

www.somersetguildwsd.org.uk

July 2019



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Newsletter

Janet Maher
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All email to: secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk

✉ Copy deadline for the November issue is Friday 1st November 2019. Please email Janet Maher at secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk

Photo on front cover: Coreopsis (which can be used as a dye plant).
Photo by Janet Maher

Message from the Chair

Hello Members,

As I write this message, we have had our Fleece Fair and Open Day, the first of our big Anniversary events. After such a fantastic day I am looking forward to what the Exhibition will hold. We have 215 items for display as well as the Open Section and an Exhibition Shop. You will receive detailed information individually about each of these aspects of the Exhibition, as there is a lot of planning required to ensure everything runs smoothly.

I am also looking beyond the Exhibition as we have the Guild competitions coming up in the autumn. After 5th August, we can all concentrate on what we will be putting into the competitions. Novice work is always welcome. We have a day planned at Alpha Alpacas. I met the lady who runs the farm at the Bath and West and I think the day will be very interesting.

Since the last Newsletter, I have been involved in the launch of the new Foundation Certificate in Natural Dyeing in my national role. We have 12 students on the pilot programme so my life is very busy with registrations and queries from both the Foundation Certificates.

Sadly, this means my garden has had less time from me. This year is very much about maintenance rather than trying anything new. My madder is thriving, however, so I will have my first roots next season to play with.

Of course, I hope to have more time next year to do a lot more creatively, as I will no longer be Chair of the Guild. It is time for you all to think about who will take over and if you could do the role. I encourage you to talk to each other so that we have a candidate well before the AGM. If anyone wants to know more, do come and talk to me.

Janet Maher
Chairperson

Tea and Coffee Rota 2019

	10.15 – 12.00	12.00- 1.30
July 20th	Jan Arthur Chris Wright	Rosemary Warren Lorna Ferguson
Sept 21st	Alison Haggis Linda McKenna	Diane Colthorpe Yvette Jones
Oct 19th	Brenda Lawrence Norma Sanders	Lesley Hill Chris Rice
Nov 16th	Brenda Hamblin Marilyn Biggs	Ruth Fielder Lis Lawrence

If you cannot fulfil your turn, please make arrangements for someone else to be there. Please let Caroline Maltby know of any changes.

Guild Exhibition 2019

We had a fantastic turnout at the May meeting when people brought their items to go into the Exhibition. The final tally for pieces to be exhibited stands at 215! We have the most varied range of items from skeins and smaller items like gloves and hats through to pieces of furniture and full garments. There were wall hangings and some unusual entries like a room in a box. I think anyone who comes to see the Exhibition will find something of interest to them.

We also have all the stewarding slots filled so there will be plenty of people for visitors to ask questions and we will have plenty of demonstrations too. The Red Brick Building has a lovely café so anyone who volunteers will not go hungry.

I want to give special thanks to the members who have contributed prizes for the Grand Raffle. The raffle will help offset the cost of putting on the Exhibition. Thanks go to:

Pat Ilsley
Sarah Basham
Pam Mitchell
Tracey Bartlett

Norma Sanders
Liz Davenport
John Arbon
Steph Williams

Lorna Ferguson

If you have not put your name down yet for stewarding, please see Carol Mellish who is organising the rota. All volunteers are welcome.

I am looking forward to a most enjoyable event and one which will raise the profile of the Somerset Guild across the county and beyond.

Janet Maher

Teaching in Tibet: Amanda Hannaford

16th February 2019



Having heard about Amanda's adventures teaching in Afghanistan last year, we looked forward to hearing about her experiences of teaching in Tibet and we were not disappointed.

Amanda has been twice to Tibet, in 2016 and again in 2018. A call on the internet for "someone to advise on the spinning of Yak fibre" was picked up by the On-line Guild and eventually came to Amanda's attention. Her offer of advice turned into an invitation to spend time in Labrang, an ancient city and site of one of the largest and most famous Buddhist monasteries in the world, which is now in part of China called Xiahe, a Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Amanda's hosts, two young men, spoke pretty good English but knew nothing about textiles; the people who knew something about textiles spoke no English, so translation was essential, but difficult. When the English-speakers were absent it was a matter of sign language but Amanda was impressed by the warmth of the hospitality she received and by everyone's commitment to the project, which was obviously aimed at creating more employment locally so that the population did not need to go off to factories in China to find work. The main instigator of the project, known as DK had sourced a number of Bliss spinning wheels, which Amanda had used before in Afghanistan, and was able to get other pieces of equipment made up by local craftsmen. Most of the other people involved in the project were members of his family or close friends.

On arrival, Amanda made sure she saw the yaks in their usual environment. They are a type of big oxen with a dark, shaggy coat and fearsome horns! The coat is double with a soft, warm undercoat called "khullu" and an outer coat of long, wiry guard hairs called "sibu". The yak were guarded by their owners living nearby on the pasture in square tents made from the sibu and the yak were usually tethered because they are milked. The coat is not shorn in this part of the world (that would need a very brave shearer!) but it is shed naturally and collected from the pasture.

Some sacks of raw fleece were delivered to Amanda's workshop. It was absolutely filthy, having been trampled in the mud (etc!) so sorting and cleaning it was a daunting task. The local method of cleaning is to beat the fibre on the floor with a pair of sticks but this method produced clouds of dust and was very time-consuming. Washing was inclined to cause felting. To save time, Amanda managed to persuade her hosts to obtain some prepared fibre from a Chinese source and she was able to teach her five female pupils to card it into rolags and to spin it using woollen long draw on the Bliss wheels. Whilst

waiting for the fibre to arrive, Amanda discovered that some of the group could knit, so she encouraged them to make cowls, hats, scarves and other items, like Dorset buttons, which would appeal to the tourists visiting the monastery.

Using Jenny Dean's book on natural dyeing, Amanda set out to teach her pupils to use local dyestuffs to dye their fibre, which is already available in three natural shades. Stoves, pots and pans were obtained in the market and off they went. Rhubarb grew locally and served as both a mordant and a dye. Walnut husks (which are substantive) were also plentiful; indigo was available and Lak (though the local people were not keen on it) and Brazilwood, so by over dyeing and using metal salts to alter the dyes, they managed to produce a whole range of exciting colours.

Amanda was able to leave her pupils with a range of new skills to practice and she was invited to return as soon as a new workshop was ready. This eventually took place in 2018, by which time DK had also sourced a couple of looms.

Amanda was accompanied on the trip by an experienced weaver and weaving teacher, called Malcolm, and between them they were able to further raise the skill level. They were taken into the mountains to see the sheep shearing so were able to add wool techniques to the use of yak fibre. Amanda and Malcolm leave the group in Labrang with a viable cottage industry, which hopefully will grow and support a number of families, manufacturing and selling quality local products to the many tourists who visit Labrang to see the monastery and that can only be a positive benefit to the local economy, culture, language and way of life for generations to come.

Lesley Took

Guild Competitions 2019

A reminder that the annual Guild Competitions will take place over the autumn months:

Dyeing (synthetic and natural): September meeting

Spinning: October meeting

Weaving: November meeting

In the last Newsletter, we outlined the theme for all three competitions. The one the committee decided to go for will work easily for all three craft areas and is:

Variations on a single colour.

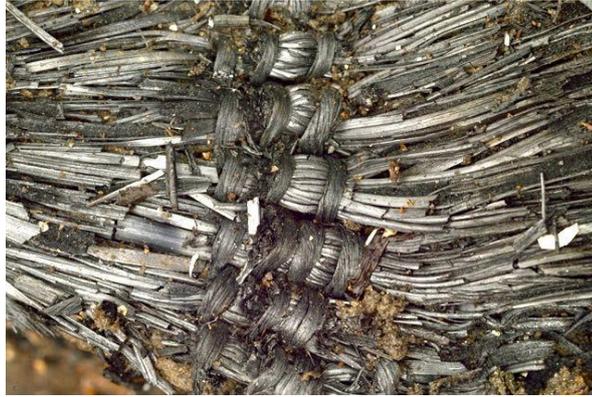
With this theme you can pick a colour, your favourite if you like, and you can use hue, shade, tint and tone to give a range of variation in colour. If you need any further information on colour theory, there are lots of articles on-line. Interweave has a good basic article if you go to the website on [www.interweave](http://www.interweave.com), look up articles, then spinning and then colour theory.

Many of you asked to know more about what judges look for when they are considering entries in a competition. A set of criteria was included in the last Newsletter. The criteria are those commonly used for competitions at the Association and for the Certificate of Achievement. If you have any queries about the criteria, let me know.

Janet Maher

The Textiles at Must Farm: Dr Susannah Harris

16th March 2019



Must Farm existed around 3000 years ago in the area that is now Whittlesey in Cambridgeshire. Archeologically, it is the most plentiful site from this early time period. The land is very flat. Although drained and dry now, the area was a lot wetter then.

Deep sediment in the Fens with a high water content served to protect the buried material. The environment preserves through the lack of oxygen (which promotes the decay process). The different layers over time can be seen in quarries, which is how Must Farm was found in 1990's. The whole geology of the time periods can be seen in the layers, not just human.

In the excavations they found fishing weirs dating back to Neolithic times with old log boats made from a variety of woods. Must Farm was a pile dwelling on a waterway. Excavations were carried out under a large tent to protect finds from the elements. They discovered the structure of the piles that supported the dwelling as well as wood from walkways and palisades, and roof supports. There was a clear palisade (a fence of stakes) ten metres across that surrounded the dwelling. Inside they found a number of circular structures. They focused on structure one, which was the best preserved.

The reason the site survived so intact was that the residents fled due to a fire and all the contents were left untouched as if they had just walked out, not contaminated by years of re-use and re-build. The charred materials became stable in the waterlogged conditions. Dendrochronology (more accurate than carbon dating) shows Must Farm existed in the late summer of 850BC. This was on the cusp of the Bronze Age and Iron Age.

Huge amounts were learned about the way people lived. Ceramic vessels of all sizes were found stacked inside each other in the roof rafters. Beads of glass and amber were found also, possibly traded across long distances. Keeping sheep and goats was in evidence. An early solid wooden wheel was found as well as lots of metals from tools, which support the Bronze Age dating.

Evidence of textile working came from finding lots of spindle whorls and loom weights. The preservation of the actual textiles is rare as only fibres with a cellulose base survive in an alkali sediment. In bog burials, which are in acidic ground, wool fibres can survive. Archeologists use lots of techniques to identify fibres. At Must Farm they found textiles, knotted nets, twining fibre and threads. These finds constituted the largest ever of textiles and yarns.

The people who made the textiles were highly skilled. The fabrics were all tabby weave but balanced and regular. The yarns used were fine – 20 EPI. Earlier finds in other places generally show much coarser yarns. There was evidence of early tubular selvages showing a connection with Denmark. Some of the textiles were a sheer weave of very fine thread. A lot of the fibre found was flax but there were also bast fibres from lime, oak and willow.

Must Farm had some very good examples of twining – very uncommon in Britain at the time. Twining was found in both fine and coarser fabrics. Some open twining with tufts (as in carpets) was found, which was new in Bronze Age Britain. Also new in this time period were the knotted fishermen's nets.

Yarn was wound around sticks to organise it. Some yarns were nettle. There was evidence of singles thread being plied. Splicing rather than spinning was the method used to create plied yarn.

Fibre bundles were found at Must Farm, unknown anywhere else and brand new for this period. A number of the bundles were shown to be nettle. CT scanning was used to determine the bundle structure, as they were so fragile. They were tied like pony tails of fibre and then wrapped around each other and tied together. Work is continuing on these bundles.

No conclusions have been reached about the function of the buildings, whether they were for living or work. It does seem though that people then lived in the same environment where they worked.

Although the use of natural dyes seemed present in the yarns and textiles, dye analysis was not possible due to the charring and water storage.

This peep into a time period shows that textiles and yarn production were developing quickly, probably with knowledge sharing across country boundaries. There were some clear Northern European connections at Must Farm and wider afield looking at the jewellery found. The background of the inhabitants, however, is unknown.

This was a fascinating talk, which showed that many of the practices we use today working with textiles have been around since the Bronze Age.

Janet Maher

My Life in Dyeing: Debbie Tomkies

18th May 2019



Lesley introduced Debbie to our group, having met Debbie a few years ago. Her talk was to be about how she came to be here today. Debbie is leading a dyeing workshop for the Guild the next day and had also brought along items for sale from her shop: D T Sales.

Debbie's interest in creative arts began at primary school with an inspirational sewing teacher. She also made clothing for her Cindy dolls and later Barbie dolls: they were the best dressed dolls in Yorkshire! When she was 14yrs old, she designed & knitted mohair jumpers for a company. She became a convert to tension squares after some jumpers came out as XXL.

At university she became interested in spinning, using a drop spindle first with some Romney Perendale fleece. Although her first attempts were a bit rough she joined the North Cheshire Guild and became their treasurer by the 3rd meeting! Debbie also took a dyeing course with Francis Thompson and found that she loved colour. Debbie began weaving with an inkle loom and although she sold this, she now has many different looms.

After finishing her degree in classics, she worked for the Civil Service and then accountancy for 12 years, knitting at home.

In 2001, following an accident with a golf club, a scan revealed Debbie had a brain tumour. After a period of treatment and recovery Debbie wrote her first book: Hand dyed yarn craft projects. It was finished just before her final session of brain surgery. Following this she attended a knitting & stitching show in Harrogate and her pattern for knitted golf covers was spotted. The quirky design was published in a magazine and more designs followed. Peter, her husband is very good at disguising her very dye-stained fingers in the photos!

Book 2: 'Complete knitting skills' followed with 27 online videos to accompany the book. Debbie also teaches sometimes in schools & with community groups, such as the scouts and at Guilds and often teaches at Summerschool. Her courses on dyeing involve some maths but she stresses they are enormous fun. She has also featured on the TV:

Gardens from the Air with Christine Wharton (BBC) - filming took place in some industrial mills in Leeds which had community gardens. They hung up some dyed colourful knickers!

At present Debbie has an online shop via her website. She is still designing, often for Knit Now Magazine and for sock & fibre clubs. She has done a degree in textiles and showed some of her designs featured in her sketchbook. She also takes an active role in a dyeing discussion group on Facebook, uses twitter, Instagram, Ravelry etc.

Jacky Calderbank

Debbie Tomkies: Dyeing Workshop

19th May 2019

12 people attended Debbie's workshop on Sunday. Everyone enjoyed it. Kathy Wright attended and provided a photo of her sample card.



Forthcoming Fibre Events

Guild Exhibition of Work: 1st - 5th August 2019 Red Brick Building, Glastonbury.

Alpha Alpacas, Bridport: 17th August 2019

Outing – more information to follow.

Anniversary Fleece Fair and Open Day



Although we started with drizzle at 8.00am, this did not deter the sellers or visitors on our 70th Anniversary event. Both the hall and pole tent were full of stalls and demonstrations. Over the day we had over 200 visitors and more than 60 Guild members. Sellers and visitors really enjoyed the day based on feedback and the number of people who took away Guild membership forms.



Some of our Guild members (shown above) demonstrating their skills to the visitors. They were kept busy all day with people asking questions, some wanting to have a go. As well as those above, there were members demonstrating weaving on a loom, pin looms, rug hooking, drum carding, braid making, needle felting and drop spindling.

The fleece sellers were mostly in the hall to protect fleece from wet floors. There were 17 different kinds of fleece available on the day, more than we have ever had before, including 5 rare breeds.



This year we had a BBQ to support the hungry crowds. We were lucky to have a Guild member and her husband who were chefs and ran the BBQ for us. There was also the usual cake kitchen, which went down well.



With the space for additional stalls we welcomed some of our own Guild members with stalls as well as the familiar faces who visit us every year (see Marilyn left selling her hand crafted goods).

In addition to the fleece sellers we had 8 stalls selling a variety of tops, yarns and equipment. For this special event we welcomed Helen Brotherton of My Fine Weaving Yarns, the first time she had attended.

As the day went on the sun came out and many people stayed for tea and cake. We all went home satisfied and very weary! A very good day and one to remember, in this special year.

For Sale

Joy 2 Spinning Wheel £500



Joy 2 double treadle wheel with 3 bobbins, carry bag and instruction details.

As new, hardly used and supplied by Herrings.

For more information please contact:
Caroline Lake on 01308 862470

Frank Herring Wheel £100 ono

Herring spinning wheel in need of minor refurbishment - new drive band and con rod required.

Double drive wheel with three speed pulley and three brass shafted bobbins. Wheel diameter 48cms. Original instructions included.

Please contact Chloe Fletcher on
Email: chloe.e.fletcher@gmail.com
Mobile: 07813 707518



Ashford Elizabeth spinning wheel £350 ono



This wheel is in excellent condition. It comes with 4 bobbins, a Lazy Kate and a pair of hand carders.

For more information please contact
Norma Sanders:
Email: ewenique@eclipse.co.uk

Haldane Lewis spinning wheel £175 ono



A very much sought after Double drive spinning wheel available (it has a scotch tension kit available too).

The Haldane Company made 3 types of wheel: The Hebridean, The Orkney and The Lewis.

This wheel comes with assembly and maintenance instructions and two spare bobbins and a Lazy Kate. It spins beautifully. I am selling it on behalf of Pam Beale.

For more details please contact Kathy Wright.

Email - Kathywright24@gmail.com

Mobile - 07766092121

Artisan Wheel £250 o.n.o



Beautiful hard wood wheel probably Rosewood. Makers initial 'A' imprinted on wheel. The wheel comes with distaff and tow fork (plain rod or cage needed for distaff) and three bobbins. Looks to be modelled on a Scandinavian/Finnish flax wheel.

Seller lives near Castle Cary. For more information please contact Lucy Archer
Mobile: 0777 265 7020

Please see separate email about the wheels Margaret Knight is selling. There is also information on the Guild website

Programme 2019

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

19th January

Ancient Peruvian Textiles
Janice Lawrence
AGM 11.00am

16th February

Teaching in Tibet
Amanda Hannaford
Committee Meeting

16th March

The textiles discovered at Must Farm
Dr Susannah Harris

20th April

Members' Skills Day

18th May

My Life in Dyeing
Talk and Sales
Debbie Tomkies, DT Crafts
Committee Meeting

19th May

Dyeing Workshop

15th June

Fleece Fair
Craft demonstrations

20th July

Exmoor Horn Wool
Lindy Head

17th August

Outing: Alpha Alpacas, Bridport

21st September

History of Liberty Fabrics
Anna Buruma
Dyeing Competition
Committee Meeting

19th October

Members' skills Day
Spinning Competition

16th November

Natural Dyeing
Jane Deane
Weaving Competition
Committee Meeting

21st December (New Date)

Social Event
Shared lunch and Secret Santa