

Cambridgeshire Guild of Weavers Spinners & Dyers

NEWSLETTER 72

August 2014



A small section of the Wall of Bags
AGWSD National Exhibition 2014

Photo by Chris Tucker

From the Editor

The highlight of the summer term has undoubtedly been the National Exhibition, and for once it was close enough that many members could visit, and quite a few helped with hanging and stewarding.



Congratulations to all members whose work was exhibited, and especially to Beth who won first prize for her spinning.

Hopefully the exhibition has inspired us, and Fibre East has provided us with lots of wonderful yarn.



Congratulations also to Lesley Willcock, who won two awards at Complex Weavers Complexity exhibition.

The jacket (Water) won best in show & the scarf (Frost) won 3rd place.

A huge thank-you to everyone who contributed articles this time around. As ever, keep them coming to:

chris.tucker@zen.co.uk or 24 School Close, Gamlingay SG19 3JY.

Chris

Weave! – A course for beginners and improvers

Are you a spinner, knitter or dyer who hasn't yet discovered the joys of weaving? Or perhaps you are a beginner weaver who would like some more tuition? Then this is the course for you.

You can bring your own loom, warped in advance, or use one of the Guild looms which would be warped up ready for you (and which could be hired for further experiments afterwards).

The tutor will be our own Anna Crutchley, and it will be a lot of fun.

Dates of Course: 1st-2nd and 8th -9th November 2014. 10-4 pm.

Venue: Steiner School, Hinton Road, Fulbourn, Cambridge, CB21 5DZ. Bring a packed lunch. Tea and coffee provided.

Cost: £200. Deposit £100 at time of booking.

Balance due 2 months prior to the course i.e. 1st September 2014.

For more information or to reserve your place contact Sue Wallis at secretary@cambsguildwsd.org.uk or call 01223 247790

My First Visit to the National Exhibition.

It was with a great deal of excitement that Maj-Brit and I set out to see the very best work of the members of the Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers at their biennial exhibition in Norwich Cathedral. Would we be overawed or inspired? We had volunteered as stewards, and after a very good lunch in the refectory we were directed to the School Crypt for our duties to begin. This area contained the non-juried work where there was the display of bags from Guild members from all over the country. Some guilds had sent in many bags, we had one entry (well done Sue Wallis!).



I guess that there were probably over two hundred in all. They made a super display in every hue and every method of construction and in a wide range of materials. Also in this room was the Wall of Wool which created considerable interest amongst the visitors. There were forty eight samples of different wool and other fibres.

We had a good time talking to the steady flow of visitors, from as far away as Norway and Canada, but we were never inundated. We then had the opportunity to look around the exhibition.



My visit dispelled a number of ideas I had about the exhibition. First, it was not just about weaving. There were super displays of knitting, spinning, crocheting, split ply braiding and tapestry! There were many inspirational pieces and I found it very difficult to choose a favourite piece.

We should congratulate Beth on winning the *Handweavers* Prize for spinning and Lesley's beautifully made and finished jacket and scarf.

I was surprised that there were not more exhibits - was it because the standard expected was not achieved or the fact that not enough items were submitted? We were there on a Monday and the footfall was modest. Perhaps this was because it was not a Saturday or Sunday? I suggest that lack of signage for the exhibition was probably the reason and not a lack of interest in the exhibition itself. Anne Dixon, her husband and her team are to be congratulated on the superb job they did in presenting this exhibition and providing the very helpful programme of exhibits with accompanying photos for future reference.



Will I ever submit an item in the future? Perhaps. There were some inspirational pieces but it made me realize what a very high standard the Cambridge Guild set and achieved in its own exhibition last year.

Words by Jacqui Fuller, photos by Chris Tucker

A Fabulously Inspiring Day at the Heritage Crafts Association

In March I attended the Heritage Crafts Association Spring Conference. I am a huge fan of the HCA which advocates for and represents traditional crafts in the UK and lobbies for their recognition at the highest level with Prince Charles as its President. It was celebrating its fourth anniversary and what it has achieved over that short time is remarkable, including securing Queen's birthday national honours for craftspeople, and a range of annual prizes sponsored by the Marsh Trust and NADFAS.

The day comprised five talks on the theme *Tool Tales*, with speakers including the famous Time Team archaeologist Dr Phil Harding who happens to be an expert flint-knapper who talked about...knapping flints, watchmaker Roger Smith whose work can sell for £100,000 apiece and takes six people 10 months to complete, and scissor and corset maker Grace Horne who has researched the Sheffield scissor-making industry and became a corset maker when she needed to protect her stomach during one of the processes essential to making scissor blades. Each described their relationship with the tools they use.

The talk that had enticed me to register for the event, however, was from Daniel Harris, who set up the London Cloth Company in an empty and run down backstreet workshop in Dalston three years ago. Previously a sewing machinist for the fashion trade (Daniel has experience of working in Savile Row), he became a weaver by default after saving a Hattersley power loom from a friend who was clearing her barn. The loom was missing some parts, so to make it workable he bought a second loom to butcher and appropriate. Well this of course meant that he had to buy a third loom to make the second loom workable...and so it went on. He now owns five working looms and in all over 20 tons of weaving machinery.

Daniel is a natural born engineer. His journey into weaving has been one of the delightful fanatic, crawling over his looms, spanner in hand, tinkering and weaving from morning to night, with only his cat as companion. He hardly has time to sleep (and confesses that he doesn't go out much) as he fixes his looms, weaves and markets his work. He produces woollens for the fashion trade using British wool, promoting rare breed fibres which he buys directly from farmers and sheep breeders. The fabrics are checks and plaids of a down-to-earth and masculine quality that make them suitable for a broad range of applications, from men's suiting to bags and luggage.

The thing that was so fun about Daniel is that he is a terrific personality, with real charm and can-do determination. His enterprise is a remarkable achievement. You can find out more about Daniel and the London Cloth Company from his website <http://www.londoncloth.com/>. And do visit the HCA website at <http://www.heritagecrafts.org.uk/> to see what it does as well. The AGWSD supports the HCA, and I would really encourage our Guild members to become friends.

Anna Crutchley

Bani Hamida Weaving Co-operative, Jordan.

On a recent trip to Jordan we were lucky enough to spend a morning at the Bani Hamida Co-operative, about 60 Km south west of Amman. The centre was set up in the mid 1980's to enable local women (from the Bani Hamida Bedouin tribe) to earn much needed money from their weaving. The project was partly funded by a grant from the 'Save the Children' Fund.

From small beginnings it has grown to include several hundred women and is now run by the women themselves. Marketing of their products is carried out by a professional marketing company with local and international outlets.

Fleeces are imported from Australia as there is insufficient quality or quantity of wool from local flocks. All the wool is hand spun (drop spindle), plied then dyed in a local workshop. Seven women are needed to supply one weaver with sufficient yarn.

As you can see from the photos, the warp, about 4 metres for two rugs, is laid out on the ground and tensioned between two sticks anchored into the earth at the back of the weaver's house. The string heddles are attached as the warp is laid out. The beater was a bit of old floorboard! Sitting on the ground the weaver laboriously opens the shed to weave the weft that is wound on a stick and she tensions the weft thread with her toes while she beats it down.



As the work progresses the weaver is sitting on the work that has just been woven. A white plastic sheet attached to upright poles provides shade from the hot sun.



Most of the patterns are traditional Bedouin ones and the women prefer to work in the traditional colours of black, white and deep reds. However, to

appeal to a wider market they now have a range of over 200 colours to choose from.

The weaver we saw can manage about 1.30 m of rug per week. Larger rugs are made by joining two widths together.

At the Centre where items are for sale we were treated to lunch cooked for us by the local women. A real treat. It just goes to show that skill is still much more important than fancy equipment when it comes to weaving!

Sue Wallis

'Just add water' - Part 2 of Ann Richards collapse weave workshop at Handweavers Studio, London, June 7, 8, & 9th.

Some of you may be familiar with Ann Richards' approach to weaving. Ann creates textiles whose textures 'emerge during wet finishing, from the interaction of fibre, yarn twist and weave structure. The most dramatic effects are produced by yarns that are very highly twisted'.

Twelve students joined Ann at the Handweavers Studio for three days. We were introduced to the principles of using active yarns in both the warp and the weft, and 12 different warps were available for us to sample on. We had an opportunity to experiment with some of the new high twist wools and yarns with elastic properties supplied by Handweavers Studio. High twist yarns have considerable energy placed in them in the spinning process. This can be exploited in the weaving process by combining appropriate weave structures with beat and warp sett.



When the resulting fabric is placed in hot water, the yarn will move by shrinking and spiralling which causes the fabric to have a textured surface. When used in both the warp and the weft, the fabric reacts in two directions to create 3D structures.

The samples we created were flat when on the loom. Some samples were a bit curly when removed from the constraints of the loom, but the magic happened when the sample was placed in warm water. The energy in the active yarn was released to force other yarns out of the alignment the weaver had placed them in. The result is a host of samples with bumps, pleats, frills and twists.

Ann is an excellent teacher with a wide and extensive knowledge of active yarns and the best way to use them for maximum effect. She is very happy and willing to share that knowledge.

Handweavers Studio have new high twist Z and S spun yarns, in bright zingy colours, lycra as used by Margot Selby and very high twist single silk 'crespo' which seemed to create the crispest pleats.

Suzanne Townshend

Why science says the Guild is good for you

Scientists get stuck for stating the obvious on occasion, but what distinguishes an obvious truth from a common, but mistaken belief? Often, the answer is simply data and scientific method. Investigate something that people think is so, and more often than not, you discover that it really is so.

But it is the process of investigation that science is about, and that can provide valuable training if not always spectacular results. Artists are the same: we don't need Michelangelo's David to tell us that young athletic bodies are beautiful, but the same skill and artistry applied in other directions can reveal hidden beauty in the common place. Think Lucien Freud's "Benefits Supervisor Sleeping".

These thoughts sprang to mind when I read that neuroscientist Dr Sarah Mackay had apparently reported why crafting is good for the brain. The "rhythmical and repetitive nature of knitting" for example – and I am sure the same goes for weaving and spinning – is "calming, comforting and contemplative" and are akin to mindfulness and meditation with positive impacts on mind health and well-being. These effects are enhanced in company, like a Guild.

Mackay reports a study by Betsan Corkhill into over 3,500 knitters. Results suggest that knitters who indulged their yarn habit more than three times a week are happier, less prone to anxiety and stress and more confident than the average person.

These benefits accrue automatically rather than through the conscious and rigorous training that yoga and meditation demand – and having a physical product to use, display, give away and be proud of at the completion of your project could be even more valuable. If Albert Einstein really did knit to clear his mind between projects, it looks as though today's scientists are on the way to finding out why it works.

Find out more at <http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-14252/why-crafting-is-great-for-your-brain-a-neuroscientist-explains.html> and <http://www.stitchlinks.com/>

Mark Boyd

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Some snippets from the July Update:

Huguenot Heritage Centre

In 2015 we are staging a Huguenot Summer which will run between July and September. In the spring the Huguenot Heritage Centre will open in Rochester and the Duke of Buccleuch will open Boughton - the English Versailles - and hold a Huguenot exhibition. Huguenots (French Protestants) transformed the skills base of this country, particularly the silk industry - but you know all about this! I write to ask your help in the Huguenot Summer 2015.

1. Do you have a member who is a Huguenot and is also a weaver?
2. Are you staging weaving workshops or courses? If so we would like to know about them: town, venue, date, time, contact name, website and telephone number, and we will put it in our programme and publicise it for you.
3. If you know of any Huguenot artefacts, buildings, works of art - any trace of Huguenots in your region, please do tell us. The email is info@huguenotsofspitalfields.org

Help Wanted

I'm looking for two more people to help us design a workshop series on dyeing – at foundation level. They will need a broad range of dyeing, natural and/or chemical methods. Please contact Steve Kennett for more information vicechair@wsd.org.uk or 01798 831010.

The National Exhibition

Our Exhibition in Norwich which finished at the beginning of June was a great success and we have had some wonderful compliments. Thanks to everyone who helped out and to all the guild members who took the time and made the effort to send in their work.

WHAT'S ON

- 6 June - 30 August - MADE IN MEXICO The Rebozo in Art, Culture & Fashion** at the Fashion and Textile Museum. The first-ever exhibition on the rebozo – the classic Mexican shawl, exploring the key role textiles have played in promoting Mexican culture from the 17th century to the present. For more info see www.ftmlondon.org
- 18 June – 7 September - Making Colour** at the National Gallery Sainsbury Wing. For info see www.nationalgallery.org.uk
- 24-25 August - Glastonbury Wool Festival**
- 20 September - World Textile Day** at Mundford Village Hall, Norfolk. The theme this year is *Spirit of the Cloth*. Info from www.worldtextileday.co.uk
- 4 October - Workshop with Canadian weaver Carol James** at Comberton Village Hall. Carol is here for the Braid Society Conference and will give a workshop on Finger Weaving or Sprang. Further details to follow.
- 8 – 12 October - Knitting and Stitching Show** at Alexandra Place. Info from www.twistedthread.com
- 13 -25 October = Braid Society Biennial Conference** at Reading Central Library, including AGM on 17 October. Info from www.brandsociety.com

Come and Weave Dates

The remaining dates for 2014 are:

13th September

11th October

15th November

10am to 4pm at Comberton Village Hall – bring a packed lunch.

More information? *Contact Jacqui Fuller or Sue Wallis*

MEETING REPORTS

April 26 - Cocoons to Cloth – Jane Deane

On Saturday 26th April we were visited by Jane Deane. Jane presented her talk on hand raising wild silk moths in order to produce silk cocoons. From eggs to caterpillars, on to silk cocoons, and then finally stunningly beautiful moths.



After the talk we were able to see real moths and their cocoons along with samples of spun silk. This talk is definitely a must for those of you who love spinning with wild silk!

April 27 - Creative Spinning Workshop with Jane Deane

The following day Jane organised a workshop on spinning creative yarns. Spinners from both Cambs Guild and Rampton Guild got together to learn the intricacies of such things as tail spinning, slub yarns, and beehives. We used these techniques along with colour to interpret personally chosen source material; a picture, a poem, or an object beautiful to the eye of the beholder. We created some wonderful yarns and thoroughly enjoyed the day!

Beth Parks

May 31 – The Textile Arts of Mexico – Chloe Sayer

Fine textiles have been created in Mexico since the dawn of civilisation, and are still important in modern culture. Chloe showed us wonderful examples of Mayan, Zapotec, Mixtec and Aztec designs. Early cloth was woven in cotton (a native plant) using backstrap looms, and the traditional designs were also found in ceramics and stone buildings.

The Spaniards introduced treadle looms and embroidery, and brought sheep for wool and silk worms. Modern textiles are a fusion of native and European traditions, and incorporate complex woven patterns, drawn thread work, beads and embroidery. Girls learn to weave at 11 or 12, and memorize designs traditional to their village.



Traditional blouse (huipil)

Embroidered bags

Traditional garments still worn today include the Serape – a blanket with a hole for the head, made using tapestry techniques, and worn by men; and the Rebozo – a large rectangular shawl for women, as worn by the artist Frida Kalo in her self-portraits. Rebozos are often ikat woven, and have knotted fringes.



Serape

Embroidered Rebozo

Unlike some areas where imported textiles are replacing traditional handwovens, in Mexico the traditions are still practiced, and worn by the people.

Chris Tucker

June 14 - Outing to the Warner Textile Archive

On Saturday 14th June nine Guild members congregated at the Warner Textile Archive in Braintree for a guided tour. Charlotte, our very knowledgeable guide, gave us an informal talk on the history of Warners before showing us a selection of textiles in the store.

The original members of the Warner family were scarlet dyers in Spitalfields at the end of the 18th century. Subsequently the family moved into making harnesses for Jacquard looms and by gradual acquisition of other companies moved into silk weaving during the 19th century. British textile design was considered very staid by this stage and Warners concentrated on improved

and innovative designs, an ethos that carried on into the 20th century. Royal patronage for their exquisite woven silks resulted in commissions for furnishing fabrics, clothing and coronation regalia. They continued to weave the fabrics for investitures and coronations right through the 20th century.

The inevitable highs and lows of the textile industry meant they diversified into printed textiles from the early 1920s onwards. A huge collection of archival material was retained over the years as each business acquisition came with its collection of samples.

Weaving ceased in the 1970s and the firm closed in the late 1990s. Grants and lottery funding enabled the textile archive to be re-housed in part of the old Warner's mill and made available to the public.

We were treated to a selection of fabrics from the store. Block printed cottons from 1930s and later screen printed examples. Some of the original hand-made printing blocks are still in the store.



The older woven textiles were stunning; sumptuous handwoven silk fabrics of complex design. The highlights were examples of silk double and triple height velvets, so complex they were never commercial and the production techniques are now lost.

Overwhelmed by the gorgeous textiles that we had seen we were revived by tea and home-made cake. Retail therapy in their delightful shop closed the afternoon.

Sue Wallis

June 28 The Story of Maximo Laura and Woven Colour – Pete and Della Storr.

Peter and Della Storr gave us a fascinating talk on the work of the South American tapestry weaver Maximo Laura at the June meeting.

Della has been a weaver and spinner for many years and went on a guided 'Textile Tour' of Peru in 2009. She visited Maximo's workshop and this sparked her enthusiasm for his work. As a result of this visit Peter and Della have become the UK representatives for Maximo and sell his work through their website 'Woven Colour'.

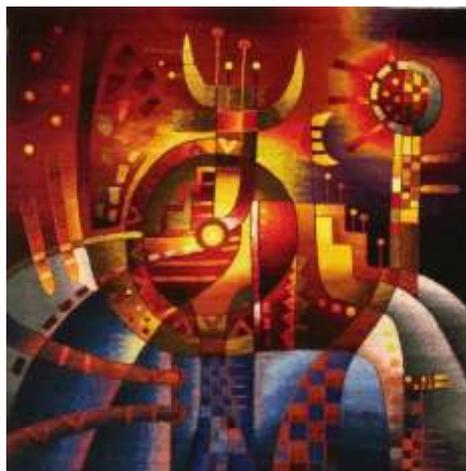
Maximo was born in Peru in 1959 and started weaving at the age of six. His father and grandfather were also weavers. The long history of graphic and textile art in South America has influenced his designs and many are based on traditional motifs but much refined and abstracted. These motifs are often geometric or creatures from myth and legend such as the jaguar, snake, fish and turtle. South American art displays sophisticated mathematical symmetry and this has influenced many artists. Links with Picasso's work could be seen in some of the designs.



The tapestries are woven on 4 shaft looms. The design is drawn out on the warp threads but each weaver will produce some variation in the design as it is worked. The yarn is alpaca and 6-8 colours are blended together to give amazing depth and subtlety to the colour variations. Texture is an important element and many techniques are used to achieve this including using supplementary threads incorporated onto the surface of the design as it is woven.

Peter and Della showed us at least 20 pieces of Maximo's work in a dazzling array of colours. At times it was hard to hear what was going on as an apocalyptic thunderstorm raged during the afternoon. Chairs had to be moved as water dripped from the ceiling windows.

However, we were lucky. Part of the ceiling in the foyer of the centre collapsed and torrents of water inundated the public areas. Thankfully by the time the talk ended centre staff had cleared most of the chaos and we were able to get out. A memorable afternoon in all respects!



Words by Sue Wallis, photos by Lesley Wilcock

CGWSD Programme 2014

- September 27 Craft Afternoon at Arbury: Weaving on Small Looms
- October 4 Workshop with Carol James at Comberton Village Hall.
More info to follow, topic will be Finger Weaving or Sprang.
- October 25 From Concept to Clothing – A Weaver's Journey – Lesley Willcock
- October 26 Sewing Handwovens Without Tears Workshop with Lesley Willcock, at Comberton Village Hall, *Booking essential*
- November 29 Ever Increasing Circles – Stacey Harvey-Brown
Christmas Tea

If you are travelling a distance to see a specific speaker please check with our Programme Secretary, Beth Parks, for programme changes.

Please send any suggestions for speakers or workshops to Beth Parks, at beth@chezparks.demon.co.uk or 01353 649855

And finally... please send news, articles and adverts for the newsletter to chris.tucker@zen.co.uk or 24 School Close, Gamlingay, Sandy SG19 3JY.

And don't forget to send a copy to Tina for our website, tina.tribe@ntlworld.com

Next Newsletter is out in January – please let me have your contributions by the November Meeting. Thank you.

Meetings are held at the Arbury Community Centre, Campkin Road, Cambridge, CB4 2LD unless otherwise stated.

Open from 1:30 pm. Talks start at 2pm.

Visitors welcome – entrance £7

(F/T students/JSA/Income support £3.50)

www.cambsguildwsd.org.uk

Contact: secretary@cambsguildwsd.org.uk 01223 247790