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July 2016



<i>Page</i>	Contents
3	Message from the Chair
4	Tea/coffee rota 2016
4	Christmas Social Event
4	Guild Competitions
5	Members Skills Day
6	National Exhibition 2016: Guild Selected Entries
7	Kersey – The History of Our Local Fabric
8	Fleece Fair 2016
9	Guild Demonstrations for Remainder of 2016
10	For Sale
12	Programme for 2016

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✉ Copy deadline for June issue is Friday 11th November 2016. Please email Janet Maher at secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk

Front cover: Lovely Manx Loaghtan Sheep

Message from the Chair

Hello Members,

Since I last wrote a message to you, my world has been a very busy place. This has been largely due to planning the National Exhibition. There has been a strong team from around the region working together on making this exhibition work. One of the good things is that we have built a very strong network across the region now and I feel sure that the relationships we have forged will continue after the show is over.

These national events are important to us as a way of meeting our aims in educating the public and keeping the skills alive. At Killerton we hope to see a wide range of people who may be interested in what we do but have never had the opportunity to see it up close or have a go. I am hopeful that the event will attract new members across the UK but especially in our region.

The Fleece Fair was a big success – all down to your efforts in supporting the event. We had the biggest number of types of fleece ever and lots of visitors to see our demonstrators.

We have a bumper autumn season planned with excellent speakers, Guild Competitions and our Xmas Social. I am planning a new Chairperson Challenge that I hope to give you in September to be ready for our Xmas Social – something a bit fun too!

In the meantime, the weather has kept me hard to the weeding grindstone in the garden. The combination of warm then wet spells made ideal conditions for growing – particularly grass and weeds. Still, I have been successful in germinating most of my new dye plant seeds so will be able to provide weld, dyers camomile, indigo and alkanet for the National Exhibition.

I wish you the best of summer holidays. Have some quiet reflection on what you will do for the Guild Competitions while you are relaxing in the sun. I may do a Chairperson Challenge for the best photo of you being creative whilst on holiday. Take some snaps if you are crafting!

See you Saturday.

Janet Maher
Chairperson

Tea and Coffee Rota 2016

The tea rota for the remainder of 2016 is below. If you cannot fulfil your turn, please make arrangements for someone else to be there. Please let Janet know of any changes.

J Newton September
P Smith

J Calderbank October
J Clark

D Hills November
E Kingston

The new tea and coffee rota for 2017 will be published in the next Newsletter. Caroline Maltby is putting together the rota for next year. Based on feedback we will be putting four people on each Guild meeting so that people do just two hours as a pair: either 10.00 – 12.00 or 12.00 to 2.00.

Note from Janet: There is a general query that comes up every few years that poses the question as to the reason we have a tea rota at all. There are two reasons:

- We collect more money in tea/coffee sales than when there is no rota
- Someone has to clear up the kitchen and a rota allocates these duties fairly rather than the same volunteers always doing it

The tea rota is one of those perennial thorny issues that we always get gripes about and yet it is a service to the Guild that is essential. People get a lot from the Guild and the tea rota is one of the ways everyone puts a bit back in. We are open to suggestions at all times about how to make it work more easily hence the changes for next year.

There are lots of jobs that volunteers do at the Guild like staying to brush up and put tables away, and it is usually the same people who stay to help. The tea rota is one of the few things where everyone takes a turn.

Christmas Meeting December 2016

These events have proved very popular with lots of opportunity for people to chat and share what they have been doing in their craft. It is also a fun occasion with lots of laughter. All members are welcome so please put the date in your diary – 17th December.

In September, I will issue a new Chairperson Challenge, something appropriately festive that we can bring to this social event.

Guild Competitions 2016

The theme for our competitions in 2016 will be “**Recycling**”. As always people can interpret the theme in any way they like.

Recycling could mean using old fabrics in some way to create something new in dyeing, spinning or weaving. It could mean literally undoing an older piece of hand made yarn and re-using it. It could mean mixing old with new. Fabrics and fibre can be overdyed to make something new. There are many possibilities. Just Google recycled fabric, textile or yarn and see what inspires you.

The competitions dates are:

Dyeing: September Meeting
Spinning: October Meeting
Weaving: November Meeting

Guild Demonstrations for Remainder of 2016

We have received requests to demonstrate at the following:

Wool on Sea at the Dairy Festival in Weston Super Mare;	5 th /6 th August
Rare Breeds Survival Trust Show, Sedgemoor Auction Centre:	22 nd September
Craft4Crafters, Bath and West Showground:	13 th - 15 th October
Quilting and Textile Show, UWE Exhibition Centre:	11 th – 13 th November

We have also been asked to demonstrate in the Taunton Information Centre again, probably later in the year.

If you can attend any of these events, there will be forms to volunteer at the entrance desk at the Guild meeting. Please do volunteer as it is good fun and the public do like to see what we do.

Guild Sales Table

As you know, we have visiting yarn and fibre sellers at Guild meetings. During the autumn meetings we have:

October: Lesley Stimpson, who is retiring and selling off her mohair yarns and carded fibre for very good prices

November: John Arbon with his usual range of goodies

Timbertops/Woodland Turnery : Clive and Joan Jones

19th March 2016

We had a fascinating day with Clive and Joan. Clive worked spectacularly hard all day mending wheels and advising on the ones they had brought with them for sale. He deserved a break by the time Joan came to talk to us about how they came to Timbertops.

Clive and Joan started out in the 1980's with Clive wood-turning and Joan doing pyrography. They went out to shows demonstrating their crafts. In 1994 Clive made his first spinning wheel. They gradually expanded their range of spinning and weaving accessories as the Woodland Turnery and Clive began doing wheel repairs. In 2008 they bought Timbertops spinning wheels from James and Anne Williamson.

Joan talked with great emotion about the fire in their equipment barn that nearly destroyed the business. They were both so devastated that they nearly gave up but were inspired to come back by the support of customers, suppliers and the on-line community that emailed them. They have now rebuilt the business from a few Timbertop wheels that were saved or could borrow to rebuild the wood working patterns.

Members Skills Day

16th April 2016

We held the annual skills at the April meeting. The taster sessions we arranged were based on the feedback from the small group discussions we had about topics earlier in the year. We had the following sessions:

- Different methods of casting on and casting off in knitting run by Julia Jones
- Basic crochet skills run by Pam Mitchell
- Navajo plying with Norma Sanders
- Colour blending on a drum carder and blending board with Marilyn Biggs
- Fibre preparation – to card or not to card with Carol Mellish

The feedback about the sessions was extremely good including the posts on Facebook, which received a lot of interest from non-Guild visitors. We will run another Skills Day next year so, if any of you have particular requests, please let me know as soon as possible.

We will follow on some of these taster sessions with whole day workshops. The first of these will be a continuation of the session on knitting skills. Julia Jones will lead the day. The day will cover:

- More on casting on and casting off, a chance to revise if you attended the taster
- Different ways of joining pieces of knitting with a focus on grafting techniques
- How to shape knitting as in armholes – different ways of doing this and how the results look

If you would like any of the other taster sessions extended into a full workshop, please let us know.

Janet Maher

Summer School 2017

The Association Summer School will be held at Sparsholt College, Hampshire starting Sunday 13th August and running through to Sunday 20th August. Sparsholt is a large and attractive campus, home to Radio 4's Gardening Question Time's Potting Shed. It is close to Winchester and one of the closest to us in a long time.

All the courses are a week long and will cover weaving, spinning, dyeing, felting, knitting and basketry. Some are new to Summer School and some are back by popular demand.

The Summer School is residential and is a good way of doing in-depth learning as well as meeting new people and sharing your experiences. Life long friends are often made at Summer School.

Summer School will include all the favourites: a trade fair, silent auction, fashion show, raffle, COA exhibition and a Gala Dinner.

The brochure will be available on-line from mid-September and we will bring copies of the syllabus to the September Guild meeting if it is available by then. Otherwise it will be emailed out. Allocation of courses will begin on 1st January 2017 with a 'names in the hat' system for over subscribed courses.

The Guild has two bursaries of £50 available to support people who would like to go to Summer School. The only requirement is that the learning is fed back in some way to the Guild. If you are interested when you see the syllabus in the autumn, let Caroline or Janet know.

National Exhibition 2016 at Killerton House

Somerset Guild entered 8 items into the Selected section of the National Exhibition. This is where experts in the fields of weaving, spinning and dyeing judge items. There were 225 entries from 51 Guilds across the country and I am very proud to let you know that 6 of our 8 entries were selected for display at the exhibition. This is the most selected for a good number of years and shows what talent we have in the Guild.

The following Guild members had items selected:

Ann Thacker:	Woven cloth yardage
Pam Mitchell:	Handspun and crocheted throw
Pat Ilsley (2 items):	Wedding veil and fine shawl, handspun and knitted
Amanda Hannaford:	Hand dyed, handspun and knitted stole
Chris Wright:	Woven ordination stole

The photographs do not do justice to the real items so please come to the exhibition to see them.



We will also have 15 bookmarks on show in the Open section of the exhibition. The exhibition runs from 8th – 18th September at Killerton House. Please bring family and friends along. Somerset Guild will be stewarding and demonstrating on 15th and 18th September supported by the Spinners and Weavers Workshop in Staplehay.

If anyone has not volunteered to steward but can do so, please contact Janet.



Kersey - The History of Our Local Fabric: Louise Cottey

21th May 2016

Louise explained she had been awarded a bursary to study local weaving history in the pre-industrial age. Her focus was Kersey, the local cloth worn by working people in the 15th - 17th century. She wanted to recreate the old patterns and fabric using local native breeds. To do this she undertook a lot of research to find out more about the cloth.

She had access to old letter books from Thomas Fox as a source of information. In that period of history, fleece was sent to wool combers for processing and on to spinners (mostly in private homes). From here the yarn went to wool winders then to the weavers. The final step was the fullers where the cloth was washed, fullled and stretched. Although spinning and weaving was largely done in rural homes before the industrial revolution, labour was still organised through 'clothiers'. Clothiers controlled the entire production process and the remuneration of spinners and weavers before the cloth was finally sent to merchants. Clothiers were powerful and often very wealthy.

Hammet Street and most Tudor buildings in Taunton were built from money made in the cloth industry. Letters from Thomas Fox to J Jarvis, a clothier in Taunton, revealed a lot about the working relationships of the time. The Fox Company originally contracted the spinners and weavers working at home before bringing labour into factories and mills such as Coldharbour Mill.



Most warps were linen with a wool weft at that time. There were very tight requirements for the sett of the cloth when it was farmed out to individual weavers.

Over time, those with money sought an all-wool cloth. The warps for these were worsted spun while the weft was woollen spun. Local fleece was perceived as too coarse for this cloth and imports started from Spain and Ireland.

Weavers were paid very little. A letter in 1700 was found asking for an Act of Parliament to protect the income and training of weavers.

Serge and Kersey were the types of cloth woven in Somerset and Devon. Kersey was a much older cloth with Devon as a lead producer. 'Devonshire Dozens' were lengths of 38 ins wide and 12 yards long - a very dense cloth worn by the working class.

Louise used her research to reproduce traditional Kersey. The weft was dyed in a black and white mottled colour with the warp dyed orange. She fullled the cloth in the original way using foot power and water in local streams and rivers. She raised the nap with a dog brush – historically fullers' teasels would have been used.

Louise brought the cloth with her. It was very thick and dense from the fulling as can be seen in the photo. The talk was a fascinating insight into how cloth was produced historically from both a technical as well as a socio-cultural perspective.

Janet Maher

Fleece Fair

18th June 2016

Nature was with us this year for the Fleece Fair. I awoke to a grey but very mild day – perfect for a Fleece Fair. If the weather is too hot, people do not think about buying fleece, if wet or too cold, they do not leave home. A grey, mild day gives us the best climate for selling fleece and fibre, and for attracting new members.



We had over 80 visitors on the day – much more than usual and a larger number of Guild members came too!

The room behind the hall was literally buzzing in the morning with our demonstrators reporting a much higher level of interest than usual. We did have almost every aspect of our craft covered!

In the photo left, Marilyn can be seen showing spinning skills to a visitor.

The Fleece Fair is one of the key ways that we recruit new members so being willing to demonstrate, talk to people and let them have a go is crucial.

We had two new stallholders this year too selling coloured Ryeland and Gotland fleece. We hope they will return again next year. We also had a few Lleyn fleeces this year that sold well, something we have not had before.

Sadly, it was the last occasion that Liffy will be sending her Manx Loaghtan fleece as she has retired from keeping them.

If any member knows of unusual breeds please let us know and we can contact the breeders early in the year



Overall the day was very successful and we made as much money from commission and food sales as in previous years.

Janet Maher

For Sale

Mohair Yarns

Lesley Stimpson, one of our Guild members is retiring from the mohair business she has run for many years. There are some wonderful bargains here if you are interested.

- 75% mohair/ 25% merino single ply yarn un dyed 1150 grams for **£10.00**
- Pure Kid Mohair single ply yarn un dyed 1100 grams for **£11.00**
- 100 grams carded kid mohair was £4.50 now **£2.50** a bag
- Dyad 42 inch Raddle **£20.00**

Postage is in addition to the above prices. Please contact Lesley on 01934 822218 or email: silvermoor.mohair@btinternet.com

Two Tapestry Frames



With a large amount of wools on a frame

Starter Pack for someone who wants just to try their hand at tapestry weaving

Price: **£30 o.n.o.**

For all 4 above items contact Margaret Knight on 01460 54498 or Email spinner54498@btinternet.com

Programme 2016

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

16th January

Rush cutting and basket weaving on
the Isle
Linda Lemieux
AGM 11.00am
Chairperson Challenge: Bookmarks

20th February

Travels in Afghanistan
Amanda Hannaford
Fibre Sales
Committee Meeting

21st February

AM: Long draw spinning workshop
PM: Long draw spinning workshop

19th March

Spinning a Yarn: Spinning wheel
surgery
Spinning wheel and fibre sales
Joan and Clive Jones, Woodland
turnery (Timbertops)

16th April

Members Skills Day
Soup and Bread Lunch
Fibre sales: Jean Field

21st May

Kersey: The history of our local fabric
Louise Cottey
Committee Meeting

18th June

Fleece Fair
Skills demonstrations

16th July

My adventures with a rigid heddle loom
Helen Brotherton
Weaving yarn sales

17th September

The history of the Paisley shawl
Valerie Reilly (formerly curator of textiles
at Paisley museum)
Dyeing competition
Committee meeting

15th October

Stranded Knitting (Fair Isle)
Fiona Morris
Spinning competition
Soup and Bread Lunch

19th November

Ukrainian crafts
Nataliya Cummings
Weaving Competition
Committee meeting

17th December

Social event
Shared lunch and Secret Santa