckthorn berries, madder, alkanet, Logwood, Sappan/Brazilwood, weld and camomile.

While the mordants and the indigo dyebath were heating we picked out samples of wool (yarn and cloth), silk (fibres and cloth) and cotton cloth that Penny supplied and gathered any samples we brought with us to dye. Some of us brought small skeins others brought rolags to dye for spinning.

When the mordants were ready we put our samples in to simmer. Penny then showed us the how to dye using the different indigo dyebaths and use them without adding extra oxygen when putting the fibre in and taking it out again. The "dark" indigo dyebath gave us a pale blue. The "pale" indigo dyebath gave even less colour. Penny decided to use the dark bath as the pale blue and added more dye to the other bath to make it dark. I'm not so sure we were achieving reliable and repeatable colour dyeing if what should have been dark indigo wasn't

When we were turned stood hunched over so we wouldn't lose carefully as instructed. amazed at the change blue when our fibre Several dips in the as indigo is a surface into the fibres.



colour dyeing if what should have been dark.

loose on the indigo dyebaths we the vat holding onto our samples them in the vat, taking them out After taking them out we were of colour from a yellow/green to samples were exposed to air. indigo vats were recommended dye and doesn't penetrate deep

When we finished the indigo dyeing we took our other samples out of the mordants and then mixed the other dye baths. These needed to be simmered for a while and then strain out the vegetable matter. If not strained it gets caught in the fibre you are dyeing and hard to get out

later from many of them. We ran out of muslin so didn't have enough to strain the camomile and weld so the loose fibre samples were mixed with that vegetation.

We gathered bundles of in the different dyebaths which bundles were privet and nettles was the end of each bundle associated with a



samples before we put them to simmer. To keep track of mordanted in copper, alum, accomplished by wrapping with a coloured rubber band specific mordant.

Afterwards these were marked with that combination of dye and mordant.

each put on a piece of paper

It was amazing to see the results of the different mordants on the dyed material. The different fibre type also has an effect on the colour the dye makes. The alkanet on wool and cotton made a nice purple/grey colour but with silk it turned a pretty green.

It was a very busy day and at the end of the workshop we were rushing to get samples of all the different combinations of fibre, mordant and dyes collected and identify them so we would know what was what at the end. I'm still not sure I have everything.

Even if it wasn't repeatable it was interesting and a place to start from using natural dyes.

Mary Paul



ANNUAL COMPETITION

September is nearly upon us and it is the start of the new year for the Guild, so it is time to announce the Annual Competition.

The committee has chosen the theme of "colour" for the coming year.
The topic for the Annual Competition is "purple and green".

- you can use any tint, shade, or hue of these two colours.
- your item can contain any amount of other colours, so long as it does have some purple and green in it.
- your item must use one, or more of the core skills of spinning, weaving and Dyeing.
- entries must be submitted by the guild day, April 2018 and the results will be announced at the AGM, May 2018.
- the entry form will be available on the Guild website.
- there will be a **specific novice** category and the new 'Yarn Bowl awards' will be awarded for novice spinning, weaving and dyeing.

KNITTING AND CROCHET COMPETITION

a reminder to plan your entry for the knitting and crochet competition.

Any yarn, any colour, any type of project - garment, accessory, toy, art piece...

Entries must be submitted by the November Guild day and the entries and results will be displayed at the December meeting.

Entry form will be available on the Guild website.

FUTURE GUILD MEETINGS

Meeting	Type of meeting	Description	Activities
16th Sept	Members Day	Open Day to attract new members	Normal meeting with additional activities for visitors and an exhibition of our work.
21st Oct	Workshop	Flower Printing	Printing with flowers and foliage.

UP-COMING DEMONSTRATIONS

Members are needed to demonstrate at the following venues.

If anyone wishes to help, please contact Lesley Dunn.

Each event really needs to have three members attending, to help with informing the public as to what we

are doing as we spin, and to safeguard equipment when members leave the stand to stretch their legs.

Demonstration venue	Date and Time
Swallowfield Show, Swallowfield Park	Sunday 27 August + Monday 28 August 10am till 5.30pm
One more needed for Sunday and two more needed for Monday	

Traditional Old Crafts Village Fete in Beech Hill (south of Spencers Wood)	Saturday 2 September 1pm till 5pm
Outside venue, alongside Memorial Hall.	

Cookham Dean Village Fete	Saturday 16 September 1pm till 5pm
Spaces available	

Shinfield Arts Festival	Saturday 21 October
Spaces available	

GUILD GROUP MEETINGS:

Now that the spinning Group has moved to Charvil Village Hall, all the day-time groups are meeting at the same venue. Here are the dates for the next few months.

Spinning Group dates: *Co-ordinator Lesley Dunn* **10am-1pm**

August: 2,16,30 September: 13,27 October: 11,25 (Wednesdays)

Weaving Group dates: *Co-ordinator Mary Paul* **10.15am – 1.15pm**

August: 10,24, Sept: 7,21, October: 5,19

Dyeing Group Dates: *Co-ordinator Debbie Cogger* **10.30am – 4.30pm**

Saturday 14 October, Sunday 14 January 2018, Saturday 14 April 2018
Come along and get the dyeing bug.

Monday Evening Group (MEG) meets at the Quaker Meeting House, Denton Road, Wokingham, RG40 2DX 7.30-9.30pm on the first Monday of the month, excluding bank holidays. This is a mixed skills group, bring your loom, wheel, spindle, knitting etc.,

UP-COMING FIBRE EVENTS

A Touch of Silk		
An exhibition of work from Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight WSD Guilds www.whitchurchsilkmill.org.uk	When:	1 Aug 2017 to 1 Sept 2017
	Where:	Whitchurch Silk Mill, 28, Winchester Street, Whitchurch RG28 7AL
	Time:	Tues to Sun 10.30-5 last entry 4.15pm Closed Mondays except Bank Holidays Admission charges apply

If you are up in London during the summer and you have a spare half an hour, why not pop along to the National Gallery as they have a weaving exhibition on until the 28th of August. It is located in the Sunley Room, there, you will find the sketches and explanations of how the images on the three weavings were created. The artist, Chris Ofili, worked with three weavers from the Dovecot studios and the piece was commissioned by the National Gallery. There is a very interesting film explaining the meaning of the work with the artist commenting on how fascinating it was to watch his watercolour change into a weaving. In the end room, you see the finished weaving, where you have the chance to look very closely at the blending of colours, it really does look like a watercolour.

Gaynore Fletcher

OTHER EVENTS

What Do I Need to Do to Make it OK		
Exhibition using stitch & other media to explore damage and repair, disease and medicine, healing and restoration, to landscapes, bodies, minds and objects. https://lizcooper.org/what-do-i-need-to-do-to-make-it-ok	When:	9 Sept 17 to 13 Jan 2018
	Where:	Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, Rugby CV21 3BZ

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What I found in my fleece.....

**At the last spinning group meeting I came upon what I thought was a brilliant idea!
Well, it has to be said...some were a bit sceptical but I like to think there was some interest among our members.**

Having (as some of you know) struggled with numerous “difficult “and somewhat challenging fleeces in my time at the guild, I have noticed that among the wool there are many objects of curiosity and wonder. To mention a few: While carding a particularly nasty piece of light brown wool of unknown origin and parentage , a mummified mouse fell out of my fleece to the horror of the other spinners who sat around. It must have crawled in there at some time thinking “this is a suitable place to end my days...nice and soft and furry and somewhat smelly” . It was quickly expedited to the bin via a sturdy piece of kitchen towel where a few chosen words were said in honour of all creatures great, and in this case, small and shrivelled up.

While teasing out another “rare breed” sheep fleece, (rare because no one has ever seen the like before or since) I found a long lost, much missed and cherished earring and two cough lozenges. The explanation could only be that I had a cold at the time of delivery and struggled so wildly with this particular monstrosity that my earring fell out in sheer desperation!

Lately, as some of my spinning chums may have noticed, I have carded away several kilos of burrs from the big dark brown fleece I acquired from a mad smallholder in Wiltshire...As time went by there was a serious question of whether it was a sheep at all ...by the texture and look it resembled a bison or it could have been one of those large hairy pigs so popular in remote areas of Hungary...but pardon me..I digress.

The idea that struck me was how fun it would be to look at your fleece and if you find a seed or burr or straw, take a picture of it and try to grow it in a pot. Then we could have a show and tell or perhaps a competition to be judged by someone cleverer than us! What do you think? Go for it? Could be the envy of other guilds and hit the spinoff magazine front page... you never know before you try!

Happy carding.... from Helene

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair	Roz Jones
Secretary	Rachel Blunden
Treasurer	Linde Merrick
Membership and Library	Sharon Spence
Members day co-ordinator	Sarah Cook
Equipment co-ordinator	Carolyn Mansi
Speakers co-ordinator	Roz Jones
Social Media and Data Protection	Sally Gurney

Newsletter deadlines: Copy – to be sent to spinningsarah2@gmail.com

Copy deadline:	Publication date:
31 October	13 November
31 January '18	12 February '18

Have you something say in our fibre world? Tell us about it. Please send your contributions to Sarah (spinningsarah2@gmail.com)

