



Nottingham and District  
Guild of Spinners, Weavers  
and Dyers.



Spring newsletter 2009

*Happy Christmas and a crafty New Year.*

Here's a picture you never thought you'd see, Margaret spinning.

This was the scene at the Craft 4 Crafters show at Newark in September 2008. We had decided that our stand this year would be less complicated, with a few wall mounted displays and the bulk of the stand being available for demonstrations and hands on opportunity for the public.

The stall looked quite cosy, and visitors are always interested in watching people spinning and weaving.



Guild members who enjoy demonstrating, speak with such enthusiasm, that folk like to stay and watch for ages. The extra space that we allowed on the stand made it a much a more comfortable experience this year. However there was a down-side to this, some parents found our stall a useful place to leave their children while they wandered off.

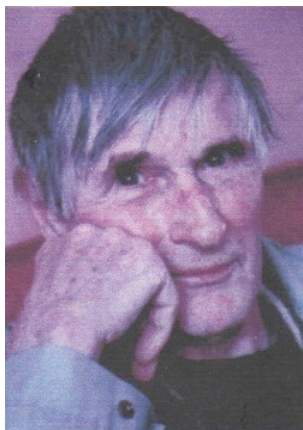
It's been decided not to have a stand next year, we've had few new members from the show as most people seem to visit from the south of the county and would find other Guilds more convenient.

## **Peter Collingwood 1922-2008**

**Peter Collingwood was one of our most famous weavers. Born in London, he trained as a doctor but decided to weave after visiting weavers in Jordan. He became a student of Ethel Mairet in the 1950s and never looked back.**

**His famous macrogauze weaves are unique and he used his shaft switching to great advantage in his rug weaving.**

**He wrote a number of books ranging from rug weaving to tablet weaving, sprang and ply splitting but probably the one most used and recognized is the "Techniques of Rug Weaving."**



**He will be sadly missed.**

**Further information about Peter can be found on [www.petercollingwood.co.uk](http://www.petercollingwood.co.uk)**

## **Sylvia Houghton.**

Alison Daykin on Design or the terrified

Alison is passionate about design, which she came to after years of making things to a pattern which never lived up to their original promise. She had a cupboard full of things she had made which didn't quite fit or look right. One day she decided to stop feeling terrified of producing her own designs, threw out the cupboard's contents and got stuck in. I think we've all been there, most of us are still there now but hopefully not for much longer after Alison's inspiring talk.

Alison's methods are simple, but thorough. She showed us how to play with colour by blending coloured fleece on the carders to produce the right shade yarn to spin and then weave/knit with. She dyes herself but you can

use fleece that has been commercially dyed. Or buy commercially produced yarn if you don't spin.

Work with simple colour theory using the 3 primary colours but remembering that there are two types of blues reds and yellows with different tones so take care to use the right one. By keeping it simple the results will work together even if they are not quite the colour scheme you originally had in mind.

The other key to successful design is patience and sampling. This is the process Alison goes through. First she takes a picture as her inspiration, it could be a photograph she has taken herself, or a card/ calendar picture - anything that inspires you. Then she writes about why she likes the picture, and it is important to keep talking to yourself by making and keeping notes as you go along so that ideas are jotted down and not forgotten.

If she is not using the whole of the picture she uses mounts, or paper apertures to mask off different sections of the picture she is interested in, making notes as to why she likes them of course. Enlarge each chosen section and then place a grid over the top. Alison makes her grids using overhead projector film and you can download grids from your computer if you have the technology or use a ruler and mark it out



yourself by hand. This way, you can count and guesstimate what percentage of the picture is filled with each of the colours and textures you want to use in your design.

Next Alison makes tone bands using paint marking out the colours in their proportions, and then reproduces the tone band by making sample wraps with the yarns she wants to use. Keep on making those notes. Sometimes she might also knit or weave a sample swatch at this stage. After she has played around with the samples she moves on to larger samples made from collages or paper weaving with different images. To get the images and paper to work with she will enlarge sections of the original photograph and print them off, then cut them up and play around with them again looking for patterns and combinations that gel with her original inspiration.

Keep on writing down your thoughts and ideas on the results. Eventually her design emerges and she can plan a warping design maybe with stripes of colours in the warp based on the colour ratios, and weft patterning on the same basis. If you are knitting then the same method applies.

It's a long slow process but it does mean that the final design will live up to the heady promise of your first ideas even if you have moved some way beyond your original inspiration.

Karen Winyard.

## Our Woolly Pets.

Our eleven sheep and two Angora goats are all little characters. Queen of the flock is Hattie, a pure black Wensleydale who rules mainly because she is the biggest and has a pushy nature. Madge is the 'middle' sheep, the bravest of them all with humans. The rest of the flock are silly little Shetlands which are quite simply bonkers and follow Madge every where.



The Angora goats, Polly and Molly are delightfully playful and love to be petted. Polly is the bossy one and always leads.

I have very carefully chosen the little characters as Madge produces soft, hardy wool perfect for socks with a high twist or when spun to the crimp, a luxuriously soft fluffy jumper. Hattie produces lovely curly black wool ideal for jumpers and socks. The Shetlands were bred by spinners so the wool quality is very good and in a mixture of shades for colour patterns for fine projects.

Molly and Polly were bred by a breeder judge and their mohair is excellent even though they are now quite old and have thicker fibres. It is a spinners dream to have this collection of animals as blending mohair and wool is great fun too. I am very particular



about my wool and so I am fortunate enough to have a good variety of quality wool at my finger tips. When I spin I like to think of the cheeky character that produced it. Mind you sheep are not the timid creatures that they are reputed to be. They are quite

strong and when I tell people that I am covered in bruises most of the time because of playful butting or being knocked over people look at me in disbelief.

## Debby Channing

A Week-end at GUNBY HALL.

Gunby Hall is a National Trust Property in Lincolnshire about 6 miles from Skewness. Over the weekend of the 13th and 14th September, Sylvia, Eileen and I were invited to be part of 'Craft and Pear Sunday', really to present what we do in any way that we chose.

The event started on Sunday at 10-00 am. and to give us time to get there and set up we went the day before, John, Sylvia and myself in their estate car, sleeping overnight in The Hall and David and Eileen with their caravan pitched at a site in nearby Spilsby. We met over a meal with other guests (14 in all) in The Hall on Saturday night, soaking up the atmosphere of this elegant country house, by the kind and warm invitation of the tenant Mrs. Claire Ayres.

We had all spent weeks preparing for this. Sylvia ran a Weaving Display, Demonstration and opportunities for Hands -On' on a large folding foot power loom. Eileen specialized on this occasion on her "Passementerie' of luscious tassels, fit for any French chateau. I covered Spinning and French Knitting ( which to the French is apparently called Tricotin.

We were allocated an hexagonal marquee on the front lawn, plenty of room for all of us and put up our sign of 'Textiles' outside on an easel. There were two other marquees like ours, one for lace-making and the other for Pears. There were all different varieties of pears, with description sheets and recipes, and willing staff to advise, and examples to taste. Great fun. In the stable yard were other stalls, plants, basket work, exotic knitting, and the tea rooms which were constantly busy. The walled gardens and glasshouses were particularly interesting, beautifully kept and so productive. I'm sure fruit, flowers and veg. must be on tap all year.

Visitors kept coming all day and we were very busy explaining what we do and giving a go to those who wanted to. The weather was just about perfect, and we came away at 5 p.m. feeling very good about the day and how

worthwhile it had been. It had all gone so smoothly. We stopped off at David and Eileen's caravan at Spilsby on the way home for sipper prepared in the slow cooker set up at breakfast time, and had a good natter about the day's events, before John drove us home again.

There are many people to thank, to Claire for inviting us and looking after us so well, Sylvia and Eileen for putting on such a professional show and to their two tolerant and supportive husbands, John and David, and to Catherine (grand-daughter) for her excellent sign writing. Lastly to Free and Joan, my relatives, who gave us back up during the day and made sure we could see all the other events. We now call ourselves "The Textileers" and hope this will lead on to other days like this.

Chris Jesson.

How Maureen found the Guild.

I had been looking forward to retirement for some time, no more leaving home in the cold and the dark, or organizing people. Instead there would be time to read, meet friends, see more of the family, but most of all less stress and hassle and more time to relax and take life slowly. After celebrating with colleagues and saying goodbye, the day finally dawned and retirement had arrived.

I spent months reading, meeting friends, visiting family and a holiday or two. Then the realization that THIS WAS IT.

No more deadlines but no focus, days were my own, there was a void that needed to be filled. I set out to find something to engage in, to fill the time with a purpose. During a visit to Nottingham subscription Library, I saw a magazine on the table, Spinster's Almanac. I turned the pages and found, Dyes from kitchen waste and how to spin a lacy shawl.

What was all this about? I found the name of the Nottingham Guild and rang up. Angela answered and invited me to the next meeting, where she made me very welcome, showed me what spinning was all about, how to spin yarn and gave such encouragement.....I was

hooked. I became absorbed by the range of fibres I could spin, milk protein, soya, bamboo and would you believe-possum! There was such a range of things I could make, such a variety of natural dyes too.... in short I became obsessed with the whole thing.

The meetings are fun, people are willing to share their knowledge and experience with a novice, I can't wait for the next meeting. How pleased I am I found the Guild.

Thank you all for making this transition so exciting and fulfilling.

Maureen Ake.

*The 2009 Project.*

*Each year the committee decide on a project for guild members to work on, which can be worked in any craft that is loosely connected with the core areas of spinning, weaving and dyeing. The completed articles are brought together for a display at the A.G.M. when the techniques and inspirations can be explained.*

*In the past there has been a prize for the most popular article, this hasn't happened for a few years, now everyone enjoys the satisfaction of their work being recognised in its own right without being compared with that of others.*

*The project for 2009 is still under discussion. It was going to be 'Mini-Beasts' but there are now thoughts that the project may concentrate on the core skills of spinning, weaving and dyeing, perhaps with everyone using wool from a fleeces brought in for the January meeting. This will all be made clear in January.*

Re-enactment costumes, a presentation by Jules.

Back in August Jules gave a fascinating talk about the costumes she has made for her roles in the re-enactment society to which she belongs. Based on the Civil War, the detail that goes into the costumes is amazing, some groups will only allow costumes that are perfect in the minutest detail to be worn, whereas Jules admitted that she only hand sews those seams that show, others are machined.

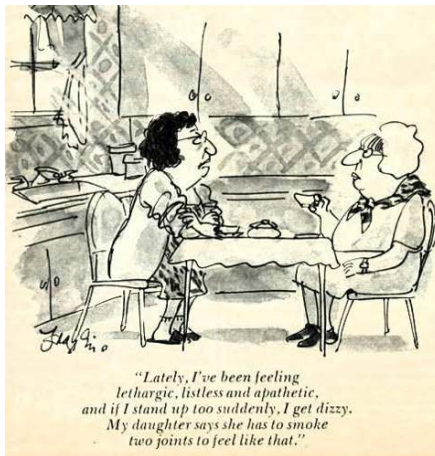
The shoes worn in the 17th century could be worn on either foot, when one side of the heel wears down, just change them to the other foot! Not only had Jules made her own shoes but she also showed us her very own, home-made flint and demonstrated how to make fire with it.

For me the most impressive garment Jules showed us was a corset. It is very important that the corset fits snugly as this controls both the shape of the dress and how the wearer moves within the garment.

Fabric was valued at this time being all hand made and strips cut on the cross were too wasteful to use. Decorative edgings were made by cutting strips on the straight, frayed out on both sides and stitched on, instant frills.

With an interesting mix of authentic reproductions, and the latest high tech visual displays, Jules 's talk was great. Thanks Jules.

Jane Ashley.





## There is no substitute for wool.

In the 1950s there was an advertising campaign by the International Wool Secretariat, to-days Woolmark Company, which invited the public to submit a short poem depicting historical events, each ending with the sentence, 'There is no substitute for wool.' These examples come from Richard Proctor's book "There is no Substitute.....'

Yon canny Highland crofters keep  
A flock of crease resistant sheep.  
They weave wee woolen shirts and slacks  
And flog them to the Sassenachs.  
Wool keeps it's shape, it's bound to please.  
(Ye nae seen sheep wi' baggy knees)  
At birth bairns learn the golden rule,  
There's nae substitute for wool.



King Arthur's knights sat sullen eyed  
"What ails you all?" the monarch cried.  
Quoth one, "Tis this round table sire,  
The lads out here can't feel the fire."  
Quoth Guinevere, "Poor faithful knights,  
I'll knit you all a pair of tights."  
Which goes to prove the golden rule,  
There is no substitute for wool.

## Woollen cloth.

The filaments of wool which make what is termed broadcloth, i.e. the cloth used for men's garments, are required to be shorter, finer and softer than those used for other woollen materials. A very inferior kind of cloth is made in some parts of Yorkshire; it is manufactured out of old cloth. This is torn to pieces by machinery and re-woven; the material is loose and not durable, but it is very cheap, and is called shoddy cloth. The art of weaving cloth came, it is said, from the Romans.

## **Group Equipment.**

The Group owns various pieces of equipment which members may borrow. Equipment is loaned out for a month at a time, when it should be brought back to the meeting. If no-one else wants to borrow it, it can be kept for a further month

If you're in the middle of a project, negotiate with the next person who wants to borrow it, a mutually convenient hand over time and place.

There is a book to record the loans in the Library cupboard, or if you have any problems, please see Jane Ashley.

### **List of equipment.**

- Ashford Traditional spinning wheel.
- Ashford Traveller spinning wheel.                      Various sticks and shuttles.
- Tenterhook.                                                              Rigid heddle table loom
- Tablet weaving.                                                              Drum carder
- 2 shaft small table loom.                                              Revolving warping mill
- 4 shaft table loom                                                              Warping mill
- Jumbo flier for a traditional loom.                                      Large folding loom
- Large folding loom.

The Lazy kate, tension box and a pair of carders seem to be missing.

## **The November Show. November 2009.**

As usual the hall was full of wonderful work, covering a wide range of the crafts that Guild members do so well. One of the aspects of the Guild that amazes me is the range of ways in which yarns are used.

- There were lengths of fabric most beautifully and expertly woven.
- Chunky, cheerful bags and cushions woven on peg-looms.
- Blankets and cushions knitted on HUGE needles using up commercial yarn that had been Navaho plied.
- Bags and a book cover woven from
- Wool dyed from a range of natural dyes.
- Spinning, loose and lovely or lumpy and bumpy, (known in the trade as 'textured').

The thing about our Guild is that people are always so appreciative of other folk's work, and keen to find out how it was done.

Unfortunately we had few visitors, to prevent this happening again the committee have asked for a volunteer from the members for a publicity officer. Are you interested in the post? Please see a member of the committee if you are.

Hebridean sheep.

The Hebrideans are small, hardy sheep, with black wool that can go grey with age, (I know how they feel!) and both males and females have 2 or 4 horns. Coming originally from the north-western fringes of Europe, they were probably brought to Scotland by the Vikings.

Over the years their numbers have declined, reaching a low in the 1970s. Over recent years their numbers have built up since their use in managing ecologically sensitive heath lands.

There are Hebridean sheep in Clumber Park, which do this job on the heath land areas and prevent the land deteriorating by eating up invasive plants such as scrub birch. In Clumber these little sheep can hardly be seen, just little black blobs, as they munch their way through the vegetation..

A young Hebridean fleece spins beautifully, but their semi-feral management often leads to the wool being full of spiky bits of grass, heather, gorse and other unmentionables. There are times when the only use for the fleece is the compost heap.

Exhibitions.

1. The Quaker Tapestry Exhibition. Southwell Minster.

31st January-28th February 2009.

To quote from their publicity, "a modern tapestry, this international community project explores three centuries of social history within 77 fascinating panels. A display of 39 panels from this unique collection of embroideries."

The complete exhibition which is absolutely brilliant, is based in the Friends meeting house Kendal over the Summer. This smaller exhibition travels around the country during the winter months, it really is worth a visit.

2. "Ernest Gimson and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Leicester."

This exhibition is on at the Leicester New Walk Museum- from now until 1st March 2009.

Meetings are held in Lambley Village Hall, Cat foot Lane. 10am-4pm.

Workshops and speakers start at 11.0/c

There is a large car park and easy access for disabled people.

### *The 2009 Programme.*

The 2009 programme in the Autumn Newsletter included 2 outside speakers, 2 'in house' workshops, January jacket potatoes, Oct. A.G.M. the November Show and the Christmas Fuddle. May, June and July meetings were left free for members to informally work alongside experienced spinners and weavers, as are all afternoons. Outside speakers and workshops take place at 11.0/c leaving the afternoons free. The room is booked until 4.0/c.

There was feedback to the Committee meeting that some people feel there are not enough opportunities to formally teach and learn the core skills of spinning, weaving and dyeing.

Are you interested in developing core skills in your chosen craft? Are you interested in having a go at something new, that is loosely connected with all things woolly? Do you value the time and space to come along and do your own thing and socialize? Are you happy to ask an 'expert' as and when you want to know something?

As a committee we try to respond to the views of the membership, but of course we cannot please all of the people all of the time. Though I must say it looked a very happy gathering at the November meeting with spinning tuition quietly taking place in the middle of all the hustle and bustle and networking happening all over the place. Please let us know how you feel, how do you want the Guild and its members to develop, or are you happy with the way things are? Please let us know. (See Maureen's article on p.)

So next year's programme is under consideration, except for January which will still be jacket potatoes.

