Letter from the Chair

The end of another year!

The Guild was set up in 1981 by Doreen (picutred left cutting the cake) and at the November meeting we celebrated our first 35 years with a 'birthday' cake.

The Guild seems to be thriving and we have over 60 members. I think the Exhibition in May was excellent. Thank you to everyone who displayed work and helped with the preparation and the event itself.

Eight people attended the Weave16! Course in October and a huge thanks to Suzanne for teaching as well as Beth, Fiona and Chris for helping.

The January meeting is the AGM and following this I hope members who attended the Ikat workshop could bring their work for a 'show and tell'. There will also be a Bring and Buy sale. Please put a price on any items you bring to the sale.

Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Sue

Community Outreach

The Queen Edith Community Forum organised a Christmas event at Queen Edith Chapel. There was a range of skills represented.

Quilting, Knit and Natter group, cake decorating, Christmas flower decorations, book stall, choir, swing band and us.

As the venue is so close to me I went over with one of the looms to demonstrate weaving and June Huntsman and Camilla Hair came to spin. As ever this creates quite a lot of interest and people are keen to have a go with the weaving. Mostly visitors seem surprised that there are still people 'like us' who actually do these things! Always good to raise our profile.

Tea and lovely cake was on hand and in spite of a terrible rain the turnout was enthusiastic.

Sue W.

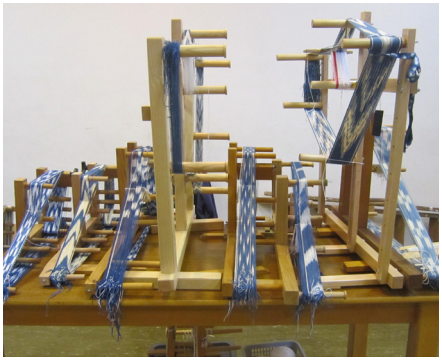
Warp Ikat Workshop with Martin Weatherhead 30 October 2016

Martin Weatherhead Ikat Textiles

Martin Weatherhead gave a wonderful presentation on his travels along the "Silk Road" in the 1980's. Martin began the talk by sharing how he gained funding for this travel. Then he showed us a vast amount of photos he took on his trip. Each photo was accompanied by stories of the people he met and what he learned. His trip not only provided him with the knowledge he has used in his Ikat weaving business, but also many cultural antecdotes that are still of interest today.

Martin's talk even included costume changes. He wore the kaftan that he wove for the fomal dinner he attended after his trip. Each section of the trip was represented by the local hat he purchased during his travels. Martin also shared the vareity of textile purchases he made along his route.

Martin's travels along the silk road provided him with the knowledge that he has continued to use these past 30 years. He now weaves Ikat professionally and gives workshops. Martin stayed to give a workshop to the guild on Sunday. Please see the information on the workshop on the next page.



Following Martin's inspiring talk we reassembled at the Steiner School on Sunday morning to try ikat for ourselves. Under Martin's guidance we each made a 2 inch wide warp on our inkle looms (without heddles), and then wrapped sections with plastic and tied them off with thread, to make chevron or block patterns.

The warps were then taken off the looms, wetted, and dropped into an indigo bath. After washing and drying the warps we then cut so that they were no longer circular, and removed all the ties. We then tied each individual warp thread back onto our inkle looms (following a shorter path than we originally warped).

This process took up most of the day, but most of us managed to start the weaving before leaving. Martin was unfailingly patient with us, he is a very good teacher. The results (although short) were looking very promising at the end of the workshop, and we all agreed to bring the finished bands to the January meeting for show and tell.

Katie Owens Tudor Textiles

Katie Owens, daughter of our own Frankie Owens and Tudor re-enactor, shared with the guild her knowledge of Tudor textiles, spinning, and costuming. Katie began her talk in her underclothes, if you weren't there don't be too shocked, Tudor underclothes cover more than many modern fashions. :)

Katie began the talk by layering up appropiately for a middle class Tudor woman. This included a smock, dress and a hemp apron. Katie explained that aprons were made of hemp to minimize the hazard of kirtle fires, which was the second most common cause of death among Tudor women. She also shared that an entire outfit for a Tudor woman would cost as much as a car today! Because of this cost middle class people generally included their clothing and other textiles in their wills, which provide great information on Tudor textiles.

Katie shared that by Tudor times wool was being imprted from Spain, where they had access to early Merino sheep. Enlgish wool was not as valuable at this time, because it was more coarse than wool being imported from Spain. During this part of the talk Katie demonstrated, combing, carding and spinning both fibre prepreations. The Tudors used a great wheel for woolen spinning, but the drop spindle was still used for worsted spinning. Katie explained that wool that is to be combed should be very clean, a bit dam and that grease was added back in to aid the spinning process. The Tudors favored olive oil, fish oil and whale oil for their spinning grease.

The end of the talk included a discussion of fulling, tentering (stretching wet cloth while it dries to ensure consistency of the fabric), dyheing, and knitting. Most stages of the textile process had it's own guild, but the weaver's guild was one of the most prominent as all other guilds had to get thier supplies form the weaver's guild. Those who cleaned wool had to get the raw wool from the weaver's guild and sell their finished product back, which was then sold on to combers and cards and so on. Most Tudor textiles were woven, though caps, stockings, and later sleeves were knitted in Tudor times.

The talk was very well attended and fascinating. Katie brought a variety of her re-enactment materials, including her combs, spinning, costumes and naturally dyed yarn. Her talk was illustrated with a wonderful presentation and the guild was lucky to have her share this knowledge.

Volunteer opportunities

As the new year begins, I would ask members to look at our extensive programme with an eye toward volunteering to write up a guild event. Last year many members sent in information for the newsletter, which is very much appreciated as are the event write ups. If there is a programme item that is of particular interest to you and would be willing to submit a few photos and write up, please let Erica Jones know. She can be reached at erica@weavolution.com. Please also consider sharing any travel or non-guild events which you think would be of interest to other guild members.

Ethel Mairet at Ditchling

Sue Prior

I was very excited when I heard that there was to be an exhibition of Ethel Mairet's work at the Ditchling Art and Craft Museum in East Sussex. I have read quite a lot about Ethel Mairet – mainly in a book entitled 'A Weaver's Life – Ethel Mairet 1872-1952' by Margot Coatts which was written to accompany a major exhibition in 1983. The back cover states that "Ethel Mairet was a member of the small but vigorous crafts community which carried the ethic of William Morris into the twentieth century. She established an influential weaving workshop in Ditchling, alongside Eric Gill, Edward Johnston and Douglas Pepler. Ethel Mairet's intuitive response to weaving was stimulated by her travels in Ceylon, India and Europe and the collection of textiles she made on these journeys. She experimented with hand-spun yarns and unusual materials and did much to revive the tradition of vegetable dyeing." Since reading the book, studying the photographs of her work and then seeing some of it for real on a visit to The Craft Study Centre in Farnham, I have been fascinated by this woman. She took on apprentices (including Elizabeth Peacock, Valentine Kilbride and Peter Collingwood), taught them all she knew but didn't suffer fools gladly. I would just love to take a step back in time and see all these people weaving, spinning and dyeing at Ethel's home and workshop "Gospels" in Ditchling.

"Dyeing Now: Contemporary Makers Celebrate Ethel Mairet's Legacy" is a joint exhibition and project to mark the centenary of Ethel Mairet's seminal book 'Vegetable Dyes', written and printed in Ditchling in 1916. The exhibition combines a live research project which invites contemporary artists, craftspeople and students from across the country and beyond; the aim is to recreate as many of the natural dyes featured in the book that are safe to use by today's standards, and display them in the exhibition at the museum.

Being a keen natural dyer, I couldn't resist the invitation and committed myself to dyeing a skein of linen (supplied by the museum) with onion skins. Not the most exciting dyestuff but one that is readily available at this time of year and had not already been "bagged" by someone else! Although the website gives a link to the original copy of Ethel's book, the references to the recipes didn't tally with the page numbers in the book so I opted for my own "recipe", duly dyed the skein and sent it back. When I visited the museum later that week, my skein was on display, alongside several others. By the time the exhibition ends in April 2017, there should be a fantastic collection of natural dyed skeins. As some people (including Jenny Dean, their dye advisor, and Isabella Whitworth) had done a number of skeins, I wish I had asked for more and may well still do so.

The museum has recently been refurbished and, as is the norm nowadays, has a lovely shop and café, but also a library, work room and an area with a sofa, yarn, knitting needles and an invitation to help yourself to patterns! The museum isn't very big but, apart from the Ethel Mairet section, there was also an exhibition of Tadek Beutlich's work which takes tapestry weaving to a new level (not to my taste, I'm afraid) and another one which explores the influence that William Morris and his Kelmscott Press had on the development of Hilary Pepler's St Dominic's Press. A really interesting mix of things to gaze at but the most spectacular thing was an enormous triangular bookcase, behind glass, displaying dozens of diaries belonging to the illustrator, John Vernon Lord, who still lives in Ditchling. They were absolutely amazing – pages and pages of tiny writing and beautiful illustrations. I was slightly disappointed in the lack of Ethel Mairet's work on show – I had seen far more at Farnham and wondered why they hadn't borrowed some of those pieces. There was a basket full of little samples, with handwritten notes by Ethel Mairet but they weren't displayed in a way so that you could see them easily. I would have loved to poke around in there! The museum has lots of events and workshops planned, including talks on natural dyeing, weaving and spinning workshops and a "Notebook/Diary/Sketchbook Day" with John Vernon Lord which involves a circular walk around the village. Lots of reasons to go back if only it wasn't so far!

I hadn't realized that there was still so much in Ditchling connected with the old craft workshops – in fact there are still workshops in the village. It felt quite magical to be there after all I had read about the place. It is a lovely village, right on the South Downs with beautiful views but also lots of traffic (rat run?). We weren't able to book a room at the "Best British Pub of the Year" – The Bull - but we did have a lovely meal there and then retired to a rather basic room at The White Horse which is right opposite the church with its sundial made by Eric Gill. I had to google Gill that evening to remind myself what was so unsavoury about him and then I wished I hadn't! With a map of the village supplied by the Museum, I was able to find "Gospels" and later, on the way out of Ditchling, we passed Elizabeth Peacock's house "Weavers" in the neighbouring village of Clayton.

There is still plenty of time to see this exhibition and, as it is close to Charleston House and Monk's House, it is worth staying overnight and fitting them all in!

Guild Programme 2017

Jan 28th

AGM and Bring and Buy Sale

Feb 25th Tapestry

Julie Taylor, one of our members, will give a talk called The Journey So Far. Julie is a tapestry weaver and was selected in 2015 to exhibit at both the Kate Derum Award at the Australian Tapestry Workshop, Victoria and at West Dean. She has subsequently obtained a grant for a community tapestry project in Cambridge. She will talk about her influences, inspirations and challenges, as well as telling us about her Australian trip. It should be fascinating.

March 25th Guild Day

Sarah Wroot will lead a mini workshop on cotton spinning. We will also have a tapestry workshop. Uppingham Yarns are bringing their stall, so that will be a big temptation!!

April 22/23rd Linen Weaving Workshop

Riitta Sinkkonen Davies will give a 2 day workshop on Weaving Linen. Riitta is an acknowledged expert on all aspects of linen and this is a chance not to be missed. She is a regular workshop leader at Summer School and her courses are always full!!

April 29th

Tim Parry Williams, a weaver from Stroud, will give a talk. More details to follow.

May 27th Milinery

Sarah Valentine , a milliner who studied at the London College of Fashion, and now runs her own business in Suffolk, will give us a talk called Hats Off. This will include a history of millinery, an overview of materials she uses and how she became a milliner. Perhaps we all ought to wear hats to this talk!!

June 24th Braids

Anne Dixon is returning to the Guild to give a talk entitled Around the World in Eighty Braids. This will be a treat, as she will bring examples of braids from 5 continents and discuss their structure.

September 7th Tapestry Talk

Carol Humphrey, curator of textiles at the Fitzwilliam Museum has invited us to view and heart a talk on English Embroidery. The museum has an outstanding collection. However space is limited to 12 people and so we will ballot it.

September 30th Saori Weaving

Kim Morgan will give us a talk on Saori Weaving. This freestyle weaving technique will be demonstrated and then we can have a go. This type of weaving focuses on free expression and creativity and sounds great fun. If anyone wants any of Kim's products from her website, contact her and she will bring them to the talk for you. (www.thesaorished.co.uk)

October 26th Worsted vs. Woollen Workshop

Amanda Hannaford will give a one day workshop on Worsted v Woollen. These are the two extremes of the spinning spectrum and so to improve on your technique with them and learn how they are best used come to this workshop!

October 28th Woollen and Worsted

Amanda Hannaford, who is an expert spinner, will give a talk entitled Afghan Adventure, on her trip to Kabul in 2015 to teach local women to spin cashmere. So we will have an insight into life in Kabul as well as hearing about the spinning.

November 25th Medieavl Weaving

Erica Jones, a member of our guild, newsletter editor and accomplished weaver will give a talk on Mediaeval Textiles. Let's expand our knowledge of textiles past again and see how these weavers worked!

Come and Weave

March 11, 2017

June 10, 2017

September 9, 2017

October 14, 2017

November 11, 2017