



BERKSHIRE YARNS

***Newsletter of the Berkshire Guild of
Spinners, Weavers & Dyers***

No. 133

October 2011

Membership Fees

Warning! This will be the last issue of the news letter that you will receive if you have not yet paid the annual fee, now £14 for those who read their copy online, £16 for those who prefer a paper copy

www.bswd.org.uk.

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Words from the Chair

Wow, it's time for the next newsletter. Time is passing so quickly. It has been a busy summer with lots of gardening, apple pressing and a little bit knitting, weaving and spinning thrown in for me.

By the time you read this we will have had the Novelty Yarn spinning workshop and be getting ready for fungi dyeing. I hope to have some nice samples of novelty yarn to show at the October meeting. Other members will also have been busy at the workshop and come up with different ideas of what to make. It always amazes me that although we are using the same techniques and materials we all have a different take on what kind of yarn to spin.

As I was up in my allotment though I realized that even my gardening has a SWD element to it. I was harvesting my fuller's teasel yesterday. Last year I bought a baby plant from the sales table and it survived and grew to about 8 feet tall causing questioning glances from fellow allotment holders about what it was. I have 20 big teasel heads and 15 medium heads. What I do with them now is another learning experience for me.

When looking at and deadheading my beautiful Calendula flowers I was wondering if I dried the flower heads could I use them for dyeing later in the year when I had more spare time (if that is ever possible). I need to mordant wool for the fungi dyeing meeting and could mordant extra for the calendula. Hummmm. I'll try drying some and see while I still have warm weather.

Of the woad seeds I got from Elizabeth H. last year only 2 sprouted and grew but they are doing nicely. I need to do something with them now too. Or should I have already done something with them? Time for me to get out the books and see what I need to do next.

It's back to the garden for me again today. More apple pressing on Monday. For some cold meeting in the winter I'll bring in some of my bottled apple juice and make us all hot spiced apple juice. Thanks for all the apple and bottle contributions from members. Sorry, it's non-alcoholic, but it still tastes great.

Mary

July Colour Dyeing Day

After a soggy start and a seemingly endless stream of equipment making its way into the hall Gloria, Denise and Debbie managed to get ready for action, occupying 4 tables across one end of the room. Burners, pots and pans, buckets, plant material, books and samples were laid out and pressed into service.

We prepared the dye baths from a wide array of sources, fresh and dried. Some were readily available from our own gardens/allotments like onion skins, lichen, dyer's weld, mahonia berries and wood, alkanet, marigold flowers and woad. Other dyestuffs came already prepared from specialist suppliers in dried, chipped or powdered form like brazilwood, logwood, osage orange and butternut root bark (nothing to do with Butternut Squash!). These products are still derived from plants but not ones that grow in our climate, so this is an efficient way of getting our hands on them and extending the variety of colours we can play with.

Certainly the deepest and most striking colours came from the specialist preparations but we still had an interesting array from our native plants, albeit more subtle. We discovered that different colours can come from the same plant depending on the stage at which it is used. Denise found that the fresh leaves of her dyer's weld gave a bright sulphur yellow but once the plant was in senescence and about to set seed a much softer yellow was yielded.

Admittedly we didn't approach any of this in a particularly scientific way, more of a 'throw it in and see what happens' affair, which is to be recommended for sampling and having fun – there's not the stress of accurate measuring or record keeping. Some of the late additions to the dye pots did make it clear though that getting the right temperature for the right length of time is crucial to the depth of colour if you are looking to get a particular result.

While all the other materials were simmered for 45 minutes to an hour to release their colour, the woad was the exception, calling for a method called vat dyeing which did require the more scientific approach. Having soaked the shredded leaves in hot water for 30 minutes they were squeezed and strained and the resulting liquor was put in a bucket. Washing soda was added (thanks Marjorie for rescuing me from my own forgetfulness!) and whisked vigorously until the froth changed from green to blue and back to green, indicating that all the blue pigment had been extracted. Then came the technical bit – heating the liquor to 50C and adding a 'reducing agent' to remove the oxygen from the water (thiourea dioxide in this

instance, but Dylon colour-run remover also works). Anything to be dyed was then added to the dark green liquor very carefully so as not to introduce any oxygen. 20 minutes later and the real magic happened – as soon as the yarns were gently lifted from the vat and the air hit them they changed to blue before our eyes.

The only thing that could top that experience was the result from skeins previously dyed in dyer's weld then over-dyed in the woad giving the most amazing emerald green, causing squeals of delight from their owner (Yes Helen, you!).

By the end of the day we had a veritable rainbow of samples:

Brazilwood – magenta/pinky red

Osage orange – burnt orange/apricot

Mahonia wood – yellow



Lichen – pale mustard yellow

Pot marigold flowers – soft creamy yellow

Dyer's Weld – bright yellow

Dyer's Weld over-dyed with

Woad – emerald green

Woad – blue

Logwood – dark blue/purple

Alkanet – grey/purple

Onion Skins – tan/rust brown

Mahonia berries – deep red/brown

Butternut Root bark – camel/teak brown

Meanwhile elsewhere in the hall Lesley Took was demonstrating solar dyeing which involves layering mordanted wool with dye stuff in a large jar, covering with water and leaving on a sunny windowsill to infuse, rather like iced tea.

All in all for those that did get involved I think it was an enjoyable and rewarding day and gave members the chance to try something they might have previously thought too daunting to tackle at home. On the whole it seemed no more complicated than cooking for Sunday lunch – lots of pans on the go, a bit of clock watching and stirring, and a lot of washing up. (Not sure I'd want veg that had been simmered for 45 minutes though!)

Debbie

A weaver called Sola

While in the US this June, I visited a new arts centre in Las Vegas called the Trifecta Gallery.

Unless you are into gambling “Lost Wages” would not be my city of choice for a cultural visit. However there is some amazing new building going on there including a fantastic new Mall and a very futuristic Concert Hall which looks like it came from a Dr. Who studio set. I digress!

The Trifecta Gallery houses a wonderful tapestry by a weaver called Sola.

I am ashamed to say I hadn't heard of her before.

The curator told me she is a tiny lady in her 70's who was born in England but is now a US citizen. She travels all over the world and carries all her belongings in a suitcase.

This tapestry measures about 11ft. by 7ft. and depicts the city of Las Vegas at night, seen from the top of a high building. It took 8,000 hours to complete and was woven entirely from recycled sweaters from thrift shops.

I feel privileged to have seen it 'in the flesh'. It is every bit as impressive from a distance as really close to.

Sola, Spanish feminine for Alone, has woven several other wonderful tapestries to commemorate the Olympic Games, one, of the mountains above Salt Lake City and another of Sydney. Let's hope she will fulfil her dream to come to London for the Olympics in 2012 as her 76th birthday comes in the middle of the games.

If you have access to a computer do Google “Sola Tapestry” or try these links

www.trifectagallery.com

www.deseretnews.com (not a typo)

Gloria

Summer Spinning Day at Joanna's

As I looked round at the relaxed group in the shade of the willow tree, with a view of the river beyond and a gentle breeze to take the edge off the fierce sunlight I was wondering who I could 'pick on' this time and came to the gradual realisation that there was no way I could break into this idyllic scene by mentioning the ever present (in

my mind) newsletter. I did mention to Gloria that she might tell us about an amazing tapestry weaver she had come across in Las Vegas but I was enjoying talking with different people and realised that a request for an article might not be altogether welcome. So, here I am, remembering the glorious sweep of the garden down to the river, the sunlight reflecting off the water, the profusion of plants and flowers, all at their best, it would seem. Someone worked hard to produce that splendid show. A bit of Kipling seems appropriate here;

‘Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing –‘Oh how beautiful!’ and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel paths with broken dinner knives.’

Then there was lunch, with the usual happy accident of a tempting variety of tasty offerings, plenty to choose from, and all delicious. Did we eat too much? Probably. Does it matter? Probably not. Some people worked diligently at their spinning or knitting, some people didn't. I felt a bit like the gentleman from Yorkshire ‘Some days I sits and thinks, some days I just sits.’ It was a very welcome opportunity to chill out, put the world to rights, share expertise and swap experiences. Very many thanks to Joanna for inviting us again, and for looking after us so well.

Marjorie

Cookery corner

Tatin d' Echalottes Nouvelles

Ingredients; 2lb fresh shallots, 3 tbs. honey, 1.8 oz butter, thyme, salt and pepper.

Pastry made with 8 ozs flour, (or one block frozen).

Pre heat the oven to 360

Peel the shallots

Melt the butter in a frying pan

Add the honey and the shallots

Cook on medium for ten minutes, stirring often

Add the thyme leaves to the shallots, season with salt and pepper.

Cook for a few more minutes and remove from the heat (when the shallots look caramelised)

Pour the shallots into six small pans or one larger one.
Roll out the pastry and cut slightly larger than the tin(s)
Cover the shallots with the pastry and push the crust down at the sides
Cook for 30 minutes. Turn out while still warm or else the caramel sticks to the tin.

Marjorie

Britt`s Courgette Cake

3 eggs
250 ml vegetable oil (any cooking oil will do)
300 ml sugar
500 ml grated courgette (no need to peel)
500 ml plain flour
2 teasp.baking powder
2 teasp.bicarbonate of soda
pinch of salt
2 teasp.vanilla powder or 8 drops of vanilla essence
3 teasp.cinnamon
250 ml.chopped walnuts

Instructions; Mix the ingredients into a large bowl in the order listed above. Stir until it's well blended and put in greased tin.

Bake in a moderate oven (ca 200 degrees) for approximately 1 hour or until a skewer inserted comes out clean.

Helene

Can you help ?

Please don't throw away worn-out shirts and blouses without first cutting off the buttons - I would like them for the little jackets I make for special-care babies in Buscot ward at the RBH.

I would also be very grateful for oddments of synthetic yarns in suitable colours - not wool, because of the high temperatures used in the hospital washing machines.

Joan

Found on the web

One of the most significant characteristics of the modern internet (web 2.0) is that it is largely built on the sharing of knowledge and information. This is either through individuals who selflessly open up their creativity for others to enjoy or through 'communities of practice' where information is stored, added to, modified and enhanced.

These web sites are all premised on this principle of sharing.

Helena Hernmarck's website is in itself, a masterpiece of highly crafted images and videos. There are not only slideshows of her amazing tapestries but links to some very informative videos.

<http://www.hernmarck.com/index.shtml>

Weavolution (<http://weavolution.com/>) is an amazing website with an incredible range of resources and information created by and for the community of weavers. This little tool is a handy resource: a warp/weft calculator (<http://weavolution.com/weaving-calculator>).

Another great site for useful information is CoeProduced where the handouts page provides some really helpful resources

.(<http://www.coeproduced.com/handouts.htm>)

If you have ever wanted to get hold of a '**fan reed**' to produce those lovely undulating fabrics, this is the site for you:

<http://www.woolgatherers.com/FanReed.htm>

Finally, the Draft Weaving Archive

(<http://www.handweaving.net/Home.aspx>) is an amazing collection of weaving drafts – over **58538 hand weaving draft** and counting!

Matty

www.theloomexchange.co.uk

A useful site for buying and selling. Hilary has a website where she advertises items for sale. Buyers and sellers make their own arrangements and Hilary collects a small fee when the sale is completed.

I used this site to sell my Harris loom. It was handed over at a service station on the A303, to a lovely embryo weaver. Couldn't have been easier.

Marjorie

National Exhibition

One category in the National Exhibition to be held in Sussex in July 2012 is for entries contained within a six-inch ring. The following information should answer some queries;

“We need all entries to come in a six inch ring ready for hanging. With over 4800 members and hopes that many will submit work, it would be impossible for me and a few helpers to stitch everyone's beautiful work in them, as well as being responsible for the whole exhibition.

The work produced can be flat, so they will be hung against the wall but if someone produces something three dimensional and it needs to be hung from above, like a mobile, that is fine too. So two dimensional/three dimensional are all fine.

We want everyone to feel free to produce something for the exhibition, which is non-selected. We have a completely separate building for the rings, so there will be no conflict with the selected work but an opportunity for everyone to feel confident in 'having a go'

Obviously no scarves please.

Of course we also hope all Guilds will be submitting work for selection as well.”

Our Climate is Changing;

International touring exhibition featuring the work of Artist felt-makers from across the World.

My husband and I managed to catch this unique exhibition on the UK leg of its two-year long world tour when it was at the Landmark Arts Centre in Teddington, Middlesex, in August and we were not disappointed.

Fifty felt-makers from countries as far apart as Norway and New Zealand had been invited to submit items for the exhibition taking climate change as their topic, and what a variety of items they had produced. Some had interpreted the topic by exploiting the three-dimensional, sculptural properties of felt, for example to produce a shower of ghostly toads, bleached white by the carelessness of humans and becoming extinct. Other artists had shaped their felt into

garments, such as a waistcoat, “stained” with articles about climate change (which have been ignored) and is beginning to disintegrate. Some chose to depict the melting of the glaciers or the desertification of the land in a more pictorial way and used colours to great effect in their work. Some of the felters had used their medium to cover other objects or to bring seemingly disparate objects together.

Felt is an ancient medium; something which mankind has made and used as clothing, bedding and building material for millennia, and yet here it was being used to depict the threat to mankind’s continued existence.

I found the whole exhibition stimulating and thought provoking and I felt that the idea of inviting so many artists to work on the same topic produced a very powerful effect. There was surely something within the exhibition that would strike a chord with everyone who viewed it and every visitor would take that memory away with the message that climate change is affecting our world and that we are not only culpable but will ultimately pay the price for our actions and inactions.

Perhaps this would be an appropriate topic for our own annual competition sometime soon.

Lesley T

Tools for Self-Reliance

(but perhaps not knitting machines for Africa...!)

Tools for Self-Reliance is a national charity with a local branch here in Reading. Retired men (including my workaholic husband) collect and re-condition good quality but rusty old tools (hand-tools only) and send them to Netley Marsh near Southampton. If you have inherited some likely candidates, do get in touch.

In Netley, more volunteers put the tools together in sets where they can be sent by container to Tanzania. In Tanzania, the partner organisation identifies likely groups of artisans in villages all over the country and sets up programmes of training with local trainers to give better livelihoods to part-skilled Tanzanians. The artisans are helped with their trade skills, marketing and record keeping and a week’s guidance can transform a village workshop from mere survival to profit and growth.

Any tools found to be inappropriate for Africa are sold on and the proceeds used to fund the small full-time team at Netley, plus the cost of container transport to Dar es Salaam.

An old but good condition Passap knitting machine together with the full set of accessories, instructions and a ribbing attachment was

collected. If you are interested (or know someone who might be) please have them contact Karen Mallik 0118 9262190 or email karenmallik@waitrose.com
Offers around £25.00 considered. Also donations accepted.

Craft Tour of Ghana

I have planned an exciting crafts tour of Ghana with the help of the Ghana tourist authority. It will be of particular interest to members of your Guild as there will be a two day workshop in Kente weaving and a workshop on Adinkra printing where the stamps will be carved first. We will attend a durbar of the King of Ashanti where these textiles will be worn.

Janet W

To look forward to

In **November** we have the excellent and entertaining speaker Stacey Harvey-Brown: (www.theloomroom.co.uk) who will be giving an illustrated talk entitled "Ever Increasing Circles".

Below is a quote from her website about the talk;

"The subtle influence of designs and synchronicity. How ideas can come to you and how to take advantage of them when they do."

December, weather permitting, will be a members' meeting with all the usual attractions; Christmas Bran Tub, Gift Exchange, Bring and Buy, and a Potluck lunch. New member Gwen will be showing us how to make small felt decorations.

This will be a preparation for Sheila Smith's workshop in March next year on Decorative Felt.

Gloria

Christmas Decorations

Festival of Christmas trees, Methodist Chrch, Wokingham, December 9th-11th

We have been invited to decorate a Christmas tree again this year. They hope to support two charities, one local- Helen & Douglas House, which supports children and young adults with life shortening conditions, and one overseas – Chicuchas Wasi, a children's educational project in Peru. Therefore we have decided that our

decorations should be on the theme of 'Children' and/or 'Peru', so we can be creative and apply our spinning, weaving and dyeing skills to produce decorations for the tree. They should be no bigger than 4inches/10cm. Please let me have them at the November 19th Guild meeting. The latest date I can accept decorations is Monday 5th December. Thanks, in anticipation of some lovely things to hang,

Janet

News from the Groups

The Weaving Group

The weaving group has had a good turnout this summer. There is a lot of interesting work going on in our group. Some new members have been doing finger weaving, and are starting tapestry weaving using different methods and types of frames. It will be interesting to see how they turn out. With holidays and other summer activities much of the work is going slowly.

Some of us are still working with the “summer and winter” pattern. I thought I understood how it worked but at the 22nd of September weaving group meeting realized I still didn’t get the “tabby” between the pattern rows. With the help of Denise I did figure out why it wasn’t turning out as it should though. Between the “tabby rows” and “tie threads” I think I understand it better now.

Our discussion group met once during the summer and will have just had a meeting in early October so we hope to have some feedback on what the summer and winter sub-group has produced.

The dates for the next weaving group meetings are: Oct 20th, Nov 3rd and 17th, Dec 1st and 15th and January 29th. We meet in Pearson Hall in Sonning from 10am-1pm.

Mary

Monday Evening Group

MEG is held on 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month at Friends Meeting House, 28 Denton Road, Wokingham RG40 2DX.

From Peach Street (A329) on the one-way system, turn left on to Easthampstead Road, then after 150 yards, turn right on to Denton Road. The road bends right then left, then you will see the meeting

house on the right. Go past the meeting house and there is a car park at the end. Parking is free after 6pm. and is a short walk from the Meeting House.
Alternatively follow signs to Cockpit carpark if coming from the south along Murdoch Road.

Janet

Spinning Group

Dates ;October 26, November 9, 23, December 7, January 4,18
February 1, 15, 29.

Lesley D

Community Arts

These courses run at Maiden Erleigh School. Autumn courses start from 17 Sept.

<http://www.school-portal.co.uk/GroupHomepage.asp?GroupID=528807>

A Visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

I recently visited this museum for the second time after a gap of many years, and thought that Guild members who have never been there, particularly weavers, would like to know that there is an interesting collection of weaving methods from other countries, e.g. Africa, India, Hawaii, N. America.

Augustus Pitt Rivers (1827-1900) was a soldier and an archaeologist. Born at Hope hall, Yorkshire, into a wealthy landowning family he was named Augustus Henry Lane Fox, but changed his name to Pitt Rivers after inheriting an estate from his great uncle. In the army from 1845 until 1882 he fought in the Crimean War.

He collected ethnographic items from all over the world and originally gave the museum approximately 15,000 specimens on a wide number of subjects.

At the museum, entrance to which is free, the first area is dinosaurs, but beyond those are the weaving collections and a wind –up torch is handed out so that labels can be read in the rather gloomy wall cases! There are two upper floors with, I believe, textiles etc, but I didn't have time to visit them. A whole day would not be sufficient! It is certainly a magnificent collection and well worth seeing.

Olive

New Members

A warm welcome to;
Sarah C (Woodley),
Sandie E (Ruscombe),
Janet R (Reading),
Gwen R (Sonning Common)

Patricia M

Note from the Editor

You will notice that I have included a picture from the Colour Dyeing Day, even though it will appear in the paper copy as black and white, which is a bit of a nonsense. However, it is not an 'either or' choice. Internet users can admire the range of colourful yarns which were produced and those of you who prefer the paper copy can anyway look at the colour version of the picture on the website where photos often look their best.

Items for the **January** issue should ideally reach me by the **December** meeting but if you miss that, please send them anyway. E mail is good but so is snail mail. Your item may be just what is needed to fill an empty space.

Very many thanks to all those of you who have contributed. A thought for those who have never put anything in the newsletter: maybe that is the one new thing that you will do this year! It doesn't need to be a fully fledged meeting report. How about a website you have found, a helpful technique you have discovered, or an inspiring place to visit?

Marjorie

Dates for your Diary

17th Oct **Monday Evening Group**

20th Oct **Weaving group**

26th Oct **Spinning Meeting**

29th Oct to 11 November.

Exhibition at the National Needlework Centre, Newbury,
to include work by the Kennet Guild. Details in the Journal

November 2011

3rd Nov **Weaving group**

7th Nov **Monday Evening Group**

9th Nov **Spinning Meeting**

17th Nov **Weaving group**

19th Nov **Main Guild Meeting** 'Ever Increasing Circles'
Talk by Stacey Harvey- Brown. See p.12

24th-27th November **Knitting and Stitching Show**
Harrogate, Harrogate International Centre,

December 2011

1st December **Weaving Group Discussion**

11th December **Festival of Christmas trees**, Methodist Church,
Wokingham

Committee 2011-12

Chair	Mary
Secretary	Sue
Treasurer	Linde
Speakers/Workshops	Gloria
Membership/Data Protection	Patricia M
Speaker Hostess	Patricia B
Library	Paula T
New Member Hostess	Sara E
Publicity	Vacant
Equipment	Vacant

The following roles are performed by non-committee members

Demonstrations	Lesley D
Sales Table	Helene
Newsletter	Marjorie
Website	Matty