

Newsletter No. 86

Mid-Herts Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers November 2017 – January 2018

www.spinweavechat.wordpress.com

From the Editor

I feared we would not have enough to fill the pages of this edition of the Newsletter – not a bit of it! We began our annual programme with the inspiring lecture given by Helen Philips on the 'The Master Craftsmen of Kashmir – and the search for the REAL Pashmina'. Such an education and so humbling to see the exquisite quality of the labours of these highly skilled remote tribes-people. Before we knew it, Christmas was upon us and we celebrated with our usual fun Christmas Social. This year our chosen theme for the Summer shows, 'Green/Recycling', was extended to the Christmas Social for the competition to win the Gill Lewis Memorial Plate. The worthy winner was Gudrun with her artistically made bag which is not only useful but delivers a thought-provoking environmental message.

This edition is liberally peppered with fascinating additions to our programme reports and as Editor my grateful thanks must go to our ever-faithful 'roving reporters', who go out into the world of fibre, attending workshops and exhibitions and bringing back intriguing nuggets of information to share with us all through the Newsletter.

Astonishingly we are already in 2018, it seems hardly any time ago the world was welcoming the Millennium. 2018 is presenting our Guild with some challenges. As is usual we have lots to prepare to represent our chosen theme at Living Crafts and the Herts County show, but this year, as if that's not enough to deal with, we also are involved in the Biennial Conference and AGM, at Kents Hill Park in Milton Keynes. All three events are to be held in the same month, without question, we have a very busy May ahead of us. I think this ancient wisdom may be helpful: **Q.** How do you eat an elephant? **A.** One mouthful at a time!

I wish you all a somewhat belated very Happy, Healthy and Productive 2018.

Rosemary

The 'Woolmark' Logo

Back in the summer I visited the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art (near Highbury and Islington rail/underground station). Ever interesting to visit and always an oasis in a busy city, this time I specifically went to see the 'Franco Grignani Art as Design 1950-1990' exhibition. Best known for his iconic swirling 'Woolmark' insignia, **Franco Grignani** (1908-1999) was an influential artist and graphic designer, whose dazzling works anticipated Op Art. The story behind the 'Woolmark', which has adorned wool products for fifty years and which showcases the extraordinary versatility and innate luxury of wool, is quite fascinating. The International Wool Secretariat (IWS), originally set up to promote wool on an international scale, launched a competition in 1964 to design a 'Woolmark' logo. Grignani in fact, was on the jury for the competition but disillusioned by the standard of the Italian entries, he submitted designs under the alias 'Francesco Saroglia' and despite his protests, won the competition!

A selection of his designs can be seen in the photographs. I found their range of forms most fascinating and cannot imagine looking at any other design on labels, other than the winning entry, which gives a great impression of the 3-dimensional feel, weight and texture of a ball of yarn.



<http://www.estorickcollection.com/>

<https://www.woolmark.com/history/>

<https://www.creativereview.co.uk/franco-grignani-london-exhibitions-ml-estorick/>

Priscilla

Woollen and Worsted Spinning Workshop

Amanda Hannaford

29th October 2017

Sheila, Maureen and I enjoyed our trip to Comberton to attend a Woollen and Worsted Spinning Workshop run by Amanda Hannaford and hosted by the Cambridge Guild.

During the morning we focussed on long draw Woollen spinning using short stapled fleece, whilst during the afternoon we revised Worsted spinning with longer stapled fleece. We prepared it beforehand with frightening-looking combs, the like of which are known to have been used to murder a man of the cloth. We also whacked long wool fibres with flick carders. My samples were very questionable, especially the long draw, but the whole day was informative and fun. In between we all had some pumpkin pie.

Sheila and I have both ordered a set of combs each from Wingham Wool. To see Maureen with these combs you would think it was a Halloween party!



Louise

Gill Lewis Memorial Lecture

'The Master Craftsmen of Kashmir and the search for the REAL Pashmina'

Helen Philips

15th November 2017

What an uplifting and enjoyable start to the new Guild Year! It was lovely to see visitors from West Essex/East Herts Guild and friends of Members as well as a good number of Mid Herts Members. Thanks to the generosity of Dennis Lewis, husband of our late, much missed stalwart Gill, we were able to arrange for a talk from Helen Philips.

Helen has travelled regularly in India over many years. With a background in textiles she appreciates the time and skill that is required to produce handmade items. Interested in the history and process of making Pashminas, she had visited the city of Srinagar and surrounding area and found families and communities involved in the process.



Q. What is a Real Pashmina?

A. A shawl made from 100% fibre from the Pashmina goat (Lena Rama), one of the most delightful looking creatures imaginable!

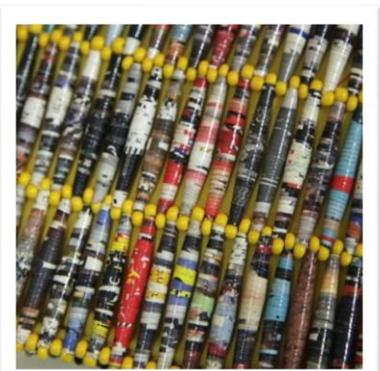
They are found in the Chantang area of Ladakh in Northern India, bordering Tibet, 17,000 feet above sea level. It is a challenging environment where temperatures reach -35°C in the winter and +35°C in the summer. Twice a year their hair, which is shorter and finer than other Cashmere goats, is obtained by combing their underbody. The fibre is hand-spun by spindle, always by the women. The weaving is usually done by the men. In this instance the old floor loom in use had

come from Huddersfield! Weaving with approximately 2000 fine warp ends is a laborious process, it involves much re-tying of broken threads and cannot be mechanised.

When the finished shawl is cut from the loom, some of them will be partly or fully hand embroidered. The pattern transfer is block printed by eye and then passed to one of the Master Craftsmen, who will spend up to two and a half years embroidering the pattern with silk threads, creating a Jamawar Shawl.

We saw a video clip showing another form of shawl called a Kani, being woven. This involved using a plain, undyed warp and brightly coloured weft threads that were wound on small bobbins. Beautiful stripes and complicated patterns were achieved.

It was wonderful and humbling to have the opportunity to see and feel examples of a Pashmina, Kani and Jamawar



Through her business, 'Door to the Himalayas', Helen helps bring to market various handcrafted items and she had therefore brought along a variety of items for sale. These included some plain and some partly decorated Pashminas, but unsurprisingly, no Jamawars! There were, however, hand spun, natural dyed and woven scarves, and hand knitted jumpers, socks and hats. There were also smaller items such as decorated papier-mâché Christmas decorations and purses covered with paper beads. For the women who make and sell these items through Helen, it is a life-changing alternative to begging.

At the end of the presentation, we needed no second invitation to look at and buy all sorts of lovely items, happy in the knowledge that the makers were receiving a fair price for their skills.

Tricia (Photographs George)

Back-Strap Weaving Workshop Meri Hunneyball

19th November 2017

I visited Peru several years ago and was fascinated by the textile crafts there. In Cusco we saw many women using back-strap looms and I have ever since been keen to learn more about this technique. I was therefore delighted when Cambridge Guild advertised they had spaces on a back-strap weaving day course with Meri Hunneyball. The workshop was originally scheduled for July but was postponed at very short notice as Meri's young daughter was admitted to hospital. Thankfully all was well with her daughter and eventually I attended the workshop on Sunday 19th November in Fulbourn.

I was not a complete beginner to this type of weaving as I had attempted to learn on my own from an excellent website by Laverne Waddington. This made quite a difference to me on the day. Meri demonstrated how to warp on a frame and then to place the warps on the loom which consists of two pieces of dowel. One end is secured to a fixed point (in this case we used clamps on a table) and the other is held to your body by the use of a strap or belt around your waist. Once we were all warped up, we then learnt how to make heddles both around your hand or using a stick. The yarn provided was wool which caused quite a few problems for people as it made changing the shed quite difficult to start with but this did become easier as we progressed. This was a delightful way to spend a Sunday. Meri was eager to help all she could and the rest of the group were friendly and welcoming (and there was lots of cake!).



The photograph shows the lighter blue back-strap belt I made a while ago using Laverne's website, the braid edged with red is the one I wove on the workday and the striped one I have since worked at home.

Sheila

Scythians: Ancient Warriors of Siberia. British Museum

14th Sept 2017-14th Jan 2018

This was a major exhibition, most of the items were on loan from Russia – photography was not allowed. The Scythians flourished in the vast plains of Siberia from the Black Sea to the northern borders of China from 900 BC to 200 BC. They were nomadic tribes, masters of mounted warfare; both admired and feared by their Persian, Assyrian and Greek neighbours to the south with whom encounters were conflict, trade or marriage. They were descendants of Persian stock and spoke a Persian dialect.

Discoveries of ancient tombs in the reign of Peter the Great revealed a wealth of Scythian treasures preserved in the permafrost including weapons, (bows and arrows, battle axes and spears), spectacular gold jewellery and exceptional preservation of organic materials of food and fabrics. The collection of finds was presented to Peter in 1715. Excavations are continuing.

The Scythians kept herds of horses and sheep which needed protection from enemies and predators and required constant movement to fresh pastures. Women and children travelled in wagons and the men on horse-back. The horses provided mobility, meat, milk and leather and the sheep supplied wool, sheepskin, meat and milk.

The leather was used for boots and shoes, clothing, straps, saddles and decoration. Long staple wool from fleece shorn in Spring was used for spinning and weaving and included fine embroidery threads. The shorter staple wool from Autumn shearing was used for making felt. Felt was invented when sheep were domesticated in the 3rd millennium BC. It is warm, soft, flexible, waterproof and wind proof, provides excellent insulation and was used for clothing and head-dresses, wall-hangings, floor coverings, bags, rugs, cushions and horse-blankets.

Three pairs of fine felt stockings from the late 4th century BC were found, trimmed round the top with a strip of felt, embroidered with woollen thread. They had one over-sewn seam up the back and were gathered into a cap at the toe with a short sole. Floor coverings provided comfortable bedding in the yurts. Yurts were made of wooden structures covered in felt which were easily assembled and dismantled for transportation. Any furniture seemed to be wooden blocks for stools and tables.

Some of the felt was decorated with appliquéd leather, gold and coloured felt. The dyes used included madder and cochineal, indigo, sorrel and sienna. A fragment of a frieze from about 300 BC, is of dark felt, 63 cm wide with a 39 cm felt decorative border composed of 3 bands sewn on with twisted sinew. The upper and lower bands are made up of alternating red and white triangles. The middle band is of cut-outs of red and blue lion's heads on a white felt back-ground. The distinctive art common to all the tribes is known as Scythian Animal Style which expressed ideas through predatory animal imagery.

High quality weavings were found in coffins of the 4th century BC. Weaving was mostly twill but plain, looped or basket-weaves were also found. The warps were often thick and tightly spun and the weft of alternating thick and thin yarns giving a ridged effect. A fragment of fabric, once indigo blue but now green, was woven with a thick warp and a fine weft thread, with a decorative band of twining with a much thicker yarn. A brown and green cord was sewn to the top. Evidence of crochet and knitting was identified in women's hair nets also found in the tombs

Many imports from Persia, Greece and China were found, such as Chinese silks and Greek pottery. One of the most important finds was the earliest surviving knotted-pile woollen carpet, 3rd century BC, from Persia, found in a horse burial site. The motifs were an outer band of horses and horseman and an inner band of deer. At the same site was a horse strap which comprised a felt base and strip of kilim weaving showing a procession of lions dyed with madder, indigo, cochineal and tannins. This was edged with foal fur and decorated with gold leaf. Other furs used for decoration and clothing were squirrel, sable, cheetah and fox. The Scythians were gradually defeated and displaced by fresh waves of nomads in the first century BC.

This was a remarkably fascinating and impressive exhibition which I am so pleased to have seen – only just in time.

Ruth

I will bring the very comprehensively illustrated Guide Book along to the next Spin Weave and Chat meeting in February. The photographs are strictly copyright.

Wallace Sewell Exhibition: 25 Years of British Textile Design Fashion and Textile Museum 20th Oct 2017 - 21st Jan 2018

An exhibition at the Fashion and Textile Museum celebrated the 25th anniversary of textile designers Harriet Wallace-Jones and Emma Sewell.... and what a stylish exhibition it was!

In 1992 Wallace-Jones and Sewell exhibited a small collection of woven scarves and cushions at the Chelsea Craft Fair. This launched their career and their work is now stocked internationally in over 200 outlets. They each have distinctive approaches to their work, incorporating industrial knowledge combined with contemporary design. The marriage of their ideas, results in designs frequently structured in blocks of vibrant colours or asymmetric stripes.



Wallace-Jones and Sewell now produce a wide range of products, including scarves, cushions, throws and rugs along with many specially commissioned pieces. Their range is woven in industrial mills in the United Kingdom and their company has become an important ambassador for the British textile industry.

Most people who visit London will have interacted with a Wallace Sewell design. In 2007 the company was shortlisted and chosen by Transport for London to design new upholstery and again for London Underground in 2011. The moquette fabric was inspired by the London skyline, featuring the London Eye, St Paul's Cathedral, Big Ben and Tower Bridge and can be seen on the seats of the Northern, Jubilee and Central lines. Wallace-Jones and Sewell continue their work with TfL and have designed the moquette for the new Crossrail network.

The centre of this small but beautiful exhibition was dominated by a sofa which was most strikingly upholstered with Wallace Sewell fabric and sited on a startlingly designed rug. It was a delight to be invited to sit back on the sofa to watch a biopic of the collaboration of these highly successful and talented textile designers.



Rosemary



London Guild WSD Exhibition 2017

The Thames & Southwark: Threads of London Life

Southwark Cathedral

23rd-30th November 2017

The Winter Pavilion of Southwark Cathedral was a splendid space to showcase the recent works of the London Guild. As ever their exhibits were of a highly professional standard with many of them using the river Thames and environs surrounding Southwark Cathedral to represent the theme, 'Threads of London Life'. Their display items illustrated a wide range of skills, ranging from intricately woven textiles, tapestry weaving, novel spun yarns and fabrics demonstrating specialised dyeing techniques. There was even a display of artefacts found from mudlarking on the foreshores of the river Thames.



'Cosmopolitan Cobblestones'
Scarf by Janet Phillips



Indigo dyed scarves
Roberto Campano



'London Fights Back'
Christine Eborall

Amongst the extensive range of different spun yarns was a skein of spun recycled blue jeans, certainly a new one for me! Christine Eborall had chosen to weave a tapestry from discarded plastic packaging, it was intended as a tribute to Londoners and visitors who stood up to terrorists in 2017 in Southwark. Having spent time at the exhibition a warming bowl of soup was enjoyed in the Refectory, where a display of framed woven bookmarks donated to the Cathedral by the LGWSD can be viewed in the gallery.

Rosemary

Picture Gallery

Christmas Social

20th December 2017



What a spread and how we all tucked in! It was an extremely closely fought battle to win the 'Gill Lewis Memorial Plate' with just one vote separating the winning entry from second place. Gudrun won with her bag, illustrating not only her skills as a craftswoman but an amazing interpretation of the 'Green/Recycling' theme. A hair breath away, was Jill with her beautifully woven scarf. But ...the true winner was an exquisite Wren's nest; woven from fleece that last Spring Margaret had put in her garden for the birds. What a feat for such a tiny bird and who as a baby wouldn't love to be swaddled in all that fleece?!



Spinning and weaving all going on in one corner



Tanja with her woven 'Seascape'



Claire being given a Master class by Margaret and Tricia in how to warp a 4-shaft loom



Hazel with her many Dorset buttons

Calendar 2018

Unfortunately, due to ill health George wasn't able to prepare the Calendar for us this year. Most of the photographs have appeared in previous editions of the Newsletter so I won't repeat them here. A notable exception though is our group photograph taken on George's camera, at the 'Gill Lewis Memorial Lecture' by Helen Philips' husband. What a jolly bunch we are.... and long may it last!!



Forthcoming Events

Unravel – Festival of Knitting

10th anniversary of the festival of knitting with marketplace, workshops, talks and demonstrations
16th – 18th February 2018. Farnham Maltings, Bridge Square, Farnham GU9 7QR

Knitting & Stitching Show

1st – 4th March 2018. London Olympia, W14 8UX

Contemporary Textiles Fair

16th – 18th March 2018. Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road, Teddington TW1 9NN

World Textile Days 2018 theme: Working Together

14th April 2018. Easy Horley Village Hall, Leatherhead, Surrey KT24 6QT

Knit & Stitch Show 2018

Covers all areas of knit and stitch and includes over 30 exhibitors, talk, demonstrations and workshops.
14th – 15th April 2018 9.30am – 5pm (4pm on Sunday) Admission £3. Rheged Centre, Redhills, Penrith

Wonderwool Wales

A celebration of Welsh wools and natural fibres

28th – 29th April 2018. Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, Powys LD2 3SY

AGWSD Conference

The Conference theme is 'Then and Now' – looking at the origins of craft and artisan production of Britain
11th – 13th May 2018. Kents Hill Conference Centre, Milton Keynes MK7 6BZ

Colours of Peru 2018

An exhibition of tapestries by Maximo Laura with local ceramic artists

18th – 24th June 2018 Mon – Sat 9.30am – 5.30pm, Sun 10am – 5.30pm. The Gallery, Denbies Wine Estate, London Road, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6AA

And finally.....

'Welsh Ewe Yarn' Copyright-Marieanne Griffiths.

Greetings cards and notelets in this design and others, available from
marieannegriffiths@btinternet.com or 01874658591





Memorial tree to William Hogg 13th Bn. Royal Scots, who died on 6th October 1918, situated at the Hawkshead campus of the Royal Veterinary College. An eye-catching and moving expression of wool-art.

*Newsletter printing: January, April, July, and October – Please email Guild Secretary your articles by **20th of the month** preceding printing. Any photos you include should not be embedded in the article but sent separately in JPEG format otherwise it makes editing very difficult. Captions for your photos can be listed at the end of your article. Also, it would be helpful if you leave your document in an editable format with Arial as the font.*