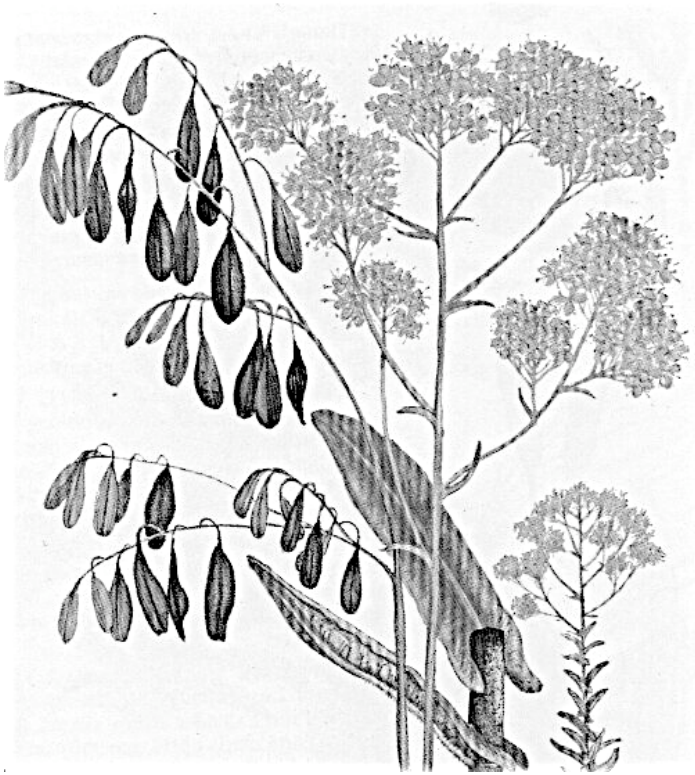
Nottingham and District Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers.

Living Threads

Winter 2010



Woad; *Isatis tinctoria.* Produces a blue dye, Indigotine, produced by crushing and fermenting the leaves.

ref: Cassell's "Wild flowers" Marjorie Blamey and Christopher Grey_Wilson

Female costume from Egtved, central Jutland. Bronze Age c. 1500 BC.

The common features of Nordic Bronze Age textiles are that they are all coarse tabbies, normally with 3-6 threads per cm, and are made of primitive wool, which is very similar to the wool of the wild mouflon. In some instances, wool can be seen to have been prepared in some way, for example, the coarse kemps, which are one of the characteristics features of primitive wool, may have been combed away.

ref. *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles. vol. 12*

The credit crunch comes to the Newsletter.

I'm afraid that the committee has decided not to send out the Newsletter to members who are not at the meeting at which the Newsletter comes out. Their copy will be put in the library to await collection. If you'd like to receive your copy through the post, please let Jane have some 2nd class stamps. Thanks.

This will be effective from the Spring issue.

Ice.

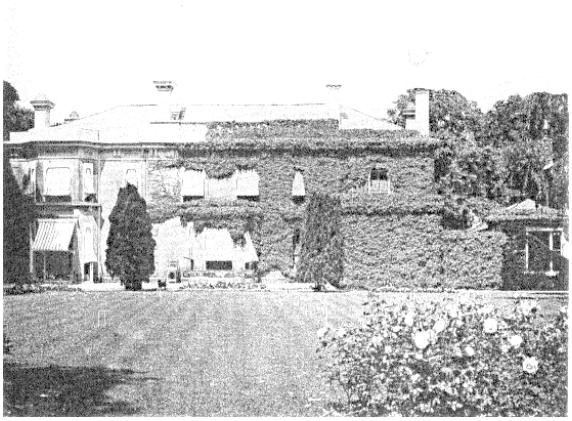
In 1887 thousands of sheep in Texas were killed during a violent ice storm.

Mauve, pale lilac or dirty pink?

Mauve was first named in 1856 by the eighteen year old chemist William Perkin. He had been trying to create a synthetic form of quinine, the treatment of choice for those intrepid Britons with malaria, who were colonizing the world at that time. When he found an interestingly coloured residue, which proved to be the first aniline dye, mauveine, - named after the french name malva, for the flower, mallow.

William Henry Perkin, (1838-1907), later knighted for his work in the early chemical industry, built a factory with his father, in London, to produce mauve cloth. The raw materials for this factory was coal-tar, a cheap and readily available bye product of the gas lighting industry in London.

Apart from being cheap to produce, the Perkins' fortunes were also helped by the royalty of the time. The Empress Eugenie of France decided that mauve enhanced the colour of her eyes and started the fashion of wearing mauve and of course every fashionable lady wanted to wear it too. The fashion conscious in England started to wear it when Queen Victoria wore mauve to her daughter's wedding in 1858.



William Perkin retired a rich man at the age of 36 and devoted his life to good works, others carried on the work of developing more colours from aniline dyes, and the streets of London became a much more colourful scene.

Later in the 1890s, mauve became associated with homosexuality. Mauve was a

colour favoured by famous homosexual artists and writers such as Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Bearsdley.

Right upto date in the T.V. programme Dr Who, mauve is the universal colour for danger. Whilst mauve is used in stage lighting to represent sunsets.

Aniline dyes from coal-tar also led to the staining of the invisible microbes which doctors were beginning to understand were the causes of illness.

And from these same aniline dyes came the sweet synthetic smells of jasmine, rose, violet and musk.

Sir William Henry Perkin 1838-1907.

ref *Wikipedia.*

1. "Mauve, how one man invented a colour that changed the world." By Simon Garfield.

3. The Colour Company.

Camlet,

A material made from long, very fine wool, held in high repute in the 12th and 13th centuries, being classed among the precious stuffs then in use. The name came from the asian word chamal, meaning fine, not from camel, camel hair was never used.

Wrinkles merely indicate where smiles have been.

Weaving.

The ancient Egyptians were the first people to weave cloth to make clothing; the ancient Chinese were the first to weave silk, and the first reference to weaving in England records it in York in 1331.

Masham Sheep Fair 26th-27th September 2009.

At one of the Guild meetings early in the year I read a copy of the Hallamshire Guild's newsletter and they were asking members if they would like to sign up for a coach trip to Masham Sheep Fair in Yorkshire. Cheekily I contacted them and asked if Sue and I could come along too and they very kindly agreed. I had heard that it was a lovely event.

The Fair has been tradition for hundreds of years; the first market charter was granted in 1250, followed by 2 more in 1328 and 1393. The market thrived because of its nearness to Jervaulx and Fountains Abbey with the monks' large flocks of sheep.

Masham's importance as a major sheep market is the reason for the huge market place and its beautiful Georgian houses. Upto 80,000 sheep were sold here in the annual September sheep fairs, and this was the major sale of breeding stock. Sheep bred on the uplands were bought by farmers across the country. To-day the sheep fair is more about showing sheep than selling, although some are still sold at the end of the week-end.

We enjoyed every minute of our day. The weather was fantastic and the sky was deep blue. Sitting outside a tea room at the edge of the market square we had our first cup of tea shortly after we arrived, listening to the sheep bleating in their pens only a few metres away. The Morris dancers

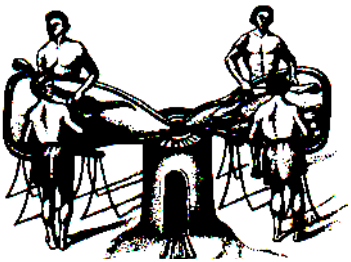
were getting ready to perform their first dance, the market stalls were lively, shops, galleries and pubs around the square were open.

The Black Sheep Brewery was open to the public, being a very popular attraction all year round, and several people on our coach went off in the afternoon to the visitors' centre. There were sheep races and a host of stalls and other amusements and the atmosphere was one of a really rural community fun. Most of the activities raised funds for local charities.

We were particularly interested in the fleece sale (many varied fleeces at reasonable prices, we were surprised that not many of our coach party had been tempted to buy); the craft stalls in the Town Hall, (including several specialist wool and craft supplies); the exhibition of handmade items and the demonstrations of spinning and weaving.

We would like to thank the Hallamshire Guild for allowing us to join them and for making us feel so welcome. Certainly the wonderful weather helped to make it such a lovely day (if it had been pouring with rain it would definitely not have been so much fun) but we would still recommend it to everyone-same weekend next year.
Eliza Conway and Sue Shaw.

Dyers.



From a mural at Pompeii c A.D. 70. Fabrics from the dye-vat are rung out on trays from which the the dye drips back. The surface of the trays is of some light impervious material, such as bronze sheets. *ref: Western Textiles vol*

A banner for the Guild.

Have you ever wondered about our Guild banner? Who designed it? Who worked on it and where did the inspiration come from? For the later I've got to take you back to 1984 and the National Exhibition of the Association Guilds held at the Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Kendal.

As is usual with the National Exhibition, it was quite impressive and a bit overwhelming. We were a young guild and, as we looked at the impressive tapestries we wondered what we were all doing associating ourselves with such talent. However, Arthur and Lillian Wright had 4 of their knitted pieces displayed and Sylvia a beautiful worsted dress length of weaving. The rest of us wondered if we would ever become so accomplished. One piece of tapestry made up of individual squares made us feel a whole lot better though.

It had been woven by members of a local guild and showed aspects of their area. I remember a square depicting the local coal mine and another with the village green complete with a red telephone box. Elizabeth Trussell, who was standing next to me, said, :"Thats what we want for our guild."It was decided that our banner should depict 'Aspects of Nottinghamshire' and Elizabeth insisted we make our squares either handspun and hand dyed or woven on a loom.

Of course, as is true whenever an idea is put forward to a group of people and not fully explained, the 'Nottinghamshire' idea went a little astray and we also had squares representing our work within the Guild. Some of us, though, stuck with the idea of illustrating people and places associated with our county.
Rowena Edlin-White (then Parr) knew exactly what she would do. Southwell

Minster was dear to her heart and she set about it with her hand spun hand dyed yarns. Edith Palmer loved knitted lace, so her contribution was a homage to the Nottingham Lace industry, Arthur and Lillian, however, knitted a square showing off their spinning and knitting skills. I was in two minds. I would have loved to depict Byron as he is buried in our parish church in Hucknall, but thought the frontage of Newstead Abbey would detract from Ro's piece.

At the time, living, living so close to Linby Colliery, I was reminded of the novels of D.H.Lawrence; in fact the pit was chosen by the BBC for their series 'The Rainbow.' I know many people think D.H. came from Derbyshire but he was a Nottinghamshire lad born in the colliery village of Eastwood. When I mentioned this to Arthur, he was appalled. "Why do you want to represent that mucky man?" he said. On the other hand, I rather fancied dyeing yarn to work the Phoenix which was his emblem. As nobody else in the Guild knew this I had to work in his name and dates, quite a challenge.

When Janet Chester brought her piece in, we all asked what a washing line had to do with 'Aspects of Nottinghamshire.' "Just look at what's on the washing line," she said and we all realized they were shirts representing Nottingham Forest and County football teams. Sherwood Forest and the Goose Fair were also submitted and I would love to know who worked on those. It was a great shame there was no record kept and it is up to the older members to search their memories.

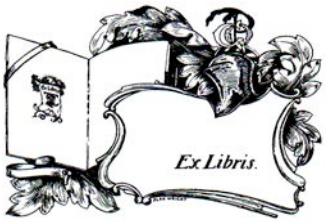
Next time the Banner is on show, have a close look and admire the handiwork of our past members. It might not be as grand as the one we saw at Kendall, but it was worked with a lot of enthusiasm and, may I say, a little skill.

Dee Duke.

The Guild Library.

From January 2010, there will be a change to the way that you borrow books from the library.
Before you take any books out, you will be asked to fill in a Library Card giving your name and address. You will also be asked to fill in your e-mail address, but this is optional.

Each book has been catalogued with a number and the appropriate card from the file will be attached to your library card and marked with the date you took the book/ books out. When you bring the books back, your library card will then be filed until you wish to borrow books again.



In the past, you have been asked to return books after one month, but this may not always be convenient, so there will be a three months' grace. After that books must be returned.
One further change-- the library will only be open during the lunch break but I'm sure there will be ample time to browse the shelves and ask advice from the librarian.

Dee is the librarian.

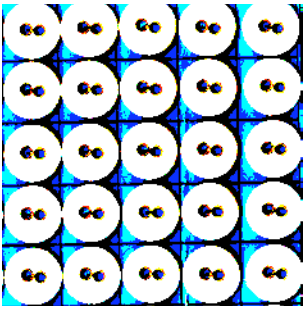
Hemp.
This strong, tough fibre is obtained from the plant Cannabis sativa. The fibre is attached to a woody stem by glutinous matter, and a separation is effected by placing bundles in stagnant water. After being dried, the fibres become loosened. Cordage and sails are made of Russian hemp, ropes of manilla hemp, coarse linens, such as huckabacks, of english hemp.

Humming birds are the only birds that can fly backwards.

The Humble Button. part 2. Karen Winyard

The button business in England was started by Abraham Case in the 1600s and it really took off under his grandson, Peter Case, and by 1730 they were employing business managers to organise the distribution of new materials to out workers who produced the buttons, leaving the company to focus on distribution, sales and exports. They had offices in London and Liverpool and business was at its peak in 1807.

It was still very much a family affair though. The wire used to make the metal rings was produced by the Clayton family, John Clayton being the first business manager employed by the Cases. The Clayton's wire manufacturing firm in Birmingham developed a special rust proof alloy for the market and sent it to Dorset by horse and cart. Finished buttons were mounted on card which was supplied by another Clayton family business in London.



But what was it like to be a humble button maker like the family featured in "Burning Bright"? (see part 1 in the Autumn issue.) Well, until 1800 the out workers were paid in goods, not cash- another outlet for the Case family businesses. This also stopped anyone saving up enough money to set up on their own in competition.

Button day came once a week when the out workers had to walk the up to 12 miles to the collection centre where they left their buttons and took away the raw materials for the following week's work. The

wire from Birmingham had to be cut into lengths which were then coiled and soldered into rings.
Children were employed as winders, dippers (dipping the ring into the solder) and stringers (threading the rings into lots of 144 rings.)This caused friction with farmers at harvest time when they wanted the children working on the land.

As well as actually making the buttons, workers had to to clean, polish and mount them. Buttons were mounted on cards which defined their quality:pink being the best and reserved for exports, blue was grade 1 and yellow,seconds.

In the winter months you worked by the light of tallow candles sometimes with a glass sphere in front of the to magnify the light. In 1793 Shaftesbury had 4,000 women and children employed in the trade, and experts could produce a gross of buttons a day. By the nineteenth century a gross of well made buttons would net the out worker 3s 6d. In 1812 Mr Acheson of Shaftesbury employed 1,200 women and children in buttony. The children received no pay in the first 3-4 weeks as they 'spoiled much thread.' After that they had a penny a day for two months and then 1 shilling a week.

But of course it couldn't last and Birmingham proved the nemesis of the Dorset button industry. Birmingham was the heart of the button making world, full of factories making buttons of all types and especially those of

metal and pasteboard.

They were in big demand for use on military uniforms and in Birmingham they were developing machines to produce them ever more cheaply and quickly. The Aston family had button factories from c1850-1876. Their factory at 33/37 Princip St. employed 700-800 people. John Aston's friend, Humphrey Jeffries, was a well known midland character famous for his experiments with kites and balloons. He devised a machine for John Aston which would make a 3 fold linen button- a ring of metal enclosed in such a way that both sides and centre are covered with separate pieces of material but produced quite flat. In 1841 John Aston patented this invention and displayed the machine at the Great Exhibition of 1851 at Crystal Palace. Within nine years the entire Dorset button industry collapsed leaving thousands in penury.

16. Edwardian workers in a midland button factory.

sources: Victor Houart: "Buttons. A Collector's Guide."
Marion Howitt: "History of handmade buttons in Dorset."
Crowfoot, Pritchard & Staniland, "Textiles and clothing 1150-1450."
Primrose Peacock Discovering old buttons.

Wool.

Despite the cold climate of Northern China, wool has never been used to make knitted garments. Warm clothes are made there by using thick cotton padding to keep out the cold.

Do you have a favourite recipe to share with the Newsletter?

Cranks parsnip and apple soup.

An unusual combination of vegetable and fruit.

- butter/margarine 1 oz.
- medium sized onion 1.
- medium sized parsnips 2.
- medium sized cooking apple 1.
- vegetable stock 1pt.
- parsley, chopped 2 tbsp
- mixed herbs 1/2 tsp
- milk 1 pt.
- salt and pepper to taste.

Chop the veg. Melt the butter in a large saucepan and saute the veg. and apple, stirring frequently, until the onion is transparent. Add the stock and herbs, then bring to the boil and reduce the heat. Cover and simmer for 30 mins. Add the milk. Allow to cool slightly before blending in a liquidizer goblet in small quantities. Reheat to serving temp and adjust seasoning to taste.

Jane Ashley.

Trouble.

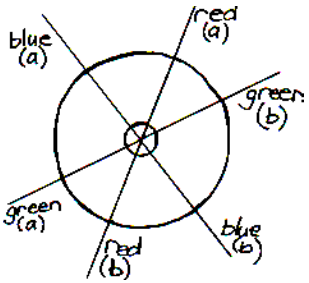
The Chinese character for ‘trouble’ shows two women under the same roof.

TROLLEN WEAVE INSTRUCTIONS.

Preparing Disc Weave.

1. Cut 1 metre lengths.
2. Tie in the middle.
3. Pass knot through the centre hole of the disc.
4. Hold the knot with your left hand underneath the disc.
5. Arrange the threads opposite each other.

Start at the top.



1. Take the top thread down to the bottom (Red (a). Take the bottom thread up to the top (Red (b).
   - Turn disc clockwise.
   - Go to next colour.
2. Take top thread down to the bottom (Blue (a). Take the bottom thread up to the top (Blue (b)
   - Again, turn the disc clockwise.
   - Go to next colour.
3. Take top thread down to the bottom (Green (a). Take the bottom thread up to the top (Green (b).

Continue working clockwise, repeating 1 through to 3, and remembering to pull weave gently through centre hole as you go.

Extract from "The Wonder Of Whiffling by Adam Jacot de Boinod."

"We worry about being over weight these days, but the evidence of language is that not being thin is hardly a new thing.

Fubsy (1780), being chubby and somewhat squat;

Flodge (Banffshire), a big, fat, awkward person ;

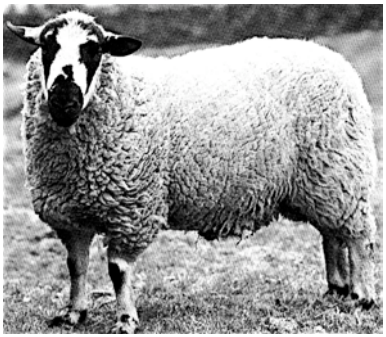
Ploffy (Cornwall 1846,) plump

Fustilug (1607,) a fat sloppy person."

Derbyshire Gritsrone.

Description;

- Found in the Peak district of Derbyshire and Pennine Districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire.
- Face and legs white with black markings, no wool on face and legs, hornless.
- Wool: staple length 8-10cm, fleece weight 2.25-3kg, quality 50's-56's.



"The wool is one of the finest of the black faced sheep. It is eminently suitable for the manufacture of high quality hosiery wools. Derbyshire, Leicester and Nottinghamshire are major hosiery manufacturing areas of Britain, and produce a wide range of knitted outerwear and underwear.

It is in hosiery, particularly, that machine washability and other easy-care finishes developed in recent years have made such a contribution to the incomparable qualities of wool as a clothing fibre."

ref. "British sheep & Wool" The British Wool marketing Board.

Meetings are held at **Lambley Village Hall,** Catfoot Lane, 10am-4pm.
Workshops and speakers start at 11 o'clock.
There is a large car park and easy access for disabled people.

Programme for 2010.

Jan. 30th.	Jacket potatoes. Spinning workshops.
Feb .27th.	Weaving workshops.
Mar. 27th.	"Flower Pounding" Using fresh flowers and a hammer to make instant botanical designs on prepared fabric (provided) or quick and easy cards, with Judy Rankin
Apr. 24th.	Spinning Workshop, details to follow.
May 29th.	Dyeing Day, dyeing methods using synthetic dyes.
June 26th.	Demonstrating at East Bridgford Show.
July 31st.	Weaving workshops, details to follow.
Aug. 28th.	Felting dabble day.
Sept. 25th.	Natural dyeing.
Oct. 30th.	A.G.M. and Open Day.
Nov. 27th.	Outside speaker. tba.
Dec. 18th.	Christmas fuddle.