



# Nottingham and District Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers

## Winter 2007 Newsletter

Happy Christmas and a 2008 full of satisfying crafting.

### Chair's report for 2007

This report will be very different from most years as I will be concentrating mainly on two items, changes in Guild policies and procedures, and the Newark Show.

#### 1. Changes to our practices.

- Many of you will have read the Guild's 'Health and safety policy'. If you have not read them, please make sure you do, and sign to confirm this.
- The need to complete a contract form for all speakers, even if you are a branch member.
- Risk assessment forms must be completed by the speaker for their session. Each of us also need to a personal risk assessment which must be updated every year, to confirm there are no new risks
- We do need to know if you have any health problems that could affect you during a meeting. These. will be kept confidential
- The Guild owns a rigid heddle loom,(see pages 4&5,) and a spinning wheel which can be borrowed by members. Experienced weavers and spinners will be only too pleased to help novices to learn these skills. If you hear of any wheels for sale, one of the experienced spinners will check it out to see if it is worth buying.
- All Guild equipment must be passed as safe for purpose, if you have any or would like to borrow any items please see Liz Harrison.
- Again with library books, please return any that you have as we need a complete list of the Guild's belongings. New library books gratefully received.

#### 2. The Newark Show.

This has been a huge learning experience for me, having to think of formal risk assessment and contracts rather than verbal agreements with members to organize a workshop

Thanks to everyone for their commitment and help in making the stand look so wonderful, spending hours talking to the public while demonstrating their skills As a result we have been asked to go into local schools; received gifts of yarn; and also had the chance to talk to fellow guild members who we may not have spoken to much before!

Margaret O'Mara.

October. 2007.

## Maggie Relph's talk on African indigo dyeing.

I was so glad we had a good turn out for Maggie Relph because her talk was fascinating. She started with a potted history of indigo which I discovered was full of interest and drama and could have provided material for a great TV history show. I was especially interested to learn that indigo is the only natural dye that has an exact synthetic equivalent, and that it was created at about the same time as the development of Levi's Strauss' manufacture of denim jeans and the two took off hand in hand. Of course this had a dramatic effect on the indigo market with a complete reversal in roles between the suppliers and buyers of the dye.

Maggie is passionate about Africa and is a frequent visitor to the dyers there. She was able to show us slides of indigo dyeing being carried out there, and talk in detail about the methods used in Africa. It is very labour intensive but their attitudes to time and production are very different to ours in the West, and Maggie often found that the Africans she buys from want the same price for a piece of dyed cloth no matter whether it is a simple piece of work or one that has taken months to prepare.

Last but not least Maggie told us about her experiences of dyeing with indigo and the different effects that can be achieved with resist, tie dyeing and stitching. She showed us many lovely examples of different dye techniques and was able to answer all the dyers' questions

I just tried to absorb as much of the information as I could. The most important thing seemed to be that indigo does not penetrate the fabric but forms a surface layer which is why it fades with time, and when you buy indigo cloth in Africa the dye will rub off onto your hands. Like woad, indigo turns blue when you take it out of the dye bath and expose it to the air, magic!

We learnt afterwards that Maggie times her talks to suit the interest she senses in her audience and will often only speak for around 40 minutes. You will see how good a speaker she was and how interested we were, when I tell you she must have been speaking for nearly 2 hours and was then still busy answering questions until we all had to go home!

Indigo dyeing is an ancient and fascinating craft and I leave you with an old recipe from a book called "Indigo Textiles" by Gosta Sandberg.

"Take urine, preferably of those who drink strong drinks, put it into a firkin or jug that has a lid with cloth between so that it is kept well stopped, and allow it to stand in a warm but not hot oven, for 3-4 days. Indigo is placed in the clear urine where it is left for 4-5 days, but rubbed once a day."

Perhaps after the Christmas fuddle!

Karen Winyard

## Johnny Depp and me.

On a sunny October weekend I joined a group of very enthusiastic doll makers at Horncastle College. I must admit that I had not heard of the College before, it turned out to be Lincolnshire's residential adult education college, and a very nice one too.

Doll makers are as excited about their fabrics, (what happened to 'material?'), as we are about our fleeces, dyes and yarns. My fabrics resembled sparrows compared to their peacocks!

I estimate I spent a minimum of 18 hours over the weekend putting together a "jointed jester" and another 6 hours the following week to complete him. The most difficult part being stuffing him, especially the nose, as I did not have the correct tools, a stuffing fork and forceps. One of the interesting aspects of learning new skills is discovering new tools; a stuffing fork is basically a huge sewing needle sawn through the eye and the sharp end anchored into a handle, it is used to push the stuffing into those places other tools do not reach. Another fact I learnt, you can't stuff successfully with cheap stuffing, it goes all lumpy bumpy.

It was a happy little group of women, only occasionally were there groans of frustration or cries of 'you stupid women!' There were only two of us newcomers to the craft, Sue next to me plans to make 'dozens' to put all over her house, I think my Johnny Depp look-a-like will be an only jester.

Jane Ashley.

## When Nancy panicked.

OK this is the scenario. you are demonstrating, for the first time, at a major craft fair. You are anxious about your own abilities. You have a rotten cold. And you have just been asked if you will conduct a workshop. What do you say? "Why, yes." (don't panic.) "I would be happy to." (don't panic.) I was told that Chris and I would be teaching the group together.(relief.) Then I found out that, as there were only three people coming, we would be doing it on the stand. That's when I panicked. Not only was I going to be teaching spinning for the first time ever, but I was going to be it right in front of everyone.

We had one wheel, two demonstrators, three learners and a space of about five feet by five to work in. We agreed that Chris would teach one beginner how to use the wheel, while I taught drop-spinning to the other two. Focus. What did I find hardest when I started / I decided to start with handling the wool. That's right- don't yank the wool, just let the fibres slide- see? Easy! Then you use the wheel, or the spindle, to put in a twist. This gives a yarn strength and structure. the principles of spinning in two easy steps. And they got it! All three, mother,

daughter, and daughter's friend, produced a length of creditable yarn on both spindle and wheel They went away excited, inspired and determined to learn more. Hey, maybe I can do it after all....

Nancy Hudson.

## Summary of the A.G.M.

The full minutes are available in the Guild file.

- Payment of speakers from within the Guild. It was agreed that speakers will be offered £20 plus expenses- not travel-which they could refuse
- Charity stall/fundraising. The £79.56 already raised plus any future monies will go towards Guild events.
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- Morning speakers. Where possible speakers will be invited to speak in the morning, leaving the afternoon for social and D.I.Y. time, plus committee .
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- Newsletter. There is now a sub-committee to produce the newsletter, Jane, Nancy and Debby. The newsletter will be printed quarterly and distributed at the Dec. March, June and Sept. meetings. If you are unable to attend any of these meetings, there are 3 alternatives for you to receive a copy.
  1. Give Jane a stamp and she will post it to you.
  2. Give Jane your email address and she will email it to you.
  3. We will put it in the cupboard and you can collect it at your next meeting.
- I will leave a list and you can sign the appropriate column.
- It would be good if members contributed articles, these would generally be 250 or 500 words, i.e. a full or half page, and might be book reviews, courses you've attended or exhibitions visited.

I will offer as much or as little direction as you find helpful and we would like to edit your articles as necessary, to fit in with the rest of the newsletter's contents

## The Pegotty.

The Pegotty, or "knitting Nancy," was a wooden gadget that had pegs protruding, either all round it, or from its corners. It was used for knitting long tubular strips of wool.

## The Spinner's Loom

As a complete novice to weaving I found I could warp up and use the Guild's rigid heddle loom relatively easily. All your spinning experiments and "textured" yarns look great as weft. Just follow the instruction book, the Ashford Book and Betty Lou Davenport's book. Have fun.

Here are some tips that I have found by experience, which might help you

- 1. Use strong commercial yarn, cotton or acrylic are good, as the warp, you won't mind any wastage if you haven't spun it.
- 2. Always put on extra warp, it's a nightmare if the warp is too short.
- 3. The edges are always difficult to keep straight, make a cushion cover to start with, they won't show then.
- 4. Set the tension at the beginning by weaving 4 or 5 rows of rags. This spaces the warp well.
- 5. Dark warps set off the weft colours and make them glow. Try 4 ply acrylics in black, dark grey, navy or dark brown. Thicker warps need the pink heddle, that is 5 dents per inch.(dpi)
- 6. Do not overfill the shuttles, as they won't easily slide through the sheds. Joins in the weft are made away from the edges by overlapping 2-3 ins. If using wool, break, but not cut, to blend in the ends.
- 7. Place the heddle in the back set of holders to maximize the weaving space as the warps come to the end. The front set are normally used, as the loom is more comfortable to use on the arms.
- 8. The extra shuttles can be used to make additional half sheds by placing through the warps behind the heddle. The pattern of threading it through the warps determines the "floats" of weft which are so attractive
- 9. To avoid knotting the warps, finish the ends with zig-sag machining immediately after removing from the loom or hemstitch before removing fabric from the loom,(stitch the first end after the rags, before rolling it on.) The top side of the fabric on the loom would then be the wrong side of the hemstitching.
- 10. Remember you loose about 1 ins in every 12 ins on the width, with possibly more for shrinkage on "fulling." (washing in hot water after weaving) Therefore always warp up wider than you think you need, especially if using wool.
- 11. When the warps are almost full, and you need that last extra 2ins, put a spare shuttle behind the heddle with it in the "down" position. Bring forward and turn it on its side to weave the down rows, slide flat to the back of the roller stick when working the "up" rows. This helps to keep the "down" shed open enough to slide the shuttle across

## The Loom Stand.

The Guild Loom comes with a stand. I don't have one, as I don't like the design, it does not fold up and is too low for tall people. My tables seem to be round and oval, a problem to support the loom. However, I have found an excellent solution with a loom board. An off-cut of kitchen work-top about 6ins wider than the outer measurement of the loom, and about 10-12ins deep. This is covered the base with Wilko's non-slip fabric, which extends up the front edge and onto the top for 2-3 ins. I secured it with Wilko's double sided tape. The board does not move on the table and the loom does not move when resting on the front of the board. The loom front rests on my lap, covered by a small cushion for both comfort, and to make a surface for resting the shuttle. The Dryad book (small thin red one.) in the Guild Library on "weaving on a two-way loom," gives a fantastic array of simple patterns achieved by varying the colours of the warp and weft threads. It also explains the "floats" in simple terms, use these with plain (untextured) yarns.

I hope these tips will inspire you to have a go, and enjoy a new skill. My thanks to the Guild weavers for their support and encouragement. I suppose the next step will be a 4-shaft table loom!-----

Mary Bell

(As a non-weaver I hope this makes sense! ed.)

You don't need to concentrate on this next piece!

- If the beech shows a large bud at Christmas a moist summer will probably follow.
- A green Christmas brings a full churchyard.
- If ice bears before Christmas, it won't bear a goose after

Helpful hints for knitters

- When undoing wool from an old garment, wind it round a filled hot water bottle. the wool should have no kinks and be easier to knit.
- After completing an Aran jumper, fold it neatly and sit on it for 30mins. This gives a natural pressing and improves the finished look.

## Tatting with Lyn Morton.

,I really fancied having a go at Tatting, and when someone suggested we invited Lyn Morton to come and run a tatting workshop I found that I was not alone. A small but intrepid group of us gathered at one end of the hall having already spent 10 or 15 minutes admiring the many intricate and beautiful samples of work that Lyn had brought along. We were all eager and ready to tat - I mean how hard could it really be?

Ten minutes later the hall was resounding not to the merry click of our shuttles but our groans of despair. Tatting is not easy and not for the faint hearted. In theory it is simple. The thread is held in one hand and the shuttle is passed over and under to form a stitch with the other hand. But the thread is very fine, and keeping the tension makes unpracticed hands ache, and you have to learn to flip the thread over to form a running loop instead of a knot and really our list of gripes was endless. Lyn was incredibly patient with us and in the end I think we all manage to tat rows of stitches. But Debby gave up at that point and decided to stick to her spinning wheel, and not all of us managed to progress onto tatting a circle.

Jules was the star of the show that day and seemed to take to tatting as though born with a shuttle in her hand. She managed everything at their first attempt and kept a beautiful even tension in her work. But even Jules found she could not maintain this high standard over the following weeks without Lyn on hand to help out. Lyn made it seem so easy and watching her was rather like watching a magician performing a delicate trick of sleight of hand. Many of us bought some of the wonderful coloured threads afterwards but I wonder how many will tat with them.

I persevered at home and have now produced tatted butterflies to sew onto a waistcoat for Emily, and a tatted bookmark. I can now tat for up to an hour before my fingers cramp unbearably, and I am glad I have learnt the skill. I will keep it up because it provides such delicate lace like work but it will never be my first love. Ahh back to my beloved loom!

Karen Winyard.

Dyers did you know?

Blue is true.

Yellow is jealous.

Green is forsaken

Red is brazen

White is love.

Black is death.

Blue and green should never be seen unless there's a colour in between.

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.
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