



*Nottingham and District  
Guild of Spinners, Weavers  
and Dyers.  
Newsletter Spring 2008*

### **The National Exhibition of the AGSWD.**

This exhibition, entitled FABRICreATIONS, will be held from the 25th July to 22nd August, at the Liverpool Hope University, in collaboration with Merseyside Embroiderers. There are 3 categories in which to exhibit work.

- 1. **A large scale piece of work**, “A world of textiles in one city” accompanied by a sample of the technique and yarn used: also a ‘good’ quality digital photo. Submitted pieces will go through a selection process.
- 2. **A miniature**, either 2D or 3D, no larger than 3 cms in any direction.
- 3. **A response to a song**” a piece of work on this theme which will fit into a clear CD case.

Items 2 and 3 will not be selected, it seems that many are required!

The title, FABRICreATIONS, reflects the theme of student workshops over the winter, “Create, recreate and fabricate,” in which the students were encouraged to work creatively with reclaimed material.

The exhibition links in with the theme of our own project, “Items spun or made from unusual materials.” These could be such materials as milk protein, soya bean fibre, jute, flax, viscose or even paper! Our July meeting, “Yarns old and new,” should also provide some helpful ideas for our project.

If you feel inspired by the national exhibition and would like to enter a piece of work, these have to be in between **7th-14th July**. The committee are hoping to send off a combined parcel, we thought we might manage categories 2 or 3. Karen will be sent further details in due course.

## **Natural dyeing.**

It was Mary who started it! She walked into the S. Devon group meeting wearing a vest knitted in wonderful shades of blues, lilacs and pinks, the product of a dyeing day at Dartington. I was hooked!

I am still hooked! I soon found myself absorbed by Jill Goodwin's book "Cooking with colour," in which she introduced natural dyes. South Devon was a good place to start, and I began to "cook." Alexanders grew outside our gate, giving a good strong green; the ancient apple trees in the garden were covered with lichen, which gave me soft apricot; and onion skins provided 2 yellows and bronze. The hedgerows, containing blackberry, elderberry and ivy gave lovely shades of maroon, lilac and purple but sadly faded in the sunlight. Gorse from Dartmoor in March gave soft yellow before being top dyed with indigo when lovely greens emerged. I scraped yellow lichen from the rocks Cornish beaches, which went into a jar of ammonia solution, which immediately turned deep pink. During winter months, in a basket of coloured skeins, my pink skein turned pale blue!

I have enjoyed dyeing days with friends, sharing our dye stuffs and expertise. On one of these days we discovered the possibility of dyes from wood. A nearby woodturner donated two carrier bags containing some leftover chippings of logwood and padauk which were usually used to fuel his stove! Logwood is well charted, but padauk, from the Far East, gave us delightful shades of brown reds and oranges, very exciting! Subsequently I've used utile and iroko, thanks to my husband's woodturning activities, and obtained a variety of shades of browns, fawns and nearly purple. For further discovery, Phil Shillinglaw's pamphlet on wood dyeing is most helpful.

All this is but a taste of a fascinating and absorbing activity; I have not mentioned the well known plant dyes, much is already written. I continue to explore, and hope for the unexpected.

Liz Cole

## **Fine Cell Work. (FCW.)**

*“Perfection is not what’s usually expected in prisons.” (Inmate, HMP Wandsworth)*

FCW is a uniquely creative charity, bringing real hope and new skills to prison inmates so that they make a fresh start at the end of their sentences,

Taught by volunteers from the Embroiderers Guild, The Royal School of Embroidery, and the world of professional design, prison inmates undertake creative needlework during the long hours when they are locked in their cells. Once trained they can often be responsible for difficult commissions done to deadlines, and frequently support other inmates who are still learning. The earnings inmates make from the sale of their work provide them with savings to send to their families, to settle debts, or to use on their release for accommodation and clothing.

*“It opens up another world, one that in many ways is long-forgotten. It is reinventing the craftsmanship of yesteryear. There is the pride and usefulness in seeing something of beauty come together, and the thought that me and my friends’ cell work will bring pleasure, now and hopefully long into the future, to the recipient. It allows us once again, to do and start something new and be useful.” (Inmate, HMP Wandsworth.)*

A network of regional committees arranges sales of products in private homes around the country and other locations. The range of FCW products is growing and includes patchwork, applique and needlepoint cushions, quilts and rugs, as well as designs undertaken to commission. Customers may also sponsor the needlework training of a prisoner and in return receive the first cushion they produce.

The charity currently works in 22 prisons around the country and 290 prison inmates, male and female, are currently involved in the schemes. The aim is to increase this to 400 by 2010. A third of the



# Noticeboard

## Items for sale.

- Rigid heddle loom, plus some nice coloured wools, £25.  
Contact; Ina Buckland. 01332 883089.
- A Traditional Ashford spinning wheel, in very good condition, lazy kate, carders, homemade niddy noddy and a bag of mixed fleeces.  
Buyer to collect, Newark area. £150  
Contact. [berylmacewan@aol.com](mailto:berylmacewan@aol.com)

## Workshops.

- Long Eaton Art Room. A sociable, family orientated studio catering for a wide range of crafts, including, quilling, pottery, print making, spinning, weaving and painting.  
Contact. 0115 917 2186 0778 315 3142  
[info@leartroom.co.uk](mailto:info@leartroom.co.uk) [www.leartroom.co.uk](http://www.leartroom.co.uk)
- Workshops with Fiona Nisbet. Fiona runs workshops in spinning, weaving and needle felting and also sell equipment and materials.  
Contacts. 01948 871618 [fionanisbet@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:fionanisbet@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.shropshireweavers.co.uk](http://www.shropshireweavers.co.uk)

## Events.

- The Knitting and Crotchet Guild at the Centre for Knitting and Crotchet, Lee Mills Scholes, nr Holmfirth. Open Days.  
March 22nd Easter Saturday. April 12th  
May 3rd May 31st  
July 26th August 23rd  
September 20th October 18th  
Contact Liz 0113 266 4651
- Wonderwool. A festival of Welsh wool and natural fibres, at The Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells. Sat 26th & Sun 27th April  
Contact. e-mail [lee.w.price@powys.gov.uk](mailto:lee.w.price@powys.gov.uk) 0198 552224  
[www.wonderwoolwales.co.uk](http://www.wonderwoolwales.co.uk)

## **Falmouth Summer School 2007 29th July to Aug 5th**

This was the course that I attended, persuaded and supported mostly by Eileen, who provided me with the necessary weaving props, including her folding loom, and I drove down to Cornwall, on my own, a big undertaking for me, coping with a breaking up gear box on the way

The whole Campus of this Art and Design College appeared to be just for us. We ran 16 separate courses of which I had chosen "Dyeing and weaving" (tutor- Bobby Kociejowski) She was excellent. We used well equipped dye labs; slept in student accommodation with access to our own kitchen for making snacks; main meals were taken in the dining hall, all 400 of us, and as I went on my own there was plenty of opportunity to mix with, and chat to others.

We spent 5 days on dyeing techniques, learning about hues, pure hues, combinations and relationships between colours, primary, secondary and tertiary and making our own recipes Our inspiration for all this was a picture or object we had taken with us. We kept careful records and I came away with over 70 samples and recipes from the course.

Then came the weaving which was simply the medium for transferring our dyeing into something tangible. I think we all were experienced weavers, but the pressure of the week's efforts plus 2 outings, to the Eden Project and the Minark Theatre, meant we were all exhausted by day 5 of 7, and some couldn't give of their best setting up looms.

The display we presented on the last day did not reflect this and was very impressive along with all the other course displays.

The last 2 days were enhanced by a Fair Trade Fayre, -very thought provoking, and I came home with a lovely bag of New Zealand Corriedale dye tops, which I am spinning at Guild.

I kept bumping into Mary Bell looking (as in fact I hope I did, ) motivated, happy and fulfilled by it all and I was so pleased I was persuaded to go.

With many thanks to Eileen.

Chris Jesson

## **New Chair for the A.G.M. 2008.**

Margaret will have completed her 3 years as Chair this year, so we will be looking for a new person to take on the role at the A.G.M. in October. Margaret has worked very hard in the position of Chair, she was in office when individual risk assessment, (this has to be completed by all members,) and the Health and Safety risks of handling raw fleeces, came on line, which needed her attention. Margaret also had the organization of the Show at Newark to cope with, in her own words “*a steep learning curve.*” Thank you for all your hard work Margaret, we are all very grateful for all that you have done. Now we need your replacement.

Please everyone, consider who would be willing to do this interesting and rewarding job next.

## **Kermes ilices, the bug that gives a carmine dye.**

This bug, Kermes ilices, closely related to the cochineal insect, lives on several species of evergreen Mediterranean oaks and resembles the scale insects which are found on our own houseplants. The insects are round, about the size of a pea, and the dried bodies of the female scale insect produce a red dye similar to carmine.

Kermes ilices was originally thought to be vegetable rather than animal, it doesn't *look* like an animal, you can't see any legs.

The cochineal insect and the carmine insect are not technically “beetles”, beetles have “*4 wings, the front pair hard and horny, and forming a cover for the back pair.*” They are both bugs.

## ***Stain removal from natural fabrics.***

- Yellowing wool can be whitened by soaking in a solution of one part hydrogen peroxide to 10 parts water.
- Restore cream coloured fabric to its natural colour by soaking in strong hot tea. Add a pinch of salt to keep the colour fast.

## **Speakers and workshops now start at 11o/c sharp.**

Meetings are held in **Lambley Village Hall, Catfoot Lane. 10am-4pm** Workshops and speakers start at **11o/c**.  
There is a large car park and disabled access.

### **Dates for 2008.**

April 26th.	Spinning from basic to experienced. Debby and Angela.
May 31st.	4 corner weaving Eileen, Chris, Sylvia, Mary, see page 10.
June 28th	Do your own thing
July 26th	Yarns old and new. See page 10.
August 30th	Items used in re-enactment. Jules.
September 27th	Design for the terrified. Pure Tinctoria
October 25th	A.G.M. and project
November 22nd	Open Day.
December 14th	Christmas fuddle

### **April Meeting.**

The Editor of The Spinner's Almanac, formerly a member of our Guild for many years, will be bringing along a selection of books and magazines for sale, between 10o/c and lunchtime. Workshop starts at **11o/c** sharp.

### **May meeting - 4 corners weaving.**

-----Or speed dating for weavers. Mary, Chris, Sylvia and Eileen will set up 4 different types of looms in the four corners of the room. We'll be divided up into 4 groups, one per corner, we'll try out that technique, the bell will ring and we'll all move on to the next corner

### **July meeting, Yarns Old and New, led by Mary.**

"At this meeting I would like to share with you some of the skills and experiences from Summer School 2007 at Falmouth.



The topic of Yarns Old and New will cover the Tex Coding for new yarns and how to calculate the Tex of your handspun ones. The old traditional method of hand spinning using worsted techniques will also be explored in the quest for the “perfect thread.”

The success of this relies on yarn preparation, and the use of the hackle will be demonstrated to this end.

To make the most of this day please any or all of the following:

a niddy noddy and a tape measure

scrap paper, pen and a calculator

scissors, 12ins ruler

a few hand spun and commercial yarns, (look for the Tex number on the commercial label if possible.)

Locks of dyed or undyed fleece

3 colours of carded fleece or tops to colour-blend.”

*Mary*

**Hackle**, in this instance, is a row of sharp metal spikes 4/5 ins long fitted into a metal base, which is used for combing locks of fleece or blending coloured rovings, and **not** a decoration in a soldier's hat as my dictionary says **nor** the hairs on the back of your neck.

**Times of the meetings.**

The pattern of the day has changed, the committee felt that some members were flagging by late afternoon if there was a speaker or workshop, so it was decided that the “working or listening” session should take place in the morning. Therefore workshops or speakers will start at **11o’c sharp**.

**Interesting local shops.**

- **1. Heath's Country Store.** In Ollerton, very easy to find on the main road, and there is a big carpark opposite at Netto's. Their website is comprehensive and a delight to browse through, with knitting wools, felting rovings, patchwork materials, buttons and handmade dolls. The shop is well worth a visit, very relaxed and

welcoming, no pressure to buy!

[www.webpagesbyme3.com/deesbarn/](http://www.webpagesbyme3.com/deesbarn/)

- 2. *Wingham Wool Works*. In Wentworth, near Rotherham). The shop is only open on Sundays and Mondays, most of their selling is by mail order. There is a garden centre near by for refreshments and the village is worth a wonder round. They stock fleeces, coloured marino tops in a myriad of colours, various odd yarns, eg- bamboo, hemp, soya, plus spinning wheels and even a needle felting machine which can be hired on site.  
[www.winghamwoolwork.co.uk](http://www.winghamwoolwork.co.uk).

If you have any favourite shops or web sites that you'd like to share with the Guild, please let me have the details.

Jane.

### **Definition.**

Linsey-woolsey, *"a strong and durable material made from wool and flax. It's appearance is somewhat coarse, harsh and dingy in colour; it is used for gowns and skirts by the poorer classes, on account of it's cheapness and serviceable qualities."*

Domestic Dictionary, late 19th century.

### **Derivation.**

*"To pull the wool over their eyes."* from the time when powdered wigs were the fashion, and if the wig slipped over the wearer's eyes, they would be unable to see the obvious.

### **Dorset buttons.**

The first hand made Dorset button was produced in Shaftesbury, Dorset between 1680 and 1685, by Abraham Case.

There are 4 stages in making the buttons, and I have just completed my first button, and it is not as easy as it looks!

**Castig;** Using a plastic curtain hook -*available from a good haberdashers-* and a long length of thread, *mine was about a yard long*. It needs to be this long as you can't join in new thread as you go. Tie

the thread to the ring and do 5 or 6 blanket stitches catching in the loose thread. *It's quite difficult to do this as gaps keep appearing, although I was able to fill in gaps at a later stage.*

***Slicking;*** All the stitches are pushed to the inside of the ring, leaving the outer edge smooth. *If you do the blanket stitches too tightly, this can be hard going.*

***Laying;*** Starting at the top of the ring, wind the thread down the back and up the front exactly in the centre of the ring, turn the ring slightly, and repeat the winding, making spokes across the ring. *The "centre" kept moving, and at first I did too many spokes, 6 or 7 seems about right.* Work a cross in the middle to hold the spokes firmly.

***Rounding;*** The button is filled in by working backstitch across each spoke in turn, keeping the thread taught. The button can be filled in as much or as little, depending on the effect required. *I found I somehow managed to turn the button over at one point and the pattern went wrong.*

*This whole process took well over an hour!*

Jane Ashley.

### **And the rats ate the men's buttons.**

On the 24th of February we had a lively and interesting talk and slide show on the History of Buttons, by Button Lady, Jenny Swindells. We were amazed that some of the earliest buttons found were from the bronze age! Some were also found in the Egyptian tombs.

It was fascinating to see how buttons played a part in the social history of our country. The slides of old button factories showed that the workers were women, and it looked very hard work too. (Nothing much has changed then.)

Men's trouser buttons were changed from vegetable material to metal ones, because in the first world war, in the trenches, rats would eat the buttons while the men were asleep. (Not very nice!)

The slides were great as they showed the beautiful designs and fashions through the ages. Of course the men's were just as flamboyant , if not more so, than the women's. A lot of the time buttons were used as decoration and not for practical use. Some of the slides showed dresses and coats with hundreds of buttons on, just for show, and of course the more you had on your clothes the richer you were.

After the talk we were able to look at some of Jenny's collection of original buttons. There were plenty of buttons for sale as well, I succumbed to temptation as did a few others

Heather Woodward.

*The British button society has a fascinating web site which details all sorts of interesting facts and contact points.*

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

In the late 19th century, *"It was computed that three penny-worth of gold can be made to cover a gross of buttons."*