

Newsletter No. 85

Mid-Herts Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers August – October 2017

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From the Editor

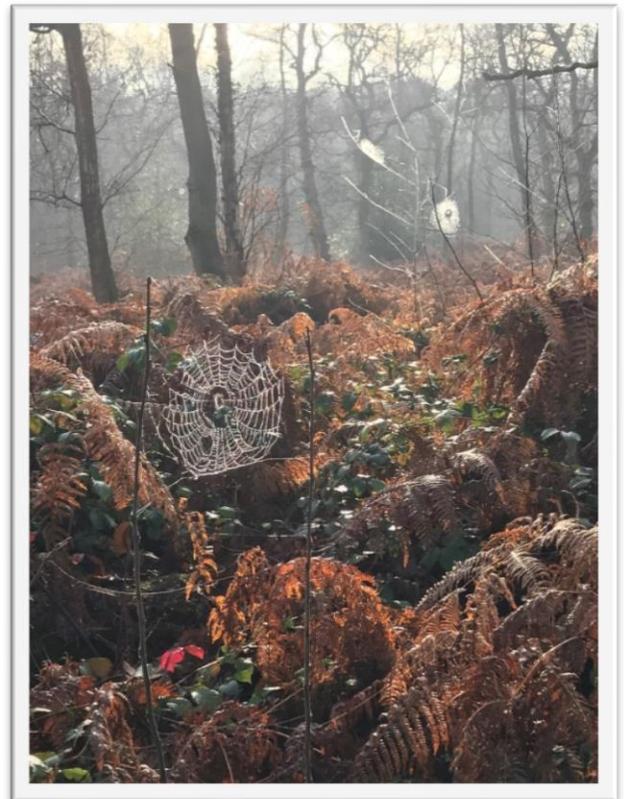
At this time of year, the subtle changes in light, the slight chill in the morning air and the obvious colour changes of leaves and berries, heralds the arrival of autumn.

On a perfect day, the sparkling horizontal light can shaft through the autumnal mists and highlight the incredible webs created by the original spinners and weavers of the world, the spiders.

The arrival of autumn always brings, to me at least, a strange sense of nostalgia tinged with a slight feeling of fear and excitement with a sense of looking forward to new adventures. This edition of our Newsletter embraces all of these emotions. Nostalgia, as Ruth looks back with deep affection at a dear friend and neighbour for whom she created a unique woven tapestry. Louise and Kathryn describe their experiences at Summer School in Sparsholt and their explorations with colour. They will certainly be able to keep the joy of summer colours alive while they look forward to winter projects working with the colourful yarns they created. The autumn brings our AGM and with it a new Committee and also the announcement of this year's exciting and innovative programme.

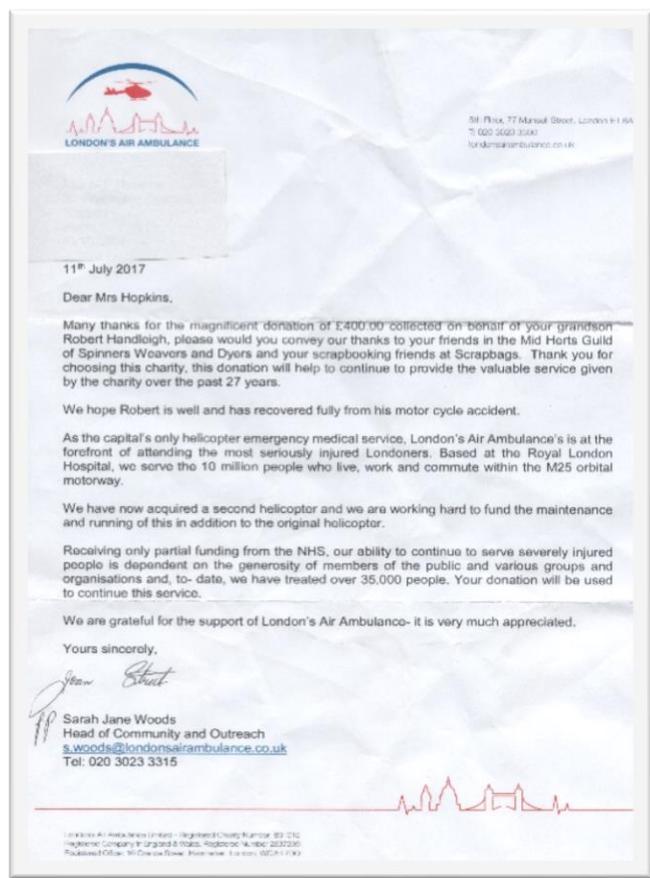
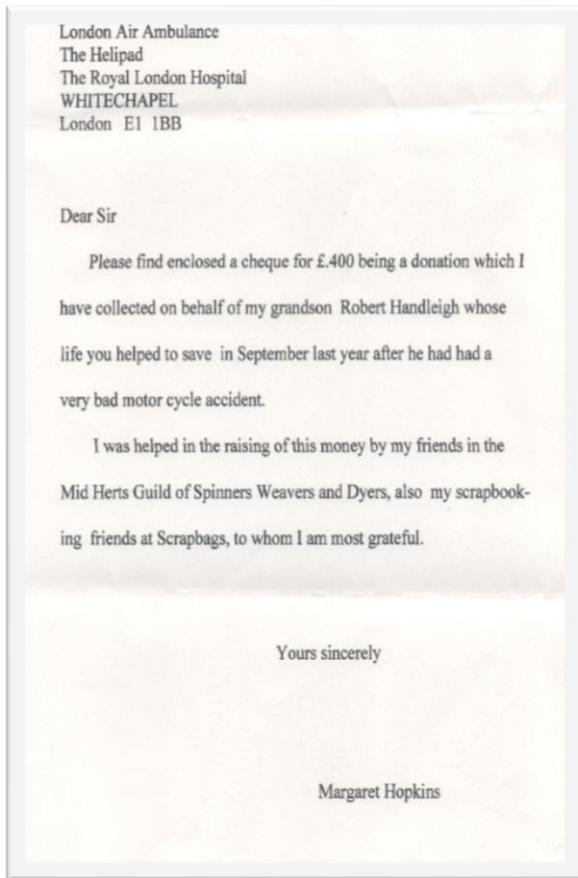
We all have much to look forward to in the coming season with lots to keep us busy while we work on our many and various projects and prepare our display items for next year's "GREEN" theme.

Rosemary

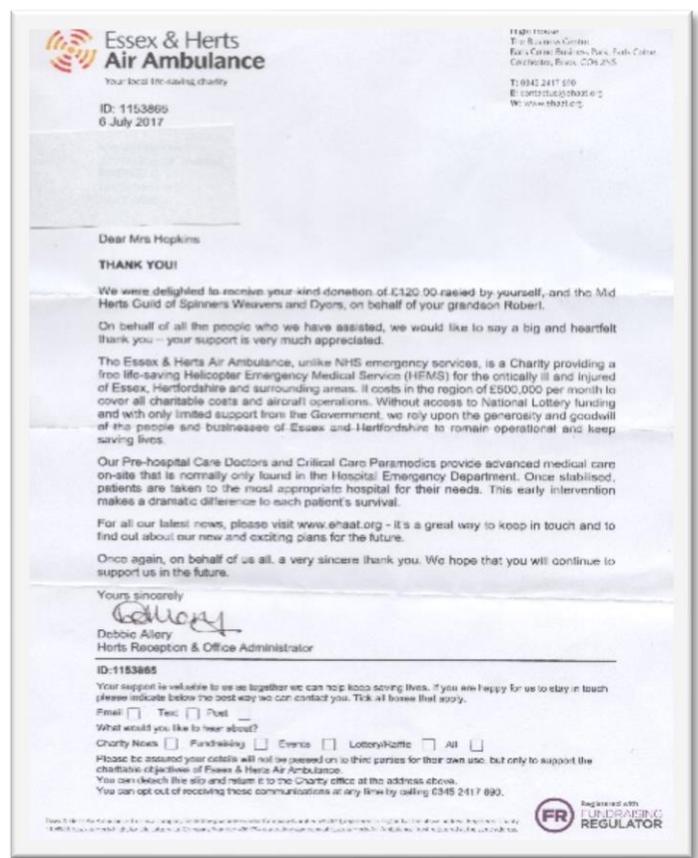
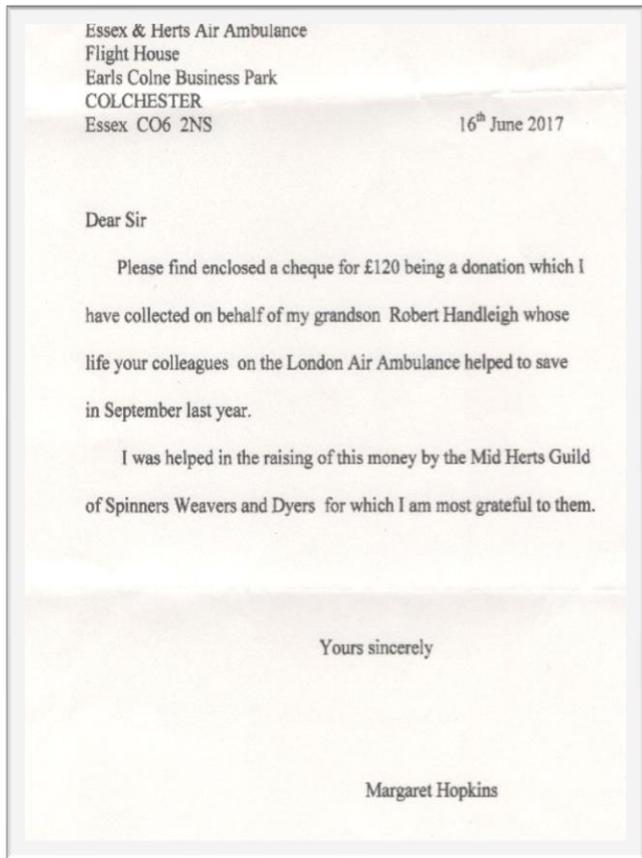


Early morning, Northaw Great Wood

Donations to the Air Ambulance



Robert Handleigh with his family beside the London Air Ambulance



In September last year Margaret's grandson Robert Handleigh had a devastating motorcycle accident. His life was saved by the incredibly skillful intervention of the London Air Ambulance. After many months of painful recovery and rehabilitation Robert is thankfully on the mend, as can be seen in the photograph of him with his family, beside the helicopter that air lifted him to safety. Quite understandably Margaret wanted to show her deep gratitude to the service that helped to save his life.

Increasingly over the past years, we have been inundated at the summer shows with children wanting to make funny little woolly creatures on the peg loom. Each year a new little creature is created. This year our special creature was a Shetland Sheep woven with genuine Shetland wool. So this year it was suggested that since we never charge for our materials or time perhaps we could put up a notice asking for donations to be made to the Air Ambulance. We didn't have to ask any of the public, they were exceedingly generous and donated willingly towards such a worthy cause. I think the parents/grandparents were also quite grateful to sit down for ten minutes or so while their little ones wove Shetland Sheep with googly eyes!

Amazingly we were able to give Margaret quite a substantial gift of money to be donated to the Air Ambulance. Although it was the London Air Ambulance that attended Robert, donations were made to both the London and the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance stations.

What a fantastic and novel way to employ the Guild's skills, not only to promote our crafts, especially to youngsters, but also to generate much needed funds for such a worthy cause.

Rosemary

When Stephen and I moved to our present house in 1997 we became very good friends with our next-door neighbour Geoffrey. One year I decided to weave him a tapestry for his birthday. Since he was Welsh and was Irish, a Celtic G seemed appropriate. With an August birthday, his sign of the Zodiac was Leo which suggested that the design might include a lion. I found a book of Celtic Alphabets which included a full alphabet decorated with lions' heads based on the illustrated letters in the Book of Kells. And there was the **G** for Geoffrey with a lion's head – just what I had in mind! I adapted the design to scale on to squared paper, chose brown, beige and orange wool for the weft, warped up the tapestry frame with a cotton warp and set to work. When it was finished we had it framed and Geoffrey got his birthday present on 9th August 2001.



The following year the Guild was invited to demonstrate our crafts and have a display in the Flower and Craft Festival in St Albans Cathedral. Geoffrey was pleased to lend me his tapestry to include in the display.

Over the years, several of our members met Geoffrey. Tessa and he were already long-standing friends and she introduced Miriam to him. When we brought Geoffrey to one of Tricia's choral concerts she entertained us all afterwards. Hilary and Margaret made his acquaintance at another social gathering. Jean and Geoffrey enjoyed each other's company several times at our house, in particular at Jean's 90th birthday celebration. He was always interested to hear about Guild activities.

About two years ago Geoffrey was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Sadly, he lost the battle in June this year. I was very pleased when his family gave the tapestry back to me. It now hangs at home and reminds us of a wonderful friend and neighbour.

Ruth

Celtic Alphabets by Aiden Meehan 1997, Thames and Hudson

Experiences at Summer School, Sparsholt 13th - 20th August 2017

Louise's Experiences.....

Attending Summer School for me was an adventure. I have never lived in halls of residence but have packed two daughters off to their own respective halls in the past, leaving them with all their clutter and anxious faces. This was my turn. I sent them photos of my room but was firmly told it was too tidy ever to be convincing. Never mind I was in role for a week and determined to have fun.

At the beginning of the week I only knew Kathryn. I was SO pleased to find her and it was good to meet up at meals and for events, as well as enjoying our own spin-in evenings. Soon I met others and enjoyed hearing about their courses and experiences of the skills we all so love to share. There were well over 200 participants and a feeling of warmth and companionship.



One evening there was a Fashion Show. We were encouraged to model our own projects from any time. There were some stunning items, some of which have been displayed in the Journal. There is so much talent within the Guilds.

It was a busy week. We were certainly kept on our toes. My course was Natural Dyeing led by the endlessly energetic Judy Hardman. I came home with a resource demonstrating the effects of a variety of mordants and modifiers on natural dyes delivering a wide spectrum of colours. We used substantive dyes as well. I certainly learned a lot, even though I had been taught much in the past on the topic several times. Natural dyeing was not my first choice. It is not possible to place everyone on their first-choice course. Although I benefitted from the course perhaps I should have chosen an alternative I knew less about already. That would be my advice for anyone considering attending in the future. I will certainly consider applying again.

Caveat: Is Chrome a safe mordant?

Our tutor Judy Hardman, on the Natural Dyeing course did not use chrome and warned against its use. Judy has an excellent book called Natural Dyes. She wrote it before chrome fell out of favour and it does include instructions for its use, so unfortunately the Guild would not promote the book for this reason. Although I have not found a written reference to the Guild position on the use of chrome I do know that it can be an irritant to skin, eyes and lungs and have seen reference to it as a carcinogen when inhaled. Personally, I would not use chrome and I heed the cautious approach of the Guild.

Louise



Kathryn's Experiences.....



For this year's Summer School, I chose Debbie Tomkies' course, 'A Dyer's Recipe Book', which promised a whole week of working with colours and it really did deliver. There were two elements to the course: making the recipe book and dyeing some fibre and skeins of our own design. Working in pairs, we managed to create over 390 colours using wool and three types of silk - tints and shades, primary, secondary and tertiary. The samples (with their recipes) were tied into our books, so that we could all be confident in attempting to create these colours ourselves at home. We also learned enough about how to adjust colours, to have a go at matching any colour and which kinds of yarn and fibre take colours more or less intensely. As for our own designs, I dyed three different skeins of sock yarn (see pictures), some wool/silk mix fibre in two colours to blend before spinning, as well as a set of five colours dyed over a grey fibre in heathy colours.



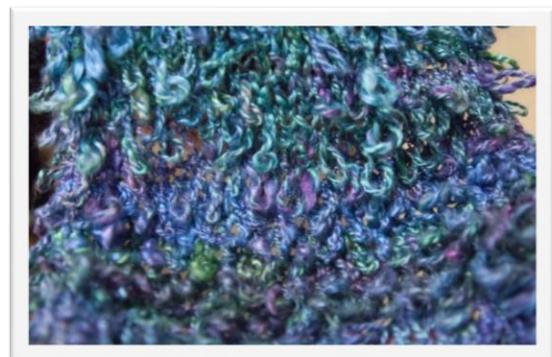
The Summer School experience more broadly was very pleasant. Everyone I met seemed excited to be engaged in fibre arts for the week and had plenty to say about their course. This could be useful if I decide to go again or if anyone wants some further impressions to make their choice. There was an open day at the end so we could see what was going on in the other courses, all achieving impressive results. We had some amusing entertainment during the evenings, an outing on offer one afternoon and a trade fair in case anyone needed more materials to take home.

My tip for anyone thinking of going would be to choose a course that offers something not so easy to do in your home Guild. Dyeing takes a lot of space and facilities for heating and rinsing, which some meeting places can't provide, so I was very happy with my choice. The Natural Dyeing course might be a future temptation, or Spinning Flora not Fauna.

Kathryn

Work in Progress....

Some little while ago Ruth rediscovered a skein of beautifully dyed silk in amongst her other treasured fibres and yarns. She set about spinning it and created a superior yarn. She chose a loopy stitch to knit a scarf or a neck warmer so that the range of wonderful colours and the softness of the yarn could be fully appreciated. Ruth was busy knitting it at our last Spin, Weave & Chat meeting. It is so lovely I felt it needed to be recorded!



Stephanie's Open Studio

September is the month that the Herts Open Studios are in operation, mostly at the weekends. Stephanie has been part of the group for several years now and has had her work on view in several different locations. This year she teamed up with Margaret Rice, a sculptor in stone and beaten copper. They displayed their work in Margaret's studio overlooking her very pleasant back garden where Stephen spied a strange plant, *Eucomis*, he hadn't seen before. Stephanie had some of her tapestries on the wall and a selection of intriguing photographs depicting unusual plant images and landscapes. She was at work on samples for her current project for the exhibition "Sound and Weave" by the British Tapestry Group in three galleries next spring: Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries; the Arts Centre, Swansea, and The Stables, Twickenham. This involves depicting in tapestry, fascinating details of the inner ear relating to deafness, tinnitus and other hearing problems.



Stephen and I were attracted to a tapestry called 'Paint Splash', but it didn't seem to have the spots of a splash. Stephanie explained that it was based on a fine brown brush stroke which had been photographed and greatly enlarged so that the detail looked more like a splash. We were so intrigued that we bought it. I prefer to call it 'Brush Stroke'!

I treated myself to one of Margaret's copper 'Mimis'. These are quaint little figures inspired by an Aboriginal wall painting and were cleverly used in the publicity for the studio.

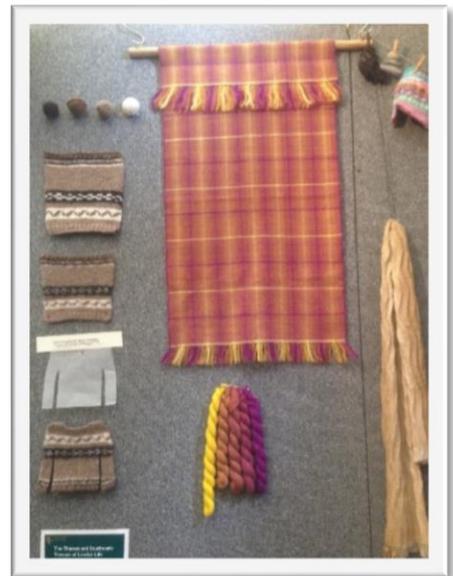
The visit cheered us up a lot on a dull Sunday afternoon.

Ruth



Our Shetland bunting had its last public outing at the Knitting and Stitching Show at Alexandra Palace in London. This year the allocated Association stand was larger than in previous years, allowing the beautifully crafted items on display from West Essex/East Herts and the London Guilds, framed perfectly by our Shetland bunting, all to be shown off to their full potential. Tricia, Louise, Gill and I did stints of stewarding at the Association stand along with Members of other Guilds. Visitors arrived from far and wide and there were very many genuine questions regarding Guild Membership across the country. The Knitting and Stitching Show certainly seems to be a most important forum to showcase the work of the Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers.

Rosemary



A good turnout attended the AGM this year despite the drab and misty evening. Having completed her three-year tenure Hilary stepped down as Chairman. Her calm thoughtful approach and the good humour with which she deals with everything has made it a joy to have shared time on the Committee with her. Due to hefty domestic demands Hilary is also stepping down completely from the Committee. We all thank her very much indeed for her commitment and the time she has dedicated to our Guild, we will most definitely miss her on the Committee.

Thankfully both Louise as Treasurer and Maureen as Secretary are happy to remain in their roles. The remaining Committee Members all agreed to stay on the Committee for a further year and were voted in *en bloc*. Rosemary was voted in as Chairman for a three-year tenure.

We are very fortunate that one of our newer Members, Samantha Terry, had agreed to become a Member of the Committee and even though Sam was not present but on holiday in exotic Dubai, we cheerfully voted her *in absentia* onto the Committee. We look forward very much to working with Sam and sincerely thank her for agreeing to take part.

Tricia announced the new programme that she has so tirelessly worked on for many months. It is an innovative exciting programme and there certainly should be plenty of variation to cover all interests within our Guild.

After all the business had been concluded everyone tucked into an array of magnificent home-baked cakes, donated by Hilary, Tricia, Ruth & Louise. There were just a few crumbs left at the end of the evening! Wow, what a way to kick start our new year and to launch next year's programme!

New Committee

Executive Roles

Chairman: Rosemary Suswillo
Treasurer: Louise Edwards
Secretary: Maureen Loomes

Non-Executive Roles

Programme Secretary: Tricia Fraser
Minute Secretary: Priscilla Simmons
Rita Owen
George Stodulski
Samantha Terry

Programme

Mid-Herts Guild for Weavers, Spinners and Dyers

Programme for 2017–2018

Month/Date	Event	Topic	Speaker
November 4	SATURDAY SWC 10 to 4 pm		
15	Speaker	Gill Lewis Memorial Talk "The Master Craftsmen of Kashmir...and the Search for the REAL Pashmina"	Helen Philips
December 6	SWC		
20	Social	Christmas party and Gill Lewis Trophy	Competition based on Green theme
January Saturday 13	SATURDAY SWC 10 to 4 pm		
February 7	SWC		
Saturday 24	Workshop	Spinning tuition	Freya Jones
March 7	SWC		
Saturday 24	Workshop	Willow Basketry Catalan platters and willow boats	2 Herts Basketry members BRING & SHARE LUNCH
April 4	SWC		
18	Speaker	Tunisian Crochet mini workshop <i>Bring yarn & crochet hook</i>	Michele Turner
May 2	SWC		
16	Speaker	"Capturing the Essence" <i>Bring pencil & paper</i>	Myra Hutton- Feltmaker
June 6	SWC		
20	Speaker	"Further Adventures in Shetland"	Louise Edwards
July 4	SWC		
18	Social	Summer gathering and Sheep trophy	Competition: Any item woven, spun or hand dyed
August 1	SWC		
September 5	SWC		
October 3	SWC		
17	AGM		

Forthcoming Events

Kaffe Fassett's Colour at Mottisfont

Mottisfont Abbey near Romsey. SO51 0LN (National Trust property)

Saturday 16th September 2017 – Sunday 14th January 2018 11am-5pm (closes dusk if earlier)

London Guild Biennial Exhibition

“The Thames & Southwark: Threads of London Life”

23rd - 30th November 2017 10.30am – 5.30pm daily. Southwark Cathedral

May Morris Exhibition

William Morris Gallery, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow E17 4PP

7th October 2017 – 28th January 2018. Open Wed – Sun 10am-5pm

And finally.....

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		Bernie Hutchinson	0777 816 4274

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