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**June 2017**



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✉ Copy deadline for June issue is Friday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Please email Janet Maher at [secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk](mailto:secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk)

Front cover: One of Fiona Gardner's Merino Rams

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

**Hello Members,**

I am sitting down to write this just after our May meeting and my head is still reeling in a very positive way following the talk from Fiona Gardner. It is rare to meet someone who knows such a tremendous amount about breeding sheep for their fleece and who cares so passionately about her animals. You will see a photo of one of her prize merino rams on the front cover.

I confess that my craft projects have taken a back seat over the last three months as the garden has demanded my time. Now that my veggies are all growing happily and the last of the annual border fillers are in, I can return to thinking craft things. One thing that struck me is that the next National Exhibition will be upon us before we know it. There is a short piece in the Newsletter about this.

We have a busy autumn with two workshops coming up to develop our skills – flax spinning and inkle weaving. We also have the Guild competitions. There is much for us all to do as the evenings draw in and the colder weather approaches not too quickly I hope.

One important venture for the Guild is the formation of the spinning study group to support the members who are doing the Certificate of Achievement or the Foundation Certificate in spinning. We also awarded a bursary for a weaving course to Linda McKenna. I believe that having a learning mindset is the only way the Guild will survive into the future as this will encourage new people to come along and engage. Wherever I worked in my career, having learners around that asked questions and pushed boundaries always enhanced the skill levels and abilities of the organisation.

The Somerset Guild has some extremely skilled experts in our craft fields and I want those skills to be passed on. Whilst it is great for people to come along and simply enjoy what they do without wanting to push themselves further, we also want there to be an element that does want to learn more. The Guild is about having the whole spectrum of skills and appetite for learning and that keeps us alive.

I look forward to seeing you all at the July Guild meeting.

**Janet Maher  
Chairperson**

## ***Tea and Coffee Rota 2017***

The tea rota for the remainder of 2017 is below. If you cannot fulfil your turn, please make arrangements for someone else to be there. Please let Caroline Maltby know of any changes.

	<b>10.15 – 12.00</b>	<b>12.00 – 1.30</b>
<b>Sept</b>	Linda McKenna/Chris Wright	Diane Colthorpe/Andrea Stuart
<b>Oct</b>	Lesley Hill/ Chris Rice	Muriel Osbourne/Lynda Dommett
<b>Nov</b>	Sally Bail/Karen Dumbill	Kathy Wright/Yvette Jones

## ***Guild Competitions 2017***

The Guild Committee considered a number of suggestions for the theme for competitions throughout 2017. The following was considered to give ample scope to people thinking about entries: **“At The Seaside”**

As always the competitions will be held at Guild meetings in the months of:

Dyeing – September  
Spinning – October  
Weaving – November

## ***National Exhibition 2018***

The National Exhibition 2018 will be held at Strathclyde University in Glasgow between 16 – 30 July 2018. Given this timeline, we can expect the closing date for entries to the selected section to be sometime in April.

Last year we had 8 entries, 6 of which were selected. It would be wonderful if we could better that number for 2018. Please put on your thinking hats. Entries can be pieces of weaving, items from hand spun yarn (with a sample of the yarn), skeins of yarn, felting and tapestries. Last year we had some items from rigid heddle looms, inkle looms as well as weaving on multi-shaft looms.

Judges look for more than the technical skill when assessing – I learned that watching them last year! They also look to see if the item shows thinking about colour use, structure and texture – all the things Janet Crowther talked to us about.

We will receive more information soon and I will keep you informed. Novice entries are welcome.

**Janet Maher**

# ***Dipping into Design: Janet Crowther***

21<sup>st</sup> January 2107

Janet gave the title to the talk for the meeting as she said it was such a big topic we would just be dipping a toe. She started by talking about her history in textiles and her philosophy of design, which can be summed up as “a bit of Zing”!

Janet's first memory of doing something with textiles was of a depressing piece of binca fabric at primary school (remember that?) followed by making a gingham apron at secondary school. The whole experience was deeply frustrating and did not encourage any creativity. After school and a spell working at Peter Jones in London, Janet went to teacher training college to specialise in Art but quickly changed to embroidery, especially the use of machine stitching. In 1980 Janet was given a spinning wheel, then she learned to weave and soon embarked on a three-year course in “Creative Textiles” at Urchfont College, which ran every weekend.

Although she learned to knit and to weave, Janet still felt she knew next-to-nothing about design but she decided that the most important thing is **research**. She started a series of ideas notebooks and brought some to show us. She always keeps a small notebook in her handbag to jot down any ideas or experiences. Her notebook on *Vessels* contained quick sketches of any relevant shapes; pictures of pots, bags, buckets and bowls. It bulged with colour swatches, postcards of paintings, and snippings from magazines. From the vessels notebook, Janet developed some bags using a shape she had seen and liked; she knitted them, felted them, embellished them and embroidered them. They led to a commission for “Quilting Art” magazine in the US and to an invitation to produce work for an exhibition based on the gardens at Knowle House in Kent.

Janet impressed on us that our sketches are working drawings for our own use only. They do not have to mean anything to anybody else. The important thing is just to collect as many ideas as possible and to bring the best of them together in our work. Oh and that Zing? A highlight of complementary colour, a bit of sparkle, a memorable title, anything that will make our work stand out from the crowd! These concepts were very well displayed in the lovely velveteen loose jacket she wore for the talk.

After lunch, Janet led a short workshop – well, there was so much to do and the time seemed very short! We thought about our own pre-conceived ideas about what colour should be used for and where, and considered what different colours conveyed to us about mood and emotions. We thought about texture and movement and tried different ways of recording the same scene using different media - including masking tape. We actually concluded by drawing a sketch of Janet's face, seeing it as a series of light and dark shapes as it was strongly lit from one side and none of us was embarrassed to hold our work up at the end. We had learnt the relevance of doing our own thing for our own benefit and of just having a go. After all, what's the worst that could happen?

**Lesley Took**

## ***Textiles of Japan: Jennifer Hughes***

18<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Jennifer became interested in textiles in the 90's when her husband was posted to a job in Thailand. She had no work permit so started with an NGO as a volunteer. Hill tribes in Thailand do lovely embroidered silk fabrics and Jennifer was hooked – she started collecting fabrics and developed an interest in how they made.

She ended up with a room full of textiles from many different countries. This talk focuses on Japan. She noted that art and textile crafts are respected equally with a big crossover between the two in both the techniques and the people involved in the crafts (unlike the traditional view held of textile crafts in the western world where it often perceived as less creative or artistic).

Decorated and bright textiles were only allowed in the Imperial Court historically with everyone else wearing dull colours. The fashion was layered silk in kimonos. Kimono is a late word - after 1800 – before the word was kosode and was all about the sleeves. Many layers were used. The photos of Paulette show her in different stages of traditional dress. One shows the first three layers and the second shows the outer coat on the top.



Whilst royalty and the upper classes wore silk, the plebs wore bast fibres (hemp) initially and later cotton. The cotton layers were decorated using **ikat** (warp and weft dyed to a pattern before weaving which produce the final design), **shibori** (squeezing and/or stitching fabric before dyeing to produce patterns) and **sashiko** (white stitching usually on indigo to produce designs). When working they would hitch up their layers and tuck them into undergarments.

House fires were common in older days as a lot of fabric was used in the construction of houses and was highly combustible. Fabric was used for everything – futon covers, bags, blinds and belts. Square pieces of fabric with tied corners were used to make a

wrapping cloth – called furoshiki – these were highly decorated by dyeing or by using sashiko.

In the 1600 – 1800's decoration moved on with gutta techniques being used to develop patterns. Stencilling was also developed at this time using a rice paste resist. A gift cloth ritual became common practise where gifts would be in a box wrapped with a decorated gift cloth. The tradition was that the box and the cloth would be returned to the giver once the gift was opened. To keep the cloth was considered an insult.

After 1868, when Japan was opened up to the world, German dyes and French looms had a big impact on the traditional fabric making crafts. Chemical dyes made fabric cheaper and patterns were influenced by western styles. Patterns became 'trendier'

An appreciation of the old styles and crafts has become popular again now in Japan with teenage girls wanting the full 'coming of age' and 'marriage' kimono outfits. The traditional outfit made of fine decorated silks can cost £000's of pounds (as much as a car). Even cheaper synthetic kits start at £1000.

On the day after the workshop, Jennifer led a workshop teaching us how to do some basic shibori designs on cotton and linen. Even though there were a few problems with the dye vats, we all learned a lot about the intricate nature of stitching involved in shibori. The group photo shows how much people achieved in a short space of time – something to take away and work on much more!



## ***Breeding Coloured Sheep in New Zealand: Fiona Gardner***

*20<sup>th</sup> May 2018*

Fiona first went to New Zealand as a young farmer on a working exchange. She met her husband, who is from NZ some time later and they returned to run the family farm. Coloured sheep were rare in NZ as most people want white fleece to dye. Fiona started with 5 coloured sheep in 1984 and they now have 5000. The farm is high in the hills – 1500 feet at the farmhouse and 2200 at the top of the farm.

Fiona breeds Merino and the half-breed Haunui (a cross between Merino and Romney) now an official sheep breed. She says her Merinos have adapted to the wide range of weather conditions. They have dry winters and wet spring seasons. They can get 2 ft of snow during the winter. Summer is like it is in Europe; autumn is dry with some rain. A type of Alfalfa called Lucerne is the main feed crop to sheep.

The fleece of the Merino ewes is average 18 microns with the hogs at 16 microns. This exceptionally fine fleece is sold in entirety to Louis Vuitton, along with most of the Haunui fleece. See the photo of the fine black Merino ram on the front cover

The farm is so remote that Fiona home-schooled her children. They both did agri-business as distance learning courses and her son went into banking (although wants to come back to farming) whilst her daughter remained at home and is a shepherd. She has been in the final of the NZ Shepherding Challenge.

Fiona was clear that consistency of feeding is essential in producing the fine Merino fleece. All of the wool goes to worsted spinning. They aim for the highest quality fleece with minimal variation. The black Merino is the most commercially attractive for Vuitton but he also buys the other colours. The Merino they produce has a higher sheen whilst maintaining the loft, similarly with the Haunui. Fineness and loft go together but not usually lustre, which is common in the Long Wool breeds. There is a continuum with the cross breeds to give both qualities, something that Fiona breeds for. In the UK, BFL is often the only sheep seen to have fine yet lustrous long fleece.

Fiona says they watch the shearing very carefully. There are lots of tips and tricks in shearing at the right time of year. They shear in August/September and shear for 15 days with each day lasting 7.30am – 5.30pm. Fiona checks each fleece as it comes off the sheep. They are then gone through again to class each fleece – meaning all fleeces are seen twice, some 10,000 – 12,000 checks completed by the Fiona and her assistants. The fleeces are then separated into colours and into categories of heads, bellies, legs, backs and locks. (See photo of colour separated fleece). All have different uses.

Fiona explained that both she and her husband are vegan - she could not eat the sheep she cares for. She said the hardest part of the job was letting some sheep go to preserve the breeding lines and quality. She has a rule that any lamb that is hand reared becomes a pet – see the photo of the 45 sheep that are pets.

This was a wonderful talk by someone who knows a lot about fleece and who cared for the welfare of the animals. She left us some lovely bags of fine fleece, which will become raffle prizes.



*Fiona's pet sheep*

## **Skills Day at the Guild**

*15th April 2017*

Despite being Easter Saturday, we had well over 40 members attending the Skills Day. The quiet buzz of enthusiastic concentration in the room was reflected in smiles on faces as members learned something new. We had five study topics in the morning repeated in the afternoon so that members could choose two different activities in the day. Whilst this was a scheduling brainteaser, we did manage with all the groups having between 6 – 9 people, meaning everyone got sufficient attention from the tutors. The study topics were:

- Continental knitting and Kitchener stitch led by Julia Jones
- Tunisian crochet led by Pam Mitchell
- Weaving a bag on a box led by Debby Hills
- Understanding more about wheel tension and wheel ratios led by Carol Mellish
- Understanding more about weaving looms led by Lesley Took and Janet Maher

The feedback on the sessions was excellent with many members commenting how much they had learned and how satisfying it was. We are lucky to have such skilled members who are prepared to give their time to run study groups. Our thanks go to all of the tutors. We already have two topics requested for next year – Dorset Buttons and Broomstick Crochet. Please let me know if you have any requests.

The day was also very satisfying courtesy of the excellent soup and bread on the day. Nice lunch and good learning – just how we like things. In particular there were many requests for the recipe for Brenda Hamblin's Celeriac and Parmesan soup (and the garlic). We have collected the recipe from Brenda and it is available in this Newsletter.

Here's wishing for as good a day next year!

**Janet Maher**

## ***Spinning Study Group***

We have at least two Guild members who have registered for the Certificate of Achievement in spinning and one member registered for the Foundation Certificate in spinning. There may be one or two other members who are thinking about registering too.

A Study Group is being set up starting in September 2018 to support the people doing these qualifications. The group will meet monthly. If you are going to register for either qualification or are just thinking about it, please let me know, as you will be welcome to join the group. Anyone registered for either certificate will also receive mentoring as a separate activity.

**Janet Maher**

### ***Brenda Hamblin's Celeriac and Parmesan Soup***

Following many requests for this recipe here it is:

#### **Ingredients**

25gms butter  
½ onion – chopped  
1 celeriac – peeled and chopped  
1.35 ltrs vegetable or chicken stock  
45mls cream  
50gms Parmesan or Grana Padano cheese grated  
Salt and pepper to taste

#### **Cooking Directions**

1. Melt butter and fry onion, garlic and celeriac gently for 4 – 5 mins.
2. Add stock, bring to the boil and simmer 25 – 30 mins until the celeriac is cooked.
3. Cool slightly and blend.
4. Add the cream, parmesan and salt/pepper – stir well.

Enjoy!

### ***Additions to the Library***

Since the beginning of the year we have ordered some new magazine subscriptions for the library based on feedback from members. We have added:

- British Fibre Arts which is attempting to fill the gap left by Yarnmaker
- Interweave Crochet
- Interweave Knits

We continue to subscribe to Spin Off and Hand Woven.

If anyone has a burning desire to see any other magazine subscriptions, please let the librarians know.

We have purchased an app so that the librarians can scan all of the books we have in the library. This will take some time but we hope to have a complete database of our books up on the website in the future so that members can see what we have without scrambling around the shelves – something I adore doing yet others do not!

I would also like to remind people that the Association also has a Library. A new library volunteer is currently revamping this. Details available in due course. Let me know if you want more information on this. The refreshed library will be called the Stuart Groom Library named to commemorate the recent Chairperson of the Association (before Angela Colbridge) who died sadly at the beginning of the year.

**Janet Maher**

## ***Abbey Hill Steam Fair***

*29<sup>th</sup> April – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017*

We never quite know what the weather is going to be like when we demonstrate at Abbey Hill. This year we had the whole range from cold winds through driving rain to glorious sunshine. Apart from Pat Ilsley, who was a stalwart for all three days that we attended, there were three or four other Guild members on each of the days. There was a good display of our crafts – with lots of people interested in buying the scarves and hats on the cold, wet days.



Despite the cold wind, Pat was persuaded to get on back of a vintage motorcycle and go for a spin around the show ring!

## **For Sale**

### **Various Items**

Wooden bead car seat cover (suitable for a felting wool on - or taking apart and using the beads)	<b>£5.00</b>
Weighing Scales (as new) £12 to buy retail Ideal for weighing tops or rug wool oz and gms.	<b>£5.00</b>
2 X 25mm Giant Needles (use for lace knitting or broomstick crochet)	each <b>£2.00</b>
Assorted Dryad leaflets x 5	each <b>50p</b>
2 x Large Wooden Bobbins	each <b>£2.00</b>
Hubby Wool Winder and Swift	<b>£5.00</b>
Small Wooden Table Swift (suitable for display purposes)	<b>£4.00</b>

Contact: Margaret Knight  
[spinner54498@btinternet.com](mailto:spinner54498@btinternet.com)

### **Books**

Peter Collingwood: Tablet Weaving	<b>£20.00</b>
Ann Dyer: New Ways with Tablet Weaving or "There's a snag in it somewhere" Very rare book	<b>£30.00</b>
Ann Sutton & Pat Holtom: Tablet Weaving	<b>£10.00</b>
Temari - Traditional Japanese Embroidery Technique Margaret Ludlow (including a started temari ball with bell)	<b>£5.00</b>
British Wool Marketing Board: Warp and Weft	<b>£2.00</b>
Crafts Council: Ikats - Woven Silks from Central Asia	<b>£3.00</b>

Contact: Margaret Knight  
[spinner54498@btinternet.com](mailto:spinner54498@btinternet.com)

**In addition to the above items, Margaret has sorted out her workshop at home and will have more to sell at the July meeting – there will be an assortment of books, equipment and yarns (linens, cottons, wools and acrylics).**

**Some things will be priced and reasonable offers can be made on the rest.**

### ***Glimakra Ideal Floor Loom £450***

Counterbalance/countermarche.

Weaving width: 70cms Footprint: 103 x 130 cms Height 163cms

Comes with 8 harnesses, 8 treadles, 3 reeds, bench and other equipment

For more information contact: Jenifer Ferguson (Minehead) on 01643 709816  
or email:

[mhjferguson2@btinternet.com](mailto:mhjferguson2@btinternet.com)

### ***Frank Herring Spinning Wheel £150 o.n.o***



Wheel made in the 1960's. Needs a good home due to ill-health of owner.

Hand carders and three bobbins included. All in working order.

All reasonable offers considered.

Contact: Julie Bull on  
01823 284157 or  
07899 031157

### ***Ashford Traditional Spinning Wheel £100 o.n.o***

Being sold as owner downsizing in the near future.

Hand carders with the wheel, only one bobbin but a jumbo flyer on wheel.

Contact: Cherry Needham 01225 859713

Buyer will need to collect - just outside Bath

# Programme 2017

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

## 21st January

Design: Colour, texture and pattern  
Janet Crowther  
AGM 11.00am  
*Chairperson Challenge: "Animal" using  
Jacob fleece*

## 18th February

My weaving  
Adam Jordan  
Committee Meeting

## 18th March

Textiles of Japan  
Jennifer Hughes

## 19<sup>th</sup> March

Shibori workshop

## 15th April

Members Skills Day  
Soup and Bread Lunch

## 20th May

Breeding coloured sheep in  
New Zealand  
Fiona Gardner  
Committee Meeting

## 17<sup>th</sup> June

Fleece Fair  
*Craft demonstrations*

## 15th July

Lace making: bobbin and shuttle  
Margaret Flux

## 19<sup>th</sup> August

Rigid heddle workshop: warping and  
making a sampler of different patterns  
including lace  
Janet Maher

## 16th September

"Just an Inkling"  
Ann Dixon  
*Dyeing competition*  
Committee meeting

## 17<sup>th</sup> September

Inkle weaving workshop

## 21st October

Flax to linen: spinning workshop  
Margaret Knight  
*Spinning competition*  
Soup and Bread Lunch

## 18th November

Colours of Scotland: dyeing traditions  
Carole Keepax  
*Weaving Competition*  
Committee meeting

## 16th December

Social event  
Shared lunch and Secret Santa