



# Newsletter

## MARCH

### 2009

## *Forthcoming Programme*

March 21 <sup>st</sup>	Hand-knitting Finishing Techniques & Tips for Hand Spinners and Knitters - Edna Gibson
April 25 <sup>th</sup>	Quantock Weavers Day Knitting With Beads – Fiona Morris
May 16 <sup>th</sup>	AGM Cocoons to Cloth – Jane Deane (Fork Lunch) Spinning Competition: Skein of Blended Fibres
June 20 <sup>th</sup>	Fleece Fair
July 18 <sup>th</sup>	Dye Day – Two tone dyeing, painting a warp or skein of wool
September 19 <sup>th</sup>	Art Project Documenting Sheep Kate Lynch
October 17 <sup>th</sup>	Round The Twist - Jacqui Carey Braiding workshop for all
November 21 <sup>st</sup>	60 <sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY Diamond Celebration (Soup and Bread Lunch) Dyeing Competition: Tie Dye using two colours

# **Guild Meeting Review**

## **November Meeting**

**W**e had expected to enjoy a talk about Textiles – Engaging with the Past, by Sue Bradley, but unfortunately, Sue was unable to come to the meeting as she had some urgent family business to resolve. We decided, therefore, to have an impromptu “Social Day”.

The morning was filled with a mixture of animated general chat and discussion, lots of spinning and knitting, browsing at the Library Table, spending money at the Sales Table and consuming coffee, tea and biscuits. After a lunch of hot tasty soup and home made bread, followed by mince pies and more coffee/tea, we had our usual raffle followed by a competition – “Wear what you have made”.

We had been asked to wear an item we had made, to be judged by our fellow members. Each member entering the competition was given a number in duplicate and asked to wear one, and to stick the other one onto a written description of the item. These numbered descriptions were placed on the table, and after we had examined the items our votes were cast in the usual way i.e. by putting a coin on the number of our choice.

There were a good number of members entering, wearing a very varied selection of items including scarves, jumpers, cardigans, shawls, jackets and a full-length coat. It was a delight to see such a talented display of spinning, weaving, knitting, crochet and felting. Personally, I particularly admired Pam Mitchell’s bolero style jacket, which had been made with a core spun yarn and using broom stick crochet. The technique had produced a very interesting texture.

Margaret Knight won the competition with her full-length hand spun and knitted coat, and she was presented with a glass paperweight by our Chairman, Carol Mellish.

Earlier in the day a display had been set up of scrapbooks and photographs from the library stock, showing records of events and members from the 1950’s to the present day. These created a lot of interest for both new and older members. I had brought along some fleece from a flock of Ouessant sheep, which is a breed of sheep from France. My daughter had brought it over from Brittany. The fleece, in my opinion, was not of the best quality but, together with some pictures and a short history, showed a breed which was new to most of us.

We also enjoyed a “show and tell” display with items made by Carol. The first item she told us about was a small scarf made from silkcaps which had been dyed by Amanda Hannaford. She explained that she had pulled the fibre out with her hands to make a fine thread and had then wound this on to a thick wooden needle before knitting it with a simple “lacy” pattern. A very effective use of silk without spinning. Various beautifully made items followed including two lovely rugs – one ingeniously made of rags and the other of tufted wool. Well done Carol.

A meeting which could have been disappointing, in fact developed into a very enjoyable and interesting one. Many thanks to all the members present for their enthusiasm and help.

**Ellen Doust**

### **Items for the Newsletter**

**Next month’s newsletter will have a different format, if you have any ideas for regular features and/or would like to send in any items please send them to Rita Ovens, details below.**

**You can also send your ‘for sale or wanted’ notices, and reviews to:**

**Rita Ovens, 6 Honeylands, Curry Rivel, Langport, TA10 0EH**

**Tel: 01458 215 215**

**Email: [ritaovens@gmail.com](mailto:ritaovens@gmail.com)**

# Guild Meeting Review

January 2009

Our first Guild meeting of 2009 was well attended, despite the usual range of winter ailments, which seemed to have done the rounds over the Christmas break. During the morning, we had the chance to exchange gossip about our Christmas celebrations, and Santa had clearly been good to a couple of members who had shiny new spinning wheels. The new "Show and Tell" table was a talking point too. Jaquie Teal had brought along a selection of Estonian knitwear, including a very fine lace shawl, which was reminiscent of the Shetland patterns. She wasn't sure what the fibre was, but thought it might be goat hair, or perhaps a mixture of goat and wool. There was also a very pretty pair of gloves with an intricate cabled design on the back and fingers. Another exhibit was a little braiding device, which had been a Christmas gift, and could be used to make a variety of braids and cords for all sorts of purposes. Carole brought a sample of her weaving in the form of a pinwheel patterned wrap. She had used a fine wool to produce an off white ground, with pinwheels in blended shades of hand-dyed turquoise, blue, magenta and purple to stunning effect.

In the afternoon, our speaker was Elza Tantcheva, an expert in the history of Bulgarian textiles who had worked and studied at the Ethnography Museum in Plovdiv in southern Bulgaria. She explained that textiles in the area had many styles due to the influences of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia, Bulgaria being something of a crossroads between these places. Her slides showed a variety of household and worn textiles as well as floor coverings. Many of the simpler designs, such as aprons were simple two-colour striped designs, the earlier examples being coloured with natural dyes such as madder and indigo. Artificial dyes were only introduced around the late 1800s or early twentieth century. The main fibre used was cotton, sometimes with wool mixed in. Elza said that the brighter colours were evidence of Greek influence, however, items with blue or purple shades were more likely to be Muslim in origin as these shades were not commonly used by Christian communities. The patterns were generally quite simple stripes or blocks of colour, though there were also some very attractive checked or plaid patterns. As with many cultures in the nineteenth century, many of the items shown were made by young girls and women as trousseau items.

Elza explained that there were many regional variations in the style of textiles in Bulgaria, most notably that in the north, the designs tended to be stripes or graphic styles, usually in fairly sombre colours, whereas in the south, many garments were decorated with coins and sequins, and sometimes incorporated machine-made braids. In areas with a heavy Greek influence, geometric designs were popular. She also said that there were differences between the types of textiles found in poor and rich homes as well as in rural or urban homes. Clearly wealthy urban households had need of things like tablecloths, which would be seen as a luxury in a poorer rural home. Once commercially produced fabrics and rugs became available, the wealthier ladies would no longer need to be skilled weavers or needlewomen.

Many of the garments we were shown were produced for special occasions such as weddings, and there were also decorated items such as towels, made as gifts for wedding guests. As with most societies in the past, clothing could show status, age, origin or wealth. For example, widows would usually wear dark clothing, predominantly black. For weddings, red and white were traditional colours, as red was thought to symbolise health and ward off evil. Wealthy ladies in the areas of Bulgaria, where roses are grown to make attar of rose for perfume, often had fine knitted stockings with intarsia rose designs. Hand embroidery, appliqué, smocking or pleats might be incorporated into designs as appropriate.

Floor coverings, we were told, would vary according to the season. Many were cotton kelim-type mats with traditional patterns, some like samplers, made to show the skill of the weaver. These would be used in summer, with warmer woollen rugs for winter. Again, special occasions might require a special set of mats or rugs, and whereas some were laid directly onto earth floors, some were laid over straw to provide extra insulation from the cold. This would also, presumably, protect a treasured piece from dirt and damage. Cotton for use in rug-making was often dyed into fashionable colours, but woollen or goat hair rugs were usually natural colours. Many of these were similar to the flokati-type rugs found in Greece, where long strands of wool produce a very fluffy and warm rug.

At the end of the slide show, we were able to explore for ourselves the selection of beautiful vintage Bulgarian textiles that Elza had brought for us to see.

The talk and slide show was very interesting, and I'm sure I have missed out many details of Elza's descriptions and explanations, for which I apologise. I have tried to include what I thought were the important bits, without taking up the entire newsletter. In this case, not an easy task!

**Helen Cridland**

# Guild Meeting Review

February 2009

Olive Hampton  
My Way With Theo Moorman

After our soup lunch (many thanks to the three members who provided some delicious soup) Olive Hampton told us about the way she has developed the Theo Moorman technique to produce her wonderful pictorial hangings. A simple four shaft threading, with two very thin tie-down threads enabled coloured in-lay threads to float on the surface of the background weave giving great versatility and design possibilities. She stressed that the warp threads must be very strong but all sorts of threads could be used for the in-lay which could cover the whole background giving rich vibrant hangings or could just be present in certain areas giving a very subtle effect.

Olive had brought along many samples of her work illustrating both these techniques and explained the inspirations behind each piece. Some were based on lines of poetry, others were taken from nature. Although she worked from drawings she also liked to develop the design as she wove.

Olive also brought along two small sample looms to illustrate the technique, which she demonstrated and encouraged us to go home, thread our looms up and 'play' with different threads and colours to see what could be achieved.

Many thanks to Olive for such an interesting talk and I'm sure she's inspired many of us to try this fascinating technique.

Carol Mellish

**Olive teaches the Theo Moorman variation of inlay at the Staplegrave Workshop on Thursday mornings. There are two classes, 09.00 until 12.00 noon, and 12 until 2.00 pm.**

**Other resources;**

**Weaving as an Art Form - A personal Statement  
Theo Moorman  
Schiffer Publishing  
ISBN 10 0887 400 68X  
Available in paperback from Amazon UK £10.95**

**Theo Moorman, 1907 – 1990 Her Life and  
Works as a Fibre Artist and Weaver.  
Edited by Hilary Diaper  
ISBN 1874331014  
Currently out of print**

**PDF File with threading diagram and instructions**

**[http://www.wgnsil.org/pdf/0808\\_Theo\\_Moorman\\_Workshop\\_PreWork.pdf](http://www.wgnsil.org/pdf/0808_Theo_Moorman_Workshop_PreWork.pdf)**

## SPINNING COMPETITION

This year's competition, to be held at the May meeting, has the title 'blended fibres'.

∞ You should blend the fibres yourself using carders or combs or you could even hand blend as you spin but plying two yarns spun from different fibres isn't sufficient.

∞ You can blend different fibres (e.g. silk and wool) or you can blend different colours of the same fibre.

Whichever you do, please display small labelled samples of your original fibres and details of how you created the blend together with your skein of yarn (25gm. is enough).

A small finished sample (knitted, woven, felted etc) would also be useful.

Please do try to enter, if you haven't blended fibres before it will be a useful exercise, just remember that to blend well, fibres need to be about the same length and its okay to cut longer fibres.

# Sheep - From Lamb to Loom

by Kate Lynch

Kate Lynch has shadowed sheep farmers in the West Country and craftspeople working in related trades over the past three years. The resulting exhibition is a collection of nearly fifty drawings and paintings documenting the hidden world behind the scenes. There are seasonal paintings of shepherds raddling their rams, lambing in silent sheds, blade shearing on the Mendips and machine shearing in the barn. The story continues at the cheese makers, sheepskin tannery and in the workshops of spinners, weavers, feltmakers and knitters. The Spinners and Weavers' Workshop in Staplehay, Taunton and several members of the Guild are featured. To complement the paintings and drawings, Alastair Goolden, a sound designer, has recorded voices and sounds, and his textured sound piece accompanies the show.

The exhibition can be seen from March 14<sup>th</sup> to April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the **Brewhouse Gallery, Taunton** ([www.thebrewhouse.net](http://www.thebrewhouse.net), tel: 01823 283244) and then visits:

**The New Brewery Arts Centre, Cirencester**  
**The Folly Museum, Settle, Yorkshire**  
**The Black Swan Arts Centre, Frome, Somerset**  
**The Heritage and Arts Centre, Dulverton Exmoor until the Autumn**

A full-colour book "Sheep - From Lamb to Loom" by Kate Lynch is available from the galleries and bookshops from March 2009. The book includes journal entries and extracts from interviews with sheep farmers and artists featured in the project.

For information: [kate.lynch@virgin.net](mailto:kate.lynch@virgin.net)

Kate is giving a talk on the project to the Guild on 19<sup>th</sup> September, when the exhibition will be at the Black Swan in Frome.



Henry counting his sheep off the Salt Marshes. charcoal drawing



Adrien machine-shearing



Olive spinning at the Fleece Fair

The Guild has awarded a Quantock Weavers' Bursary of £50 to assist with the cost of workshop lessons at the Sweethay Studio in Taunton. This is most gratefully accepted by the recipient, who is being taught by Paddy Bakker, and hopes to show her current efforts at a Guild meeting soon.

Ellen Doust

## Letter from your Chairman.

By the time you read this, the A.G.M. will be rapidly approaching and I am again appealing for members to stand for the committee.

I have served on the committee in one way or another for fifteen years and am retiring as chairman this year. I hope as chairman for the last two years (my second stint in this post) if I have achieved nothing else, I have got everyone talking to one another and sharing knowledge and expertise. It is lovely to see so many members spinning at the meetings and to hear the buzz of conversation.

The committee meetings are held four times a year during the mornings of our normal monthly meetings and new committee members bring a fresh approach and new ideas, so if you are interested in the guild and want it to continue please do consider putting your name forward.

Also, remember the committee exists to serve its members so please, get to know who is on the committee and if you have any ideas, suggestions or queries do talk to a committee member.

**Carol Mellish.**

### GUILD LOOMS.

We have recently required two looms. The first is a four-shaft table loom kindly donated by Norma Sanders. It is intended to warp this loom and have it available during the morning sessions so that anyone can have a go and it will be possible for individuals to borrow the loom for a month.

We also have a tapestry loom donated by Elza Tantcheva. It is a little heavy but if we can devise a method of moving it easily from the store to the hall we would like to set it up so this is also available during the mornings for anyone to use. Perhaps we can get a group project underway.

### LIBRARY

We have two new librarians, Miranda Hewett and Helen Rushton but it would be useful to have at least one, preferable two other members who would be prepared to help with the library, perhaps on alternate months. It is planned to update the cataloguing of the books and improve the signing in and out procedure and extra help will enable this to happen a little quicker. If you are willing to help please speak to Miranda or Helen at the meetings.

### What's On...

**Kate Lynch Exhibition "Sheep – From Lamb to Loom"**  
at the Brewhouse, 14<sup>th</sup> March – 23<sup>rd</sup> April.  
See Kate's article in this newsletter for more information.

Much further away and later in the year is

#### Woolfest

**Wonderwool Wales**  
Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells.

Wonderwool Wales is an annual festival to promote wool and natural fibres in Wales. Its aim is to bring like minded people together to network and engage with each other and have fun.

Woolfest is another annual festival celebrating all aspects of natural fibres – their sources, uses and products. It takes place over 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June at Cockermouth, Cumbria. It's quite a happening, with a giant 'Spin-in', with a grand supper in the marquee on the Friday evening before, (additional tickets required). You can even camp near by!

<http://www.wonderwoolwales.co.uk>

<http://www.woolfest.co.uk>

**An Appeal from Peter Penneck  
Chairman  
Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers**

New members are desperately needed for the General Purpose Committee. The job of the GPC is to back up the individual members doing the organising of the national events and enable them to succeed. Volunteers are needed, otherwise activities that members take for granted will not happen.

Peter stresses, "It is serious enough to say, that if you want the Association to continue, it is imperative that more members do come forward".

The events that need more help are:

Conference	2010	2011
Summer School		2011
Exhibition		2112

The full text of Peter's appeal can be read in the Association's February newsletter, which will be on the notice board, or can be read online at <http://www.wsd.org.uk>

**CHAIRMAN**

**Carol Mellish  
01935 850144**

**SECRETARY**

**Ellen Doust  
01278 683748**

**TREASURER**

**Barbara Spicer  
01278 691264**

**NEWSLETTER**

**Rita Ovens  
01458 215215**