



Cambridgeshire Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers

The Bronze Age Fabrics of Must Farm by Dr Susannah Harris (University of Glasgow) and Dr Mark Knight (University of Cambridge).

Article by: Chris Tucker

Dr Knight is in charge of excavations in Fenland sites, and Dr Harris is an expert on archaeological textiles.

Interest in Fenland archaeology began when very deep finds were discovered at a brick pit near Whittlesey. The alkaline fenland sediments had preserved the archaeology in near perfect condition, and they were completely undisturbed by agriculture or animal activity. The Must Farm site is a collection of round houses built on stilts along an ancient river course, and surrounded by a defensive palisade, similar to the Bronze Age Swiss lake villages. Dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) shows that the village was only occupied for a year in the late Bronze age, around 850 BC, and then burnt down. The people appear to have escaped but left their possessions behind. The textile finds are particularly exciting because hardly any Bronze Age fabric has been found in Britain.

Textile finds in the first structure excavated included pieces of fabric, in plain weave, one with a tubular selvedge (similar to textiles found in Bronze Age Denmark); with spindle whorls, loom weights, beaters, plied yarns, and bundles of fibres in different stages of preparation. The fibres were flax and nettle, and some lime tree bast fibres used to make knotted nets. There were also small samples of warp twining and something which looks like a fragment of sprang. It is thought that this was a textile workshop.

The also found pots (all made by the same hand), some still containing food; metal work including weapons, razors and scythes; wooden bowls, platters and wheels; and assorted beads including amber from Scandinavia and glass from Syria and Turkey. Many of these objects were older the settlement. Wooden settlements of this type would only have lasted about 10 years so people would be moving on with their belongings regularly.

Outside along the river course were log boats, fish weirs and fish traps.

Although the settlement was over water, they were using dry land species for food and materials. The houses were made of oak, and the palisade of ash. They were eating wild boar, lamb and deer, using honey and making mead, suggesting that they were using the uplands for hunting and agriculture.

The settlement may have been build over water for defence, because the rivers were the main transport in the Bronze Age, and also because they needed large amounts of water for retting. The river at the time was about 25m wide and shallow, but water levels would have fluctuated, hence the need to build the houses on stilts. The water was slow moving, so nothing was washed away, and there may be a lot still to find.

People had been using the fenland landscape for a long time. There are many more paleo river channels in the fens, some Neolithic and Mesolithic, and possibly lots more archaeology waiting to be discovered.

Weekend Workshop 7-8th April 2018 - Spring workshop: 3D tapestry – Fiona Hutchison

Article by: Paula Armstrong

Photos by: Paula Armstrong and Debs Saunders

Last April Fiona Hutchison gave the guild a two-day workshop in shaped and 3-D tapestry. It took place for ten of us in a light airy room of Harston Village Hall.

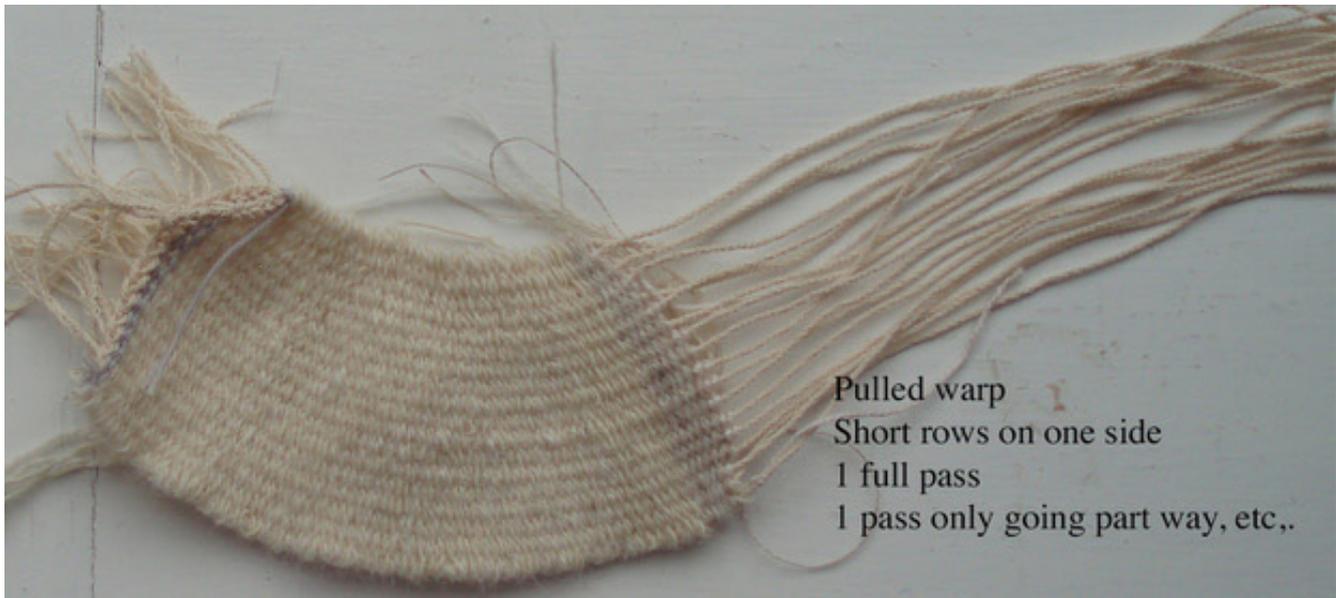
Fiona is an international tapestry weaver based at Patriothall Studios in Edinburgh. She approaches her workshops with confidence both as a teacher and a weaver, infectious in her enthusiasm, and generous in her sharing of knowledge and skills.

She began by showing us samples of her own work explaining what to do and inspiring us to be experimental and adventurous. We got down to the practical work quickly and by the end of the first day had woven samples of wavy lines. We wove flat but packed more weave in to some areas than others. When we took the pieces off the frame we pulled the warps so that we either achieved a curved piece or a curly piece, or both.

On the second day we wove a more detailed piece weaving over two, three or four warps at a time, or wrapping single warps, creating strips and joining them at intervals. When we took this off the loom we had a more fragile piece to manipulate by pulling the warps and make into a finished 3-D piece which most of us finished at home. This technique results in a fluid, airy and curly fabric which can become an embellishment to a foundation tapestry or integral to one in some other way. The applications of all we wove are endless.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the weekend, eased by generous quantities of cake, most especially a very special birthday cake. The rain tumbled down incessantly on the Sunday, but no matter, life inside the room was warm and sunny.





Pulled warp
 Short rows on one side
 1 full pass
 1 pass only going part way, etc.,



Pulled warp
 Less weaving down the centre
 Short row weaving on sides

2018 Guild Programme

Saturday 26th May A Journey to the Third Level –
 Jenny Parry (Takadai)

July Summer Trip TBC

Saturday 29th September Fungus the Bogey Dye:
 dyeing with fungi with Irene Taydler & Carole
 Thompson

Saturday 27th October Sustainability & The Weaver
 by Alison Daykin

Sunday workshop 28th October: Patterns in the
 Hand - finger manipulation patterns & textures for
 the Rigid Heddle, with Alison Daykin

Saturday 24th November Member Dr Carolin
 Crawford: Symmetry & Chaos from Earth to Space

Come & Weave Dates

10-4 Comberton Village Hall CB23 7BZ

June 9th

September 8th

October 13th

November 19th

Textile Tradition Study Group Dates

11-4 Northern Lecture Room, Museum of
 Archaeology and Anthropology

May 12th

July 14th

October 6th

December 8th

Guild Day March 2018

Article by: Erica Jones Photos by: Fiona Bureau

The Guild Day is always a highlight of my Guild Year. I think we all love the talks and the discussion after talks, but I find the discussions I have at Guild Days to be invigorating and inspirational. / The 2018 Guild Day was just as invigorating as previous years. We had fantastic vendors, wonderful guild members sharing their expertise and enthusiasm, The School of Textiles and expert millinery.

As an avid weaver, I found myself in the Trisha's Rigid Heddle workshop more than once. There were several beautiful warps on the go and so many exciting samples and projects Trisha has woven on a rigid heddle loom. Those who know me know I have a love of complex textiles, however, I am equally enamoured with the beauty and flexibility of the "simple" rigid heddle loom. Trisha's display proved that rigid heddle weaving is exciting for beginner and expert weavers alike!

I found myself wishing I had a tapestry dilemma. The time I spent listening to Paula work with people in her Tapestry Troubleshooting workshop was invaluable. Paula has such a vast knowledge of tapestry weaving. Her passion for this art is completely infectious. I enjoy every conversation I have with Paula and am always inspired to at least sketch out some tapestry designs after, several occasions have found me heading for my tapestry loom!

I did not participate in the Rose Hat workshop but each time I walked by I could see those who attended were having such fun! The hats created in the workshop were beautiful and I have no doubt they will be a great accessory for special summer occasions.

And then there was the shopping!!! Who can ever resist the wares of My Fine Weaving Yarns? We have had the pleasure of their booth at several Guild Days, each time there are the same quality yarns we know and love. There are also always new and exciting yarns, this year the new yarn that drew my attention was the Swedish Linen. Although I did not buy any, I am still thinking about it and pondering just the right weaving project for this yarn.



AGWSD 14th Biennial Conference, 11-13 May 2018
Kents Hill Park Conference Centre, Milton Keynes
Chris Tucker

I have never attended an Association Conference before, so I thought I'd take advantage of a local one to test the water. I didn't sample the accommodation or meals but I gather it was a very good venue.

The real attraction for me was the first talk, on the Bronze Age Fabrics of Must Farm by Dr Susannah Harris and Dr Mark Knight. The site is apparently being hailed as the British Pompeii because the finds are so well preserved by the alkaline conditions in the fen. It was a fabulous talk and well worth trekking over to Milton Keynes on a Friday night, and it set the scene for the rest of the conference.

The first talk on Saturday morning was Dr Dinah Eastop, Textile Conservator and Research Fellow at the National Archive at Kew, talking on the Board of Trade Design Register 1839 – 1991. This is a vast collection of nearly 3 million designs, half of which are for textiles. The collection is very difficult to handle and many of the volumes are in a vulnerable condition but the National Archive are working to get a lot of information on-line and to make links with other collections.

This was followed by Anna Buruma, the Archivist for Liberty, talking on The Art of Liberty. Anna delivered a very animated talk on the development of the company. It started with Arthur Liberty importing silks from the east; but the family soon began dyeing and block printing the cloth, and making their own fashion designs in house. After World War 2 they began employing contemporary designers, and had their heyday in the 1960's when Liberty fabrics were used by several Carnaby Street designers.

Sunday morning started with an excellent talk by Isabella Whitworth, Seen Through Purple. Isabella talked about the three sources of purple dyes; lichens (orchil and cudbear), shellfish (Murex, Imperial purple) and Mauveine, the synthetic purple discovered by Sir William Henry Perkin. She focused mainly on lichens, and described in detail her research, which started when she inherited the archive of the Bedford family who made dyestuffs.

The second talk was John Miners, from John Boyd Textiles at Castle Cary, Somerset, talking on Horsehair Tales. John talked about the history of horsehair textiles and the way the company works today. They are still using the power looms which were installed in 1857, although they are now powered by electricity rather than a waterwheel. They are also still weaving some of the fabrics from their 1890 sample book! The hair comes from the horse's tail, and these are now imported from Mongolia.

I was sorry to miss the after-dinner speaker on the Saturday night; Alan Rouveure, talking about his work with carpet weavers in Nepal. I wasn't staying over, and there was a 4-hour gap between the AGM and this talk, so I decided not to wait, but I heard it was excellent.

Saturday afternoon was the AGM. Jenny Balfour-Paul gave a short but encouraging President's Address, and we were into the officer's reports:

- The Association is in a good position financially, and has been advised by the auditors to reduce its surplus, so there will be more money available for educational use.
- We have a new Association web site which will be live by the time you read this (all being well), and all guilds will be able to host their own page within it. The site will also

include forums which all members will be able to access.

- It has been decided that the revised Certificates of Achievement will not seek external accreditation, as this would be too expensive.
- The new Foundation Certificate is underway, but the GPC are looking for people willing to be mentors.
- The Journal has a new design and the summer issue will be themed (Colour).
- Summer School 2017 was very successful and plans are afoot to run the 2019 Summer School at Askham Bryan in Yorkshire.
- The Association is making more use of Social Media to promote our crafts, and the monthly newsletter to Guilds will continue.
- Nik Knott promoted the Association Library.
- The Auditors were reappointed.

There were just the right number of volunteers for the GPC and Journal Committee vacant posts so all were duly elected.

All of the propositions were non-controversial and were approved or rejected almost unanimously. That being the case I was disappointed by the amount of argument that went on before voting. The results were:

- The minimum number of members needed to start a new Guild (and thus the minimum Association levy) was reduced from 10 to 3.
- Mileage for Association Business and travel generally was increased to “up to 40p per mile”.
- The future of the Association Conference will be reviewed, and other formats for meetings will be considered. Suggestions will be brought to the next AGM.
- Minutes of GPC meetings will be posted on the web site but will not be circulated.
- Guild observers will not be invited to attend GPC meetings.

There was a lot of discussion around using two set venues (one in the North and one in the South) for the Summer School (to be alternated). This would make organising a Summer School much less onerous as the venues would be used to our requirements, and I think it would be a very good idea. Quite a few delegates were not enthusiastic and wanted to stay with a variety of venues (presumably they never intended to help organise one). More research will be done and this will be brought back to the next AGM.

I was left with the feeling that there is a certain amount of friction between some Guilds and the Association, some old axes were being re-ground, and some people were firmly stuck in the previous century. That of course is purely a personal opinion.

All, in all a very good conference with fascinating talks.