

Nottingham and District Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers.

The Sheep Geeks' Gazette

January 2011



The 2 handed spinning wheel illustrated by Thomas Firmin in 1681

A reluctant spinner. (*Is there such a thing?!*)

There once was a girl who was idle and would not spin, and let her mother say what she would, she could not bring her to it. At last the mother was once so overcome with anger and impatience, that she beat her, at which the girl began to weep loudly.

Now at the moment the Queen drove by, and when she heard the weeping she stopped her carriage, went into the house and asked the mother why she was beating her daughter so that the cries could be heard on the road? Then the woman was ashamed to reveal the laziness of her daughter and said: "I cannot get her to leave off her spinning. She insists on spinning for ever and ever, and I am poor, and cannot procure the flax."



Then answered the Queen: "there is nothing that I like better to hear than spinning, and I am never happier than when the wheels are humming. Let me have your daughter with me in the palace. I have flax enough, and there she can spin as much as she likes." The mother was heartily satisfied with this, and the Queen took the girl with her. When they arrived at the palace, she led her up into three rooms filled from bottom to top with the finest flax. "Now spin me this flax," said she, "and when you have done it, you shall have my eldest son for a husband, even if you are poor. I care not for that, your untiring industry is dowry enough."

The girl was secretly terrified, for she could not have spun the flax, no, not if she had lived till she was three hundred years old, and had sat at it every day from morning till night. When therefore she was alone, she began to weep, and sat thus for three days without moving a finger. On the third day came the Queen, and when she saw that nothing had yet been spun, she was surprised; but the girl excused herself by saying that she had not been able to begin because of her great distress at leaving her mother's house.

The Queen was satisfied with this, but said when she was going away: "Tomorrow you must begin to work."

When the girl was alone, she did not know what to do, and in her distress went to the window. Then she saw three women coming towards her, the first of whom had a broad flat foot, the second had such a great underlip that it hung down over her chin, and the third had a broad thumb. They remained standing before the window, looked up, and asked the girl what was amiss with her. She complained of her trouble, and then they offered her their help and said: "If you will invite us to the wedding, not be ashamed of us, and will call us your aunts, and likewise will place us at your table, we will spin up the flax for you, and that in a very short time."

"With all my heart," she replied, "do but come in and begin the work at once." Then she let in the three strange women, and cleared a place in the first room, where they seated themselves and began their spinning. The one drew the thread and trod the wheel, the other wetted the thread, the third twisted it, and stuck the table with her finger, and as often as she struck it, a skein of thread fell to the ground that was spun in the finest manner possible.



The girl concealed the three spinners from the Queen, and showed her whenever she came the great quantity of spun thread, until the latter could not praise her enough. When the first room was empty she went to the second, and at last to the third, and that too was quickly cleared. Then the three women took leave and said to the girl: "Do not forget what you have promised us,- it will make your fortune."

When the maiden showed the Queen the empty rooms, and the great heap of yarn, she gave orders for the wedding, and the bridegroom rejoiced that he was to have such a clever and industrious wife, and praised her mightily. "I have three aunts," said the girl, "and as they have been very kind to me, I

should like to forget them not in my good fortune; allow me to invite them to the wedding, and let them sit with us at table."

The Queen and the bridegroom said: "Why should we not allow that?"

Therefore when the feast began, the three women entered in strange apparel, and the bride said: "Welcome, dear aunts."

"Ah," said the bridegroom, "how do you have come by these odious friends?" Thereupon he went to the one with the broad flat foot, and said: "How do you come by such a broad foot?" "By treading," she answered, "by treading." Then the bridegroom went to the second and said: "How do you come by your falling lip?" "By licking," she answered, "by licking." Then he asked the third: "How do you come by your broad thumb?" "By twisting the thread," she answered, "by twisting the thread." "On this the King's son was alarmed and said: "Neither now nor ever shall my beautiful bride touch a spinning-wheel." And thus she got rid of the hateful flax-spinning.

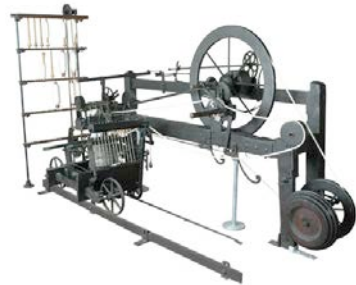
Author unknown.

Spinning mule

The only surviving example of a Spinning Mule built by the inventor Samuel Crompton

The **spinning mule** was invented in 1779 by Samuel Crompton. It spins textile fibres into yarn by an

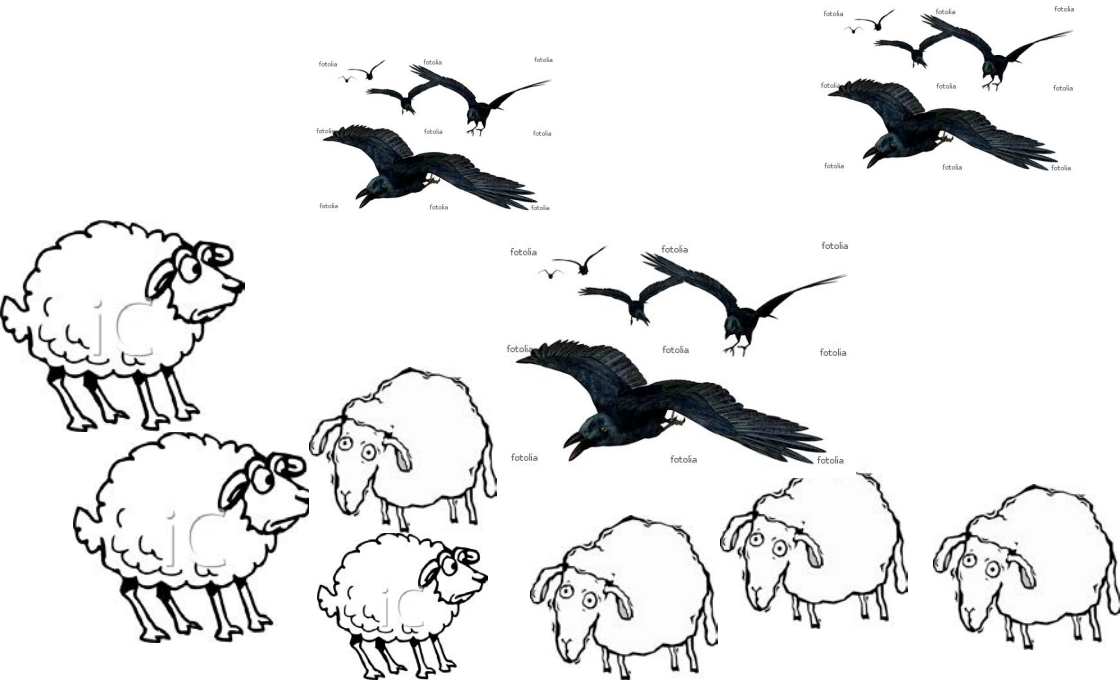
intermittent process: in the draw stroke, the roving is pulled through and twisted; on the return it is wrapped onto the spindle. Its rival, the throstle frame or ring frame uses a continuous process, where the roving is drawn, twisted and wrapped in one action. The self-acting (automatic) spinning mule was developed in the 1830s. The mule was the most common spinning machine from 1790 until about 1900 and was still used for fine yarns until the early 1980s. In 1890, a typical cotton mill would have over 60 mules, each with 1320 spindles. *Article from Wikipedia*



Birds attack sheep

Mr. H. Smith, head shepherd, the Lodge farm, Normandy-le-Wold, told a reporter of an extraordinary happening there on Wednesday. He was digging sheep out of snow drifts and when they had been brought out into the open, blocks of ice, said by Mr Smith to be as big as footballs, formed around their heads because of the sudden condensation of moisture from their breath. Crows and magpies settled on the backs of the sheep, and attacked them, the sheep being unable to defend themselves because of the ice. They pecked into their backs upto an inch deep, and it is feared one may die. Since then a dozen sheep have been protected by having sacking tied round them.

The Lincolnshire Chronicle, 15 Feb. 1947.



An Aesop Fable

Having received an order for twenty yards of silk from Princess Lioness, the Silkworm sat down at her loom and worked away with zeal. A Spider soon came around and asked to hire a web-room near by.

The Silkworm acceded, and the Spider commenced her task and worked so rapidly that in a short time the web was finished. "Just look at it," she said, "and see how grand and delicate it is. You cannot but acknowledge that I'm a much better worker than you. See how quickly I perform my labors."

"Yes," answered the Silkworm, "but hush up, for you bother me. Your labours are designed only as base traps, and are destroyed whenever they are seen, and brushed away as useless dirt; while mine are stored away, as ornaments of Royalty."



Paying the Shepherds

Shepherds' wages for 1902, as settled at the annual hiring fair, Hawick,

averaged about £40 a year, with a cow, three bolls* of meal and potato land. Men not paid in cash got 50 sheep.

St. Neots Advertiser 11 Jan. 1902

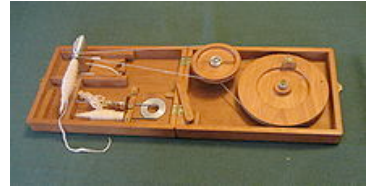
*A 'boll' was a dry measure, varying from 2 to 6 bushels according to the county.



Charkha

A small notebook Charkha

The tabletop or floor charkha is one of the oldest known forms of the spinning wheel. The charkha works similarly to the great wheel, with a drive wheel being turned by hand, while the yarn is spun off the tip of the spindle. The floor charkha and the great wheel closely resemble each other. With both, the spinning must stop in order to wind the yarn onto the spindle.¹



The charkha was both a tool and a symbol of the Indian Independence movement. The charkha, a small, portable, hand-cranked wheel, is ideal for spinning cotton and other fine, short-staple fibers, though it can be used to spin other fibers as well. The size varies, from that of a hardbound novel to the size of a briefcase, to a floor charkha. Mahatma Gandhi brought the charkha into larger use with his teachings. He hoped the charkha would assist the peoples of India achieve self-sufficiency and independence, and so used the charkha as a symbol of the Indian independence movement and included it on earlier versions of the flag of india

Flag of the provisional government of free india, displaying a charkha *Article from Wikipedia*



How my day works out

A Winter Recipe



Haricot Lamb Hotpot

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 tin haricot beans. | 4 celery sticks |
| 2lb neck of lamb chopped into chunks | 1 tbs oil |
| 3 tbs flour | 1/2 pt red wine or beer and water mix |
| 2 tsps mixed herbs | bay leaf |
| salt and pepper | 3tbs chopped parsley |
| 1 large onion | 8oz carrots. |

Trim any excess fat from the lamb. Mix the flour with the herbs and plenty of salt and pepper, then use to coat the pieces of lamb. Roughly chop the carrots, onions and celery.

Heat the oil in a heavy bottomed pan, add the lamb and brown. Remove from the heat and drain off excess fat, fry the onions in this fat, add remaining flour, cook for a few minutes, stirring constantly. Add wine or beer and water, still stirring. Add bay leaf, carrots and celery, replace the meat in the pan. bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 2hrs. At the end add the beans and heat through.

Some warm crusty bread and robust red wine make excellent accompaniments to this warming, simple dish.

Village Custom

In the Nottinghamshire village of Blidworth, near Mansfield, on Sunday, the 1st inst., the Rev.J.Lowndes performed in the Parish church the ancient ceremony of “rocking” the most recently born baby in the parish - symbolising the presentation of the child Christ in the Temple. Baptised on Saturday, the infant was on Sunday placed in a cradle inside the altar rails, as the vicar rocked the cradle while dedicating the child to God. The ceremony, which dates back to A.D. lapsed for a century, but was revived three years ago.

The Derbyshire Advertiser
6 Feb. 1924



Horse Weaving

Weaving is a stable vice of horses, in which the horse repetitively sways side to side, shifting weight and moving its head and neck back and forth.

Causes. Horses often perform this vice over a stall door, or near the grill of the stall, possibly because it is the exit from the stall, or because their view changes slightly as they view the barn aisle from the stall and is visually stimulating. Some horses that have developed the habit will also weave while turned out. Although it is commonly thought that weaving is caused by boredom, many experts consider it a stress response, usually due to isolation from other horses, unhappiness in general, or little grazing time.



Golden Rod as a dye



Years ago every cottager would grow this plant not only for its medical use but also for the superstitions associated with it. It was thought that it indicated the presence of fairy gold and good luck was sure to come if it self set by the cottage door. There were many medicinal uses but it was mainly used as a blood stauncher. During the early reign of Elizabeth 1 it was imported in a dried state and sold at a high price making it only available to the rich. The bottom fell out of the market when it was discovered growing wild in the hedgerow!

As for dyes, the best dye comes from the flower heads just as they have opened. These yield the brightest yellow. Alum mordant gives a nice lemon yellow somewhere around 3A4 on the Methuen* scale and a lovely green, 3E3 with iron. I cut up the dye material and bring it to the boil. I then simmer it for 2 hours and leave it to get cold. The dye is strained off and either frozen or used fresh.

Dee Duke

*Methuen Handbook of colours by Kornerup and Wanscher. Now out of print this rare little book “was the first authoritative international dictionary of colours with British Standard and Mansell equivalents, with the 1266 colour examples laid out so that colours can be matched using the colour finder card/mask tucked inside its rear pocket.”

Prices on Amazon, £115, £170, £345 plus postage.

Swaledale Sheep



Origins

Developed by farmers on the borders of North Yorkshire and Westmorland.

Characteristics

A bold and hardy sheep, very suited to an exposed hill environment. Popular as a breeding ewe, and widely crossed with a Bluefaced Leicester to produce the North of England Mule. A dark upper head, with low set horns and a distinctive grey muzzle; grey or mottled legs. Long, thick and woolly tail and rugged, resilient wool that is mostly white, although mixed with black on the top of the head.

Location

The hills and moorlands of Northern England.

Main uses

Carpets

Staple length

10-20 cm

Fleece weight

1.5 - 2.5 kg

Micron range

35+

These details come from “British Sheep and Wool” published by the British Wool Marketing Board. This book is in the library and with our collection of fleeces is a good reference source for fleeces

One year I visited the Bakewell Show with a non-spinning friend and we watched the Sheep Show. The sheep being sheared was a Swaledale. Friend Pat bid for it me for me.

When I got it home and opened it up, it was full of bracken, bramble and sheepy dirt and VERY coarse. Being new to spinning I thought I wasn't allowed to throw anything away, so after sorting and washing, I struggled for months to spin the horrible stuff! I now know about compost heaps and bean trenches for unusable fleece

Moral, beware non-spinning friends bearing gifts.



How to sort and wash your fleece



The April* meeting will deal with sorting and washing fleece, at the request of some of the new members. Everyone has their own way and there was a description of another method in the Summer 2010 copy of the newsletter. The following piece comes from:

www.joyofhandspinning.com

It is sometimes necessary to clean (scour) the fleece first before spinning it. Leaving the grease in the wool will make it difficult to dye later, and the grease can also ruin the carding cloth on a drumcarder. Some handspinners prefer "spinning in the grease" and then cleaning the fiber when setting the twist into the yarn. Here is one way that fleece can be cleaned:

1. Fill the washer with very hot water. Add about a cup of washing liquid. Turn off the washer. Gently put your fleece in the washer tub. Close the lid and let the fleece soak for about 45 minutes.
2. Next, turn washer to the end of the SPIN cycle. Spin the water out of fleece. Lift the fleece out and set it aside.
3. . Fill the washer tub again with very hot water. Put the fleece back in and let soak for about 30 minutes.
4. Turn washer to the end of the SPIN cycle. Spin the water out of the fleece. At this point, sort out the fleece that is clean enough to dry. If fleece is especially fine or dirty, you may need to repeat the wash and spin steps a few more times. Mohair often needs multiple washes as does merino, rambouillet** and sometimes other finer wools. Use hot water with about one-half cup of white vinegar and soak fleece 30 minutes for the last rinse, then spin it out. Spread the fleece to air dry on a towel or drying rack.

***Rambouillet, also known as French Marino or Marino Rambouille*

*The fleece sorting meeting has been changed to April instead of March.

Wool Insulation

Wool has kept mankind warm for hundreds of years so installing it in your walls or attics is not that radical. Wool is a great insulator with a thermal conductivity of 0.04w/m^2 which is very similar or better than most mineral or glass wools.

Naturally fire retardant, it is strong, safe and easy to handle, and will not settle or compact like man made equivalents. This natural insulator is treated with Borax a naturally occurring salt to deter moths and beetles.

One of the most important factors for choosing an insulator like wool is its ability to naturally absorb moisture, it is hydroscopic. Man made insulation cannot perform this task.

Older buildings were constructed in such a way that they breathed, absorbing and emitting moisture through the fabric of the building. Using man made insulation will restrict this breathability and so increase the risk of condensation.

Sheep's wool insulation can be added over the top of existing loft insulation, though in older properties it is better to start again especially if the old insulation has deteriorated.



A well insulated sheep.

I had been given a bag of very old fleece, origin unknown, matted and unappetizing. I m now experienced enough not to try and spin it, so I used it to insulate the water tank in the attic, following a burst pipe which filled the boxes with my precious store of wool, fleece, material and yarn full of water

Spinnotts update

Many of you will have noticed an assortment of woolly hats being worn at the November Guild meeting. These were the results of the very first spinnotts spin challenge 'Spin a hat'

The idea was to spin yarn either on a drop spindle or a wheel and knit/crochet a hat using any pattern or just making it up as you go along. As this venture proved successful, we are embarking on our second challenge and we are also inviting Guild members to take part.

Spinnotts winter challenge starts Jan 2011.

Simply spin and knit/crochet a small shawl, now we are talking small



shawlette size here. If you are on Ravelry (Ravelry.com) you will find a pattern called '198 yards of heaven'* which will give you some idea of what we mean. There is also a small shawl lovers group that keep a list patterns.

Alternatively you could knit something similar to the scarf/shawls that Pete and myself wear or you could crochet one. The important thing is that we are looking for something that takes up to 350 yds or 100gm. Not a full size lace shawl! As usual, this is just a bit of fun, if you are a spinnotts member we would love to see photos of your work on the spinnotts ravelry group or facebook page. If you are not a member then why not join? For any non-members taking part, we would love to see your work and we generally have cameras with us so we can include photo updates on the groups pages. Please feel free to speak to any spinnotts members if you have any queries. Oooops....forgot to say that we are looking for finished items in time for the April guild meeting

**I've tried really hard to download the pattern for you but without any success I don't understand computers, mine seems to have a mind of its own, I could have either none or loads of copies.*

Instead this is one of **Pete's patterns**.

Cast on 3 stitches, knit 6 rows, pick up 3 stitches along long edge, three on short edge. Total 9 stitches.

1. K3, YO, K1, YO, PM* K1, PM, YO, K1, YO, K3 **place marker*
 2. K3. YO. Purl to marker, , SM, P1, SM, Purl to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 3. K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 4. K3. YO. Purl to marker, , SM, P1, SM, Purl until last 3 sts, YO, K3
 5. K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit until last 3 sts, YO, K3
 6. K3. YO. Purl to marker, , SM, P1, SM, Purl until last 3 sts, YO, K3
 7. K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit to last 3 stitches, YO, K3
 8. K3. YO. Purl to marker, , SM, P1, SM, Purl to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 9. K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 10. K3, YO, Knit to marker, SM. K1, SM, Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 11. K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit to last 3 stitches, YO, K3
 12. K3, YO, Knit to marker , SM. K1, SM, Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 13. K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 14. K3, YO, Knit to marker , SM. K1, SM, Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
- stitch count 55
15. K3, YO, K1 (YO, K2 tog) to 1 stitch from marker. Then YO, K1, YO, SM, K1
 16. K3, YO Purl until last three stitches YO, K3
- stitch count 63
17. K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 18. K3, YO, Knit to marker , SM. K1, SM, Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 19. K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
 20. K3, YO, Knit to marker , SM. K1, SM, Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3

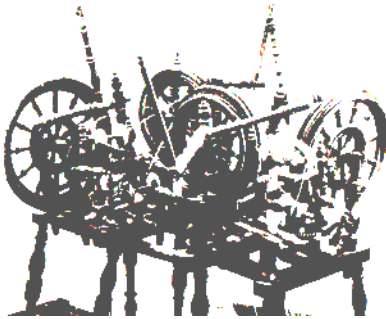
Continue with stocking stitch

K3. YO. Purl to marker, , SM, P1, SM, Purl to last 3 stitches, YO, K3
K3, YO, Knit to marker YO, SM. K1, SM, YO Knit to last 3 sts, YO, K3
and insert the garter/lace section as required insert lace section as required,
giving two ridges of garter stitch on the right side

You may find that the lace row will need to be adapted to:-

K3, YO, K1 (YO, K2tog) YO, SM, K1, SM, (YO, K2tog) YO, K1. YO, K3
End with 6 rows knit and cast off.

One for the Spinnotts!



A multiple spinning wheel with 4 wheels and eight flyers to be used by 4 spinners simultaneously. c. 1818.

Photograph: National Museum of Ireland. Dublin.

Waists

Slim waists have always been admired, but sometimes the demands of fashion have been rather extreme. In the seventeenth century Louis XIV's queen succeeded in reducing her vital statistic to 33cm (13in), and at about 1860 it was generally accepted that 43-53cm (17-21in) was a desirable waist measurement.

Robins

Experiments made with robins have shown that each bird ate 4.26m (14ft) of worms in 24 hours, and in 12 hours a robin eats more than 41% of it's own body weight.

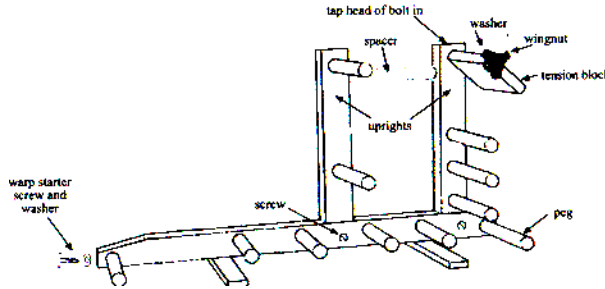


Erratum

On the contacts' sheet Sylvia's e-mail is wrong. It should read

“As thick as Inkle-Weavers”

“As thick as inkle weavers” is a very familiar expression, used by persons who mean to imply that ‘close fellowship’ exists between particular parties to whom they might refer. Now *inkle* is an old provincial name for *tape*, which was, nearly a century ago, manufactured to a great extent at Newbury, in Berks. The tape-looms, on which the threads were prepared, were so narrow, and so closely connected in position, that the weavers sat in close proximity to each other. Hence the expression, ‘as thick as inkle weavers’
ref. ‘Lost Crafts’ by Una McGovern.



February Spinning Workshop led by Angela

February’s spinning workshop is ‘Ratio’s & tension.’ There will be a pamphlet for folk to take away as there is quite a lot to remember, and if people want help with their wheels afterwards I’m sure that there will be other spinners to help me.”

Angela.

(This is something I need to get to grips with. There comes a point in one’s spinning career when just playing has to stop. Then comes the scary bit learning about the technicalities of the wheel. Jane.)

March Weaving Workshop

The weaving workshop in March will be **Repp Weaving**. The definition of repp weaving is “*A cloth with narrow ribs running the width of the fabric. Usually a fine warp and heavier filling/weft yarns.*” If you visited the National Exhibition at Mansfield the rug which was displayed on the stage in the first room was an example of repp weaving.

Bring along a loom warped up using the finest heddle, a rigid heddle loom is ideal. I rather hope this is a style of weaving that will use up some of my stash of commercial yarn.

A Traditional spinning rhyme.

Turn the reel,
Spin the wheel,
Spin - spin.
Wind it full
With finest wool,
That every lad
May wear his plaid*,
Turn the reel,
Spin the wheel,
Spin - Spin.

Anon

* **Plaid**. *A long broad woollen scarf, with fringe at each end, worn in the following manner:- It is passed across the chest to the back, an end is brought over each shoulder, and finally both ends are passed under the fold across the chest.*

General knowledge Quiz

1. Which English King was nicknamed 'The hammer of the Scots'?
2. To which island group was Archbishop Makarios exiled in 1956?
3. Toxophily is a popular world-wide sport- by what named is it better known?
4. What is remarkable about the construction of the word 'facetious'?
5. What famous 20th century singer was christened Harry Webb?
6. What flag is flown by a vessel leaving port?
7. What is processed in a 'ginnery'?
8. What was a 'troglodyte'?
9. What is the opposite of 'Nadir'?
10. In what year was decimal currency introduced in the U.K?

Answers,

1. Edward 1.
2. Seychells.
3. Archery.
4. The vowels all occur in alphabetical order.
5. Cliff Richards.
6. Blue Peter.
7. Cotton.
8. Cave dweller.
9. Zenith.
- 10.1971

"In the handicrafts exhibition at Wordsley Community Centre, the contribution of the Misses Smith was smocking and rugs and not smoking drugs as stated in last week s report. "

Committee members

Jane Ashley	Chairman.	01909 509 487 janeashley7@yahoo.co.uk
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Librarians.	Dee Duke	0115 963 5538
	Patricia Dyson	0115 920 9719
Newsletter	Jane Ashley	01909 509 487

Meetings are held at Lambley village Hall, Catfoot Lane, from 10am to 4pm.
Workshops and speakers start at 11o/c.

There is a large carpark and easy access for disabled people. Visitors are always welcome. Membership is £20 a year starting in October and £3.50 each meeting.

Programme for 2011

Jan.29th	Jennie Parry's workshop.
Feb.26th	Spinning workshop with Angela.
Mar.26th	Repp Weaving workshop with Chris, Sylvia and Ann.
Apr.23rd	Sorting and preparing a fleece.
May. 28th	Dyeing forum.
June 25th	East Bridgford Show. No meeting at Lambley.
July 30th	Spinning workshop with Angela.
Aug.27th	Do your own thing.
Sept.24th	Weaving workshop, tba.
Oct.29th	A.G.M. and open day.
Nov.26th	Linda Radkin Workshop.
Dec.19th	Christmas fuddle and secret santa.