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**November 2013**



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✉ Copy deadline for March issue is Saturday 1st March 2014. Please email Janet Maher  
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Front cover: Rajasthani style textile slippers made by Tiggy Rawlings

## ***Message from the Chair***

**Hello Members,**

Do you ever wonder why we do it? Amass a great stash of fleece, yarn and equipment just in case. I have been reflecting upon this recently, probably because I have been trying to sort and make space and it seems like an impossible task. No sooner does one bagful go near the door for recycling or Charity Shop and another one comes through the door, or I remember why I wanted the recycling bag in the first place. Ultimately very little moves but it does get squashed smaller and put into airtight boxes, which are neater.

I have also been reading a write up about British Wool and the versatility of fleece in the Independent on 11<sup>th</sup> October. We can now use fantastic bright acid dyes and we have skilled dyers who can calibrate and use natural dyes to their best effect, we can spin, weave, felt and embellish. In short we can create, we can express ourselves in many different ways, shapes and colours and that, dear members, is why I do it. That is why I hoard and secrete and stash oddments away for just the right occasion. It may not impress anyone but it is my way of expressing myself at any given time and if that gives some pleasure or raises a smile from someone else then so much the better. If I actually make something useful or wearable that's an added bonus too.

I hope you all have the same pleasure that I achieve when I am faffing about, mixing colours, knitting odd shapes and felting to my hearts content.

Have a Happy Christmas and use these long dark nights as you wish with your favourite woolly activity.

See you all in January.

Jan Newton  
Chairperson

## ***Guild Competitions***

### ***Spinning and Weaving Competitions 2014***

We are planning the competitions for 2014 and are seeking your ideas on the theme for the competitions. We will hold the dyeing competition in April and the spinning and weaving competitions in November.

We have had many themes such as "Somerset landscapes", "Thick and thin" and this year "Three of a kind". Please put on your creative thinking caps and give us some thoughts. Speak to any committee member.

### ***Tea and Coffee Rota***

The rota is prepared taking names alphabetically from the membership list. Members with full time roles such as the running the library or sales table are not included on the rota. Also not included are members who cannot take a turn for health reasons. This means that each full member can expect to take a turn once every two years roughly.

If you cannot fulfil your turn, please swop with someone from the list in the first instance. Also please let Janet (Secretary) know so that records are kept up-to-date.

Thank you.

January	Diane Chidzey & Sophie Fovargue
February	Emma Gowing & Liz Grassby
March	Jean Field & Talitha Clarke
April	Helen Cridland & Jackie Giles
May	Sue Coates & Brenda Lawrence
June	Linda Dommett & Christine Edmunds
July	Joan Mabbott & Jenifer Ferguson
September	Sue Hamblin & Debby Hills
October	Willow Iredale & Patricia Ilsley
November	Julia Jones & Margaret Knight

## ***The Costumes at Killerton House: Shelley Tobin***

21<sup>st</sup> September 2013



Shelley has worked at Killerton for 21 years. She also does the same job at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. Both places work in collaboration for costume exhibitions.

They do a monthly focus on fashion events. The last one was on hats. Killerton has over 10,00 pieces dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century whilst RAM has more than 20,00 pieces. Taunton museum also has a costume collection.

The costume collection at Killerton began with opera singer Pauline Durn who performed at Killerton and her daughter Paulise, who looked after the collection of clothes she and her mother had. They both loved the theatre, dressing up and collecting costumes.

Initially they used the collection to dress actors but realised that some of these garments were too precious to be used in this way. Paulise married Herbert Lugg and inherited the title Baroness de Bush. She bought a house and kept the collection housed downstairs whilst the upstairs was let out to actors such as Alan Bates and Prunella Scales.



Paulise died in 1975. She had met the wife of a film producer, Atherton Harrison and they shared the passion for costume. She asked Atherton to make sure the collection endured. Atherton found a home for it at Killerton in 1977 and it has gone from strength to strength.



There are displays every year, often in conjunction with RAM. This year the exhibition was called "Objects of Desire" which finished on 4<sup>th</sup> November. Beautiful fashions from 1690 to the present day were shown with crewelwork decoration on fine silk and other expensive fabrics.

They have a lot of underwear in the collection. There is a book called "Inside/Out: A Brief History of Underwear" which can be purchased at Killerton. This was a fascinating talk and well worth looking out for future exhibitions at Killerton, which is on our doorstep.

## ***Travels and Textiles, A Wander around Rajasthan and Gujrat: Tiggy Rawlings***

19<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Tiggy talked about how her travels in Rajasthan and Gujarat had influenced her own approach to textile design and dyeing. The designs in pottery, basket making as well as textiles showed highly ornate patterns. Textiles are often embroidered richly and silk is woven with metal elements to reflect the light.

She had learned a lot about the use of natural dyes and block printing. A great deal of the textiles there is made from cotton prepared by washing it in cow dung and drying in the sun to produce white cloth. She has and continues to collect wooden stamps for block printing. Up to 1000 prints can be achieved from a single pattern block. She showed examples from Jodhpur where they specialise in screen-printing. Ikat dyeing is very common particularly using indigo dyes.



All of her experiences in India are used in her own work. Tiggy brought along some wonderful examples of quilts which are her specialty as well as garments made in rabari work with small mirrors embroidered into the designs.

The picture on the left shows some hats sitting on a bag made with rabari embroidery. The slippers on the front cover show more ornately embroidered designs.



Examples of richly decorated quilts made by Tiggy



Here is a quilt on the theme of Shalimar made by Tiggy, which came second in a national quilting competition. Her quilts are made from scratch using all natural dyes and the finishing is done with hand sewing. Some beautiful textiles!

# **Glastonbury Wool Festival**

29th August 2013



*Pam modelling her coat*

At the Guild meeting in July, Patricia Ackroyd and Jackie Giles went round the members asking for items for the Fashion Show at the Glastonbury Wool Festival. I had a Jacob wool coat and shawl that I had spun and knitted and I promised to deliver this to Jackie for inclusion. The fleece had come from one of my neighbour's Jacob ewes that was very elderly and so had become rather grey (don't we all!).

The wool was particularly fine and beautiful to spin and it made me go back to basics with its preparation.

In fact, our house had been flooded and I carded, spun and knitted the shawl while we were waiting for everything to dry out and it kept me calm and sane! I called it my Therapy Shawl. I also wove in as I knitted some dyed Wensleydale locks to give it a bit of colour. The quality of the wool encouraged me to go on and finish spinning the rest of the fleece, and there was really no waste in it, which I knitted into the coat.

A few days later I received a telephone call from Debbie, one of the organisers of the Fashion Show, to ask if I would be a model! My initial reply was a definite NO. However, as is a woman's prerogative, I phoned back and said yes. Oh dear! Patricia held a meeting at her home in Glastonbury for outfits and models to be matched and I was persuaded to wear, along with my coat and shawl, two of Patricia's woven outfits. I wasn't that happy about them but... in for a penny, in for a pound!

The day of the show arrived and we models had to be in the Tithe Barn at the Rural Life Museum early to do a run through to see how long it would all take. At 1.30pm we started getting ready for the first part of the show. I wore my coat and shawl for this part and, together with the other models, we strutted out stuff up the cat walk and down again to a pretty good reception from the audience. We slowed down a bit for the next two sessions and then did a grand finale all together.

At the end of the show, two medals were awarded by the Worshipful Company of Woolmen for the best knitted and the best woven garments. The current Master and, I think, a previous Master were there to hand out these medals. (I should add here that everything had been judged before the fashion show started so some of the organisers already knew who had won). I sort of heard someone say "... with her handknitted coat and shawl" and I realised I had won the knitwear medal!

I had never modelled anything before, and I never win competitions or raffles, so it just goes to show that if you wait long enough, things DO happen! It was a really enjoyable experience with some great people, a once in a lifetime event.

*Pam Mitchell*

## ***Embellishing Workshop: Sandra Coleridge***

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2013

Following a hugely successful mini workshop at the February Guild meeting, members requested a full day workshop with Sandra. It took until November to be able to book Sandra as she is so busy with teaching commitments around the country. There were nine of us at the workshop and with three people bringing their own embellishing machines plus the six that Sandra brought, each of us was able to have a machine to play with.

Sandra went into more detail about some of the things she talked about in February and we were guided through a series of exercises working at our own pace. We learned about:

- Basics of using the machine and how to start off placing fibre onto a background
- Making flowers, trees, houses and landscapes with fibre and pre-felt
- Making abstract designs to turn into handbags, book covers, iPad and glasses cases
- Which fibres worked best in different situations
- Using stitching on a sewing machine to 'bring out' the design
- Using a cord winder to make handles for bags



We received as much 1:1 support as needed and we all experimented with different fibres, yarns and other threads that could be couched into the overall pattern. Some of us forgot to eat we were so absorbed in what we were doing. Sandra had brought along a huge range of fibres, pre felt and other embellishments that we could buy. We also did quite a bit of swopping with neighbours to find just that right colour.

At the end of our day we all put our pieces on a table and had a 'show and tell'. The variety was extensive and a good number had done all the basic work to turn the fabric into a finished article.

Overall, this was a highly informative and relaxing day spent with colleagues who shared ideas with each other. It was the sort of experience that hopefully can be repeated in the future to extend our skills and bring new learners along.

## ***From the Archives***

I was recently given a batch of papers that had been collected over the years by one of our members who was moving house. On examination these provided a great source of information about the early days of the Somerset Guild. I thought current members might like to read the brief history of the Guild that was included in these papers.

“ One cannot mention the history of the Guild without reference to the Misses Biddulph and Dickinson. Both ladies were born in 1885 into families used to comfortable living, but in the early 1920's both their worlds were shattered and they were left virtually penniless.

Miss Biddulph spent some time in Egypt where she became interested in spinning and weaving. She returned to Britain and decided to pursue the crafts. She went to Sweden for instruction. On returning home she settled in Somerset and started spinning weaving and bottling fruit.

Miss Dickinson spent several years as an Organiser in the Women's Guild of Empire and then, for a time, worked for the Conservative and Unionist Association. However, she missed the countryside and its crafts and finally decided to move to Somerset.

It was at this time that she and Miss Biddulph met and in 1932 they took the option to buy the property they had been leasing. They set up business together spinning, weaving and bottling fruit and adopted the name “**The Quantock Weavers**”. They began giving lessons in their craft and were soon known far beyond Somerset for their work.

In 1949 they founded **The Somerset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers**. The Guild began as a branch of the Dorset Guild but by September 1949 discussions had taken place and it was decided that a County Guild should be set up. In January 1950 the constitution was presented and accepted and the sign of the spindle adopted.

At the first AGM in 1950 membership was reported to have grown from 33 to 113. Three exhibitions had been held and a variety of talks given at the meetings. By the third AGM membership had grown to 200 odd and, despite rising costs, the annual subscription had not increased from its original 5/- or 25p\*. By 1956 the subscription had increased to 10/-.

Miss Dickinson was the Guild Chairman from 1949 to 1966 and during the same years Miss Biddulph served on the committee both as member and later as Honorary Secretary. In 1966 they became Joint Presidents (at the age of 81). Sadly Miss Biddulph died in 1972 but Miss Dickinson remained President until her death in 1978 at the age of 93.

\* For interest, the subscription of 5/- in 1950 would be the equivalent of £8.50 today and 10/- in 1956 would be £11.50 today. There were also monthly meetings subs but the amounts are not clear.

## ***Guild Bursaries***

The Guild will be offering two bursaries of £50 during 2014. Bursaries are given to support appropriate educational experience in weaving, spinning and dyeing skills. In special circumstances a higher level of support may be possible with up to 50% of course fees made available.

If you wish to apply for a bursary, please contact one of the Guild Officers: Jan Newton (Chairperson), Caroline Murray-Gourlay (Treasurer) or Janet Maher (Secretary). You will be asked to write stating what the learning will be, how much it costs and what you can bring back into the Guild to benefit other members. Generally there would be an expectation that you show the fruits of your learning in some way – a short talk or an exhibition of work.

## ***Association Journal***

It is now time to renew subscriptions for the Association Journal for 2014. Forms will be available at the November meeting. Caroline, our Treasurer, needs to return the overall numbers and money by mid-January 2014. There are three ways to order the Journal:

Fill in a form at the Guild and pick up your Journal at Guild meetings	£14
Fill in a form at the Guild to have Journal posted to your home	£18
Go on-line to the Association and order postal copies to your home	£18

## ***News from the Association***

### ***Certificate of Achievement***

New documents have been received for the certificate of achievement and the certificate in advanced textile studies. These documents will be posted on the website for any member to use.

The purpose of the Certificate of Achievement is to preserve and improve craftsmanship in handweaving, tapestry weaving, spinning, and natural and synthetic dyeing, and to promote education in such craftsmanship. It aims to provide a structure within which an individual can undertake a programme of study, practice and experimentation, in their own way and in their own time. It is open to any member of a Guild affiliated to the Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers. The Certificate in Advanced Textile Studies will be awarded to a candidate whose work has reached a standard of excellence and would normally follow the successful completion of the Certificate of Achievement, or a comparable qualification at the discretion of the Certificate Committee. It is to be awarded in acknowledgement of personal development and study in weaving, spinning or dyeing.

## Future Dates for Diaries

**Wonderwool Wales** Royal Welsh Showground Saturday 25th-Sunday 26th April 2014

**Woolfest** Cockermouth Cumbria Friday 27th-Saturday 28th June 2014

**2014 Conference/AGM “Reaching Out”** in Manchester 24<sup>th</sup> - 27th April 2014

**National Exhibition 2014** “Yarns in the Cathedral” in Norwich (see Association website for details)

## Help Needed

**The GPC** is looking for two or three members to join a small working party to help develop an entry level certification scheme for members of all guilds in the Association. Two drafts have been drawn up one for dyeing and another for spinning. The aim now is gain additional help that will lead to a pilot scheme. The initial work will be done by email but a meeting may be needed later on. If you have experience in helping others to improve their skills and would be interested in helping for a short while, then please let Steve Kennett know. He can be contacted by email at

[vicechair@wsd.org.uk](mailto:vicechair@wsd.org.uk) or [steve@profact.co.uk](mailto:steve@profact.co.uk)

Steve Kennett  
Vice Chairman

The Association of Guilds of Weavers Spinners & Dyers

# Programme 2014

Meetings begin at 10.30am at  
Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall  
Talks begin at 1.45pm

18<sup>th</sup> January

**AGM 11.00am**

**Hunting Purple: Leeds Treasures**

Isabella Whitworth

15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> February

**15<sup>th</sup> Wet Felting Talk**

Jennie Loader

**16<sup>th</sup> Workshop: Felting 3D Forms**

8 places £40

Committee Meeting

15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> March

**15<sup>th</sup> Wingham Wool Sampling**

**Workshop**

**16<sup>th</sup> Workshop: Spinning Tuition**

10 places £10

19<sup>th</sup> April

**Knitted Comforts for your Soldier**

Joyce Meade

Dyeing Competition

*Soup and Bread Lunch*

17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> May

**17<sup>th</sup> Weavers Bazaar: Talk on**

**History of Tapestry Weaving**

**18<sup>th</sup> Workshop: Introduction to**

**Tapestry Weaving**

Numbers and price to be confirmed

Committee Meeting

20<sup>th</sup> June

**Fleece Fair**

19<sup>th</sup> July

**Textile Collection at Taunton Museum**

Estelle Guilbert

Note: This session and September may be reversed

20<sup>th</sup> September

**Skills Day: Making PMC Silver**

**Pendants**

Tamsyn Amber

Committee Meeting

18<sup>th</sup> October

**Natural Dyes and Fibres**

Teresina Roberts

15<sup>th</sup> November

**P & M Woolcraft**

Members open sales day –bring unwanted textiles/goods/fibres for sale

Committee Meeting

*Soup and Bread Lunch*

Spinning and Weaving competitions