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**September 2013**



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**Chair**

Jan Newton  
01823 669163  
[jammynewt@gmail.com](mailto:jammynewt@gmail.com)

**Secretary**

Janet Maher  
01823 481373  
[janet.s.maher@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.s.maher@btinternet.com)

**Treasurer**

Caroline Murray-Gourlay  
01935 862629  
[masseycbb@hotmail.com](mailto:masseycbb@hotmail.com)

**Librarian**

Miranda Hewitt, 01884 820263

**Notice Board**

Jan Arthur 01749 890266

**Newsletter**

Talitha Clarke  
01823 669322  
[talithaclarke@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:talithaclarke@yahoo.co.uk)

Janet Maher  
01823 481373 or 07703 829068  
[janet.s.maher@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.s.maher@btinternet.com)

✉ Copy deadline for September issue is Friday 1st November 2013. Please email Janet Maher  
[janet.s.maher@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.s.maher@btinternet.com)

Front cover: Sophie Fovargue showing a visitor the floor inkle loom at the Open Day

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



**Hello Members,**

Welcome back after the summer break. It's only a week into September and it definitely feels Autumnal with colder mornings. I for one have really enjoyed this summer and the lovely weather we have had. There have been a couple of highlights for me, totally personal but I would like to share them with you.

In August I was able to visit the Kaffe Fassett Quilt exhibition in Lampeter at the Welsh Quilt Centre. As usual Kaffe was displaying a lovely range of quilts using his trademark mix of vibrant colours. These were hung like flags from the ceiling and could be viewed back and front. However what really set these magnificent quilts off was the plain dyed traditional Welsh quilts which were hung on the walls. They ranged from white through the full colour spectrum to the deepest shades of orange, green, red and blue. They were all hand stitched in various patterns which represent long life and eternity, love, prosperity and health.

At the end of August I went to the Monmouth Show, very similar to our own Somerset Show I am sure but it was in a lovely setting and the weather was good. I do not believe I have ever seen so many sheep in one place. Although the Usk Rural Life Museum were demonstrating butter making and how to milk a cow there was no one spinning or weaving, just one lady with peg looms for sale so an opening for us if anyone fancies a short journey next year.

We will be starting the autumn with Shelley Tobin speaking to us about the Costumes at Killerton House and in October Tiggy Rawlins will be talking about Travels with Textiles wandering around Rajasthan and Gurjarat. November is Members Day with soup and bread lunch. We will be asking for soup volunteers very soon.

Wishing you all a bountiful Harvest Festival!

Jan Newton  
Chairperson

## ***Guild Competitions***

### ***Spinning and Weaving Competitions 2013***

Both the spinning and weaving competitions will be held at the **November** meeting. The theme is the same as for the dyeing competition – “three of a kind”. John Arbon will be coming to judge the entries.

We had a good range of entries for the dyeing competition. There was great variety in interpreting “three of a kind”. Having a good number of entries stimulated everyone. All entries are welcome for all of our competitions. We want members of all skill levels to feel comfortable about entering. We have a lot of new members and we encourage you to join in. The competitions are judged on the interpretation of the theme. You can be creative as a beginner at your craft. Please enter!

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

The Guild has a rota for serving tea and coffee at Guild meetings. The rota works through the membership list alphabetically. All non-postal members are allocated a date to work with one other person in the kitchen for the duration of the meeting. If any member cannot fulfil their allocated date, we ask you to arrange a swop with another member and to let Janet Maher, the Guild Secretary know so that the list can be updated. If you cannot do kitchen duties due to health issues, please speak to Janet. The rota for the remainder of the year is:

September:               Lale Beck & Patricia Ackroyd  
October:                 Marilyn Biggs & Hilary Bonney  
November:               Eleanor Burgess & Diana Clarke

The rota for 2014 will be published in the November Newsletter.



*'Someone's sent me a bleet.'*

# ***The Work of the Rare Breed Survival Trust***

## ***Richard Broad***

*20th July 2013*

As field officer Richard covers the whole of the south west of the UK from Pembrokeshire across to the Wash. Sula Gibbard who runs the local Somerset support group accompanied him. Richard talked about the early days of the RBST with Joe Henson as the first Chairman. Joe saved the Castlemilk Moorit by buying six of the last flock that were going to be slaughtered. His son, Adam Henson, with Castle Farm Park is well known to Countryfile viewers. Adam has done much to spread the message as the programme regularly reaches 9 million viewers. Adam's sister, Libby, runs a computerised list of the animals on the watch list of the Trust.

The RBST works to help with all the breeds on the danger list. The registered numbers are all breeding females. He gave some examples of sheep on the list like the Boreray which is very small at 40kg when wet so no bigger than most meat lambs and some of the Longwools which used to be kept for their fleece. Numbers are now small because of the low price of wool. Long wools are also more susceptible to maggot. Maggot is the second biggest killer of sheep after man.

He commented that 80% of farm animals are British breeds. The RBST works to protect the gene pool. Richard said that this meant that a lot of the breeds had to sell more stock for meat to be able to keep breeds going. Sheep fleece alone would not save the breeds. The RBST are working with breeders and supermarkets to promote the breeds as premium meat. They also want to push the message that these breeds are well cared for and less stressed.

Part of saving the gene pool involves controlling the bloodlines to prevent in-breeding. They will save semen and give this out to different females. Some of the breeding ewes are then given back to the RBST. They also support people wanting to start a flock to support bloodlines.

The RBST has started its own agricultural college at Bicton. They have put in rare breeds like short horn dairy cattle. Two out of three cattle were short horn 100 years ago whereas now it is a rare breed. Richard said that, sadly, fashion plays a part in which breeds are kept.

The RBST has a bank of sperm and embryos and enough money to keep it going for 40 years. The bank will be used to restore Herdwick sheep where half of the breed was lost in the foot and mouth outbreak. The new lambs will have to re-learn the ways of hill living as the old learning passed down through the ewes has been lost.

Fact sheets are available on-line for any rare breed. Richard gives advice on many things - one aspect is mating guidance to support bloodlines. The RBST extract semen to sell abroad for the same purpose. He supports many Wildlife Trusts that tend to know a lot about plants but less about rare breeds. He is working with Wildlife Trusts along the M25 corridor on animal husbandry and conservation. They also support Farm Parks: Cotswold Farm Park, Wimble Home Farm and Temple Newsam are three such examples. Local councils run many Farm Parks.

The RBST are just starting a gene bank for poultry. They have just produced a native breed list. There are a lot of geese and duck UK breeds that are now rare. The RBST will give advice to people about the location of reputable breeders.

# ***How the Fleece Fair Began***

*by Jim Doust*

How often is it that the ideas that turn out to be most useful just jump out at you by accident or chance? That is what happened to me and led to the birth of the fleece fair.

The South West has a large number of small holders/farmers producing quality fleeces from a number of different breeds. The trouble is they are spread over five counties so you need transport to reach them. The idea that the Somerset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers should hold an annual fleece sale came about by accident. In October 2006 my wife Ellen and I were driving home from a Guild meeting when we saw a farmer tipping a load of fleeces into a hole in the ground. The following day I telephoned our programme secretary, told her what we had seen and said, "Why don't we hold a fleece sale and get the producers to come to us"? Her reply was, "What a good idea but you can organise it!"

My first approach was to the Somerset Small Holders Association and the Coloured Sheep Breeders Society. Both organisations were enthusiastic and helpful in providing lists of members they thought would be interested. After countless emails and numerous telephone calls, I not only had as many breeders as I had space for but also a waiting list.

We decided not to charge a fee for stall space; instead we set a fee of 10% of sales. The breeders liked this as if they failed to sell any fleece then it cost them nothing. Fellow members Fay Wilks took on the publicity and Carol Mellish put together a catering team offering lunches to stall holders and visitors alike.

The date we set was July 21<sup>st</sup> 2007. That was our first mistake as it was the first day of the school holiday and floods in Gloucestershire as well as heavy rain in Somerset and Devon kept a number of people away. None the less the response from the breeders was enough to encourage us to carry on.

For the following year we changed the date to June 21<sup>st</sup> and this proved a great success and popular with the breeders. The morning session saw an almost constant stream of members and visitors coming through the doors and leaving with bulging bags of fleece.

The third Saturday in June has now become fixed in our calendar for the fleece sale, and each year becomes more successful than the previous. At the end of 2009 I had to give up the organisation of the sale for health reasons, and the organisation of the sale was taken over by Norma Sanders. Norma organised the 2010 event, the best yet with commissions exceeding £400 not a lot of money by some standards but when looked at in percentage terms that's quite a lot of fibre sold.

One big advantage in holding this event is the number of new members it has attracted, both experienced spinners and those wishing to learn the craft. This I think is down to the excellent publicity covering the event.

Other Guilds have followed our lead but tend not to have all day events. I talk to the breeders that I have known from the beginning and with out exception they tell me that they like coming to us because they can get a meal.

And that is how it all started.

## ***Fleece Fair and Open Day 2013***

This year we decided to have a two-day event. We held the annual Fleece Fair on Saturday 15th June and an Open Day for the public on Sunday 16th June. Despite the poor weather and that the Sunday was Father's Day the weekend was extremely successful. We took just under £1000 as a Guild on commissions, sale of food and entrance fees.

Most of the sellers with unprocessed fleece went home having sold everything. Certainly, people could be seen visiting their cars with bags full of fibre and fleece. In the processed fibre, John Arbon's organic merino and mulberry silk caused many a Guild member to go back more than once!

Many members came on both days: to sell fleece and fibre on the Saturday and to demonstrate on the Sunday. As always we had a varied range of demonstrations in the billiard room on the day of the Fleece Fair. On Sunday the hall was bursting at the seams with members demonstrating every craft possible linked to our Guild purpose. The weekend would not have been possible without the hard work of many in organising things, demonstrating skills, cooking, cleaning and serving the public. There are too many people to thank individually. You all know who you are and your efforts make the Guild something to be proud of.

Although the weather was dreadful on the Sunday and it was Father's Day, we did get a number of visitors and six of them have turned into members. One of the real benefits of Sunday was the opportunity for members to go around and look at the fantastic range of skills we have in the Guild. The sense of community was palpable in the room and the feedback has shown how much members enjoyed the day. Those of us who came all learned something new.

This was the first time we have combined an Open Day with the Fleece Fair. There has been much learning and we will do it again using the lessons learned. Next time we will check it is not a significant calendar event. The positives are that we have joined with the BBC in promoting our crafts through sponsorship of the Countryfile programme. We have asked for someone to volunteer for the role of publicity officer to make sure our work is promoted effectively.

One of the benefits of doing two days was that some people stayed overnight. There were about 12 members and friends who stayed the course. It was lovely to sit down in a relaxed way and eat with people. Those of us who stayed for the meal had fun and we all learned a lot more about each other as people. The group ranged from brand new members through to people who have been in the Guild for many years - a great way to segue into skills sharing on the Sunday.

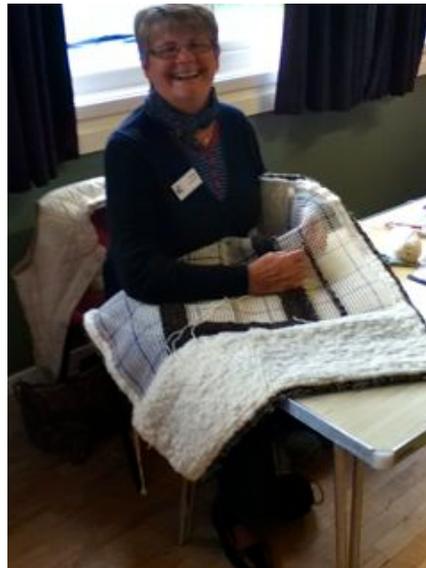
The photo gallery on the next pages gives a flavour of the two days but, sadly, it was not possible to include photos of everyone who participated or we would run out of space.

Janet Maher  
Secretary to the Guild

## *Fleece Fair Gallery*



## Open Day Gallery



# Dye Workshop

3rd August 2013

Eleven members attended the Dye workshop, which was tutored by Barbara Spicer. We learned about using acid dyes. Barbara had planned a full day of very practical learning and provided printed lesson plans taking us through a series of exercises.

We began with an introduction to using the dyes including basic health and safety requirements. We learned how to make up a dye solution, about preparation of the fibre and yarn for dyeing, and that we only ever needed to buy the three primary dye colours plus black to make any colour.



Using small skeins of wool, small balls of wool and some tops brought by Barbara, we progressed through a number of exercises:

- Effect of different dilutions of primary colours
- Using black to create shades on primary colours
- Mixing primary colours to obtain secondary colours
- Over-dyeing
- Dyeing tops
- Dyeing balls of wool

We hung our finished samples on washing lines to dry. Most of the day we had dull sunshine but downpours in the afternoon had us running to rescue our samples. We all ended up with wet legs as we had set up working under the veranda outside the hall to reduce the risks for the wooden floor in the hall.



The day was well planned and we learned a lot. Feedback from one member was, " it was a privilege to be taught by someone experienced, knowledgeable and so brilliantly organised that we were able to cover such an extensive range in one day ". Thank you Barbara!

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

### ***New President for Association***

The Association will have a new President to follow on from Sheila Smith - who will officially stand down at the 2014 Conference / AGM in Manchester in April 2014. The new President will be Dr Jenny Balfour-Paul - a person and name that will be well known to lots of you through her extensive knowledge, books and work with all things Indigo.

She is a writer, artist, traveller and lecturer, has researched and worked with indigo for over two decades. She has extensive international experience in her chosen field and is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at Exeter University and we greatly look forward to her representing our Association.

### ***Trowbridge Museum: Textile and Weaving Festival 2013***

This event is running from 17th August to 16th November. For more information please contact:

<http://trowbridgemuseum.co.uk/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/thingstodo/activity/textile-and-weaving-festival-2013/occurrence/285612>

### ***Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives Exhibition 'A Stitch in Time; Wool's Mark on History'***

28th September – 31st December 2013

A new exhibition in the Chained Library is open to visitors this autumn. 'A Stitch in Time; Wool's Mark on History', draws upon a varied collection of exhibits to showcase the story of wool.

[www.herefordcathedral.org](http://www.herefordcathedral.org)

### ***Devon Weavers Workshop***

17th-18th October 2013

**Sprang** with Carol James

£90 includes all tuition, frame and materials

9th - 11th November 2013

**Colour & Design** with Margo Selby

3 day course £195

Further details on both courses from from [ann@ambrook.net](mailto:ann@ambrook.net)

### ***Knitting and Stitching Shows***

London: Alexandra Palace

10th-13th October

Harrogate: Harrogate International Centre

21st-24th November

# Programme 2013

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

19th January

**Members Dye Day**  
**Preparing for Dye Competition**  
Meeting cancelled

16th February

**Embellishing Demonstration**  
**Needle Punch Felting**  
Sandra Coleridge  
Committee Meeting  
*Soup and Bread Lunch*

16th March

**How I Got Started**  
**Sara's Texture Crafts**  
Sara Millis  
*Sara's Sales Table am*

20th April

**Spinning Art Yarns**  
Jill Shepherd  
*Talk at 11.15am, Mini Workshop pm*  
Committee Meeting  
Dyeing Competition

18th May

**AGM 11.00 am**  
**The Elizabethan Textiles of**  
**Hardwick Hall**  
Dr Gillian White

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

**Fleece Fair Saturday**  
**Open Day for Visitors Sunday**  
Evening Get Together for Guild  
Members (camping on Green if wanted)

20th July

**British Rare Breed Sheep and the**  
**Work of the RBST**  
Richard Broad, RBST Field Officer  
Committee meeting

21<sup>st</sup> September

**The Costumes at Killerton House**  
Shelley Tobin  
Costume Curator, Killerton House  
Committee Meeting

19th October

**Travels and Textiles: A Wander**  
**around Rajasthan & Gujarat**  
Tiggy Rawlings

16th November

**Members Day: Sharing our Work**  
**Past, Present and Future**  
Discussion of projects with each other  
Open sales day –bring unwanted  
textiles/goods/fibres for sale  
Committee Meeting  
*Soup and Bread Lunch*  
Spinning and Weaving competitions