

*West Essex & East Herts Guild of
Spinners, Weavers & Dyers*

Threads



December 2016

Members of the Committee 2016/17

Chair	Lesley Ottewell
Vice-Chair	Hilary Hedderick
Secretary	Mary Hicks
Treasurer	Cate Barnett
Publicity Officer	Asela Ali
Programme Secretary	Sue Prior
Committee Member	Chris Lane

Guild Website

www.westessexeasthertswsd.weebly.com

Guild Programme 2016

Saturday 14 January 10.00 a.m.- 4.00 p.m. Harlow Museum	Spin and Chat - Bring your wheel (or other work in progress). Introduction of 2017 Competition Bring & Buy Sale
Saturday 11 February 10.00 a.m.- 4.00 p.m. Village Hall, Bell Lane, Widford SG12 8SH	Basketry Workshop with Sue Kirk Advance booking essential Members £35, Visitors £45
Saturday 11 March 10.00 a.m.- 4.00 p.m. Harlow Museum	Spinning Workshop including spinning from a silk cap. Bring your wheel (or other work in progress) to spin and chat.

We look forward to seeing you there!



We have enjoyed the facilities at the museum for some now but financial constraints on Harlow Council meant that they passed on their management of the Harlow Museum to a charity known as Science Alive. They are now experiencing funding difficulties and can no longer support our evening meetings, even though we do pay a hire charge. Those who arrived early in November, will be aware that the museum was closed during the day and only opened for us in the evening.

At a meeting with the CEO of Science Alive, several months ago, our bookings up to December were guaranteed and we have worked hard to smooth the way to enable us to book dates in 2017. Unfortunately, we have now been informed that we cannot use the museum for any evening meetings after this year.

At present, we have booked the following meetings:

January: Harlow Museum

Spin & Chat and introduce the 2017 competition

February: Widford Village Hall

Basket making workshop (Members may attend even if they are not taking part in the workshop)

March: Harlow Museum

Spin & Chat with a short session on spinning from a silk cap

The members of the committee have been investigating alternative venues and will try to choose the best one for us all. We need to consider several factors, including available dates, cost, suitability and distance. Hopefully we will have effected this by the time we need to move in April.

We will keep you informed of any changes to this plan.

Guild Competition 2016 - Dye A Bundle

I decided to make a cushion, as I had done with the previous 'bundle' competition some years ago, and I gave the project quite a lot of thought.

I wanted to tone down the bright yellow without losing its vibrancy. I also wanted to use as much of the 'bundle' as possible. I spun the fibre and then laid all the yarns side by side about half an inch apart on a piece of cream cotton I happened to have. I taped all the yarn ends onto the cloth with sellotape to keep them straight while I placed a sheet of soluble AquaBond over the whole piece, pressing the yarns onto the fabric. I then removed the sellotape and machined backwards and forwards across the piece to stitch the yarns to the fabric. I rinsed out the Aquabond according to instructions on the pack, dried and ironed the fabric, cut the shapes I wanted, turned in the edges and applied the shapes to the yellow 'bundle' fabric. I had some fabric suitable for the back of the cushion, into which I put a zip, and then machined the two sides together.



I have to say this was all very time-consuming and I did question whether it was worth the effort, but the cushion turned out exactly as I had envisaged so I was pleased with the result. Using Aquabond was also interesting although it is not cheap: nearly £10 for the square I needed, but I would use it again as it worked very well.

It was great to win the competition and made all the effort worthwhile, so thank you to everyone who voted for my cushion.

By Mary Hicks

Knitting with Cats!

by Lady Dinah's Cat Emporium



On Thursday 20th October we hosted our first ever knitting night led by the wonderful Asela Ali with resources from the [Knitting and Crocheting Guild](#), and it was a great success!

Over 20 keen knitters joined us for a relaxing evening of crafts and cat cuddles. Regular visitor and VIP cardholder Asela ran a beginners' class whilst the more experienced knitters worked on their own projects, using wool and patterns provided on the night.

Our guests worked on scarves, socks and blankets while the cats watched on, coveting the long lines of wool. Of course we were very careful to watch them closely, ensuring no harm came to the cats.

It wasn't just knitting either – one of our guests was a renegade crocheter! Thank you to Lauren Sim (@PaintySim) for these tweets!

[20 Oct](#)



[Sim Lauren](#) @PaintySim

I'll be at [@LadyDinahsCats](#) tonight with my crocheting! [#KittyKnitTakeover](#) [#TeamCrochet](#)





It was a fantastic evening of friendly chatter, sharing tips, relaxing with the cats and making! If you came we'd love to see your creations, share them with us @ladydinahscats.

P.S. Kitty Knitters will meet again on Jan 18th 2017.



Lady Dinah's Cat Emporium
152-154 Bethnal Green Road
Shoreditch
London, London E26DG
United Kingdom

Ethel Mairet at Ditchling

I was very excited when I heard that there was to be an exhibition of Ethel Mairet's work at the Ditchling Art and Craft Museum in East Sussex. I have read quite a lot about Ethel Mairet – mainly in a book entitled 'A Weaver's Life – Ethel Mairet 1872-1952' by Margot Coatts which was written to accompany a major exhibition in 1983. The back cover states that "Ethel Mairet was a member of the small but vigorous crafts community which carried the ethic of William Morris into the twentieth century. She established an influential weaving workshop in Ditchling, alongside Eric Gill, Edward Johnston and Douglas Pepler. Ethel Mairet's intuitive response to weaving was stimulated by her travels in Ceylon, India and Europe and the collection of textiles she made on these journeys. She experimented with hand-spun yarns and unusual materials and did much to revive the tradition of vegetable dyeing." Since reading the book, studying the photographs of her work and then seeing some of it for real on a visit to The Craft Study Centre in Farnham, I have been fascinated by this woman. She took on apprentices (including Elizabeth Peacock, Valentine Kilbride and Peter Collingwood), taught them all she knew but didn't suffer fools gladly. I would just love to take a step back in time and see all these people weaving, spinning and dyeing at Ethel's home and workshop "Gospels" in Ditchling.

"Dyeing Now: Contemporary Makers Celebrate Ethel Mairet's Legacy" is a joint exhibition and project to mark the centenary of Ethel Mairet's seminal book 'Vegetable Dyes', written and printed in Ditchling in 1916. The exhibition combines a live research project which invites contemporary artists, craftspeople and students from across the country and beyond; the aim is to recreate as many of the natural dyes featured in the book that are safe to use by today's standards, and display them in the exhibition at the museum.

Being a keen natural dyer, I couldn't resist the invitation and committed myself to dyeing a skein of linen (supplied by the museum) with onion skins. Not the most exciting dyestuff but one that is readily available at this time of year and had not already been "bagged" by someone else! Although the website gives a link to the original copy of Ethel's book, the references to the recipes didn't tally with the page numbers in the

book so I opted for my own “recipe”, duly dyed the skein and sent it back. When I visited the museum later that week, my skein was on display, alongside several others. By the time the exhibition ends in April 2017, there should be a fantastic collection of natural dyed skeins. As some people (including Jenny Dean, their dye advisor, and Isabella Whitworth) had done a number of skeins, I wish I had asked for more and may well still do so.

DEVELOPMENTS AT GOSPELS 1733-1738 77



Dye day at Gospels in the early 1930s; Ethel Mairet (bending down) with her workgirls Elsie, Rose, Olive and Lillian

The museum has recently been refurbished and, as is the norm nowadays, has a lovely shop and café, but also a library, work room and an area with a sofa, yarn, knitting needles and an invitation to help yourself to patterns! The museum isn't very big but, apart from the Ethel Mairet section, there was also an exhibition of Tadek Beutlich's work which takes tapestry weaving to a new level (not to my taste, I'm afraid) and another one which explores the influence that William

Morris and his Kelmscott Press had on the development of Hilary Pepler's St Dominic's Press. A really interesting mix of things to gaze at but the most spectacular thing was an enormous triangular bookcase, behind glass, displaying dozens of diaries belonging to the illustrator, John Vernon Lord, who still lives in Ditchling. They were absolutely amazing – pages and pages of tiny writing and beautiful illustrations. They kept my husband, Robert, entertained for ages so I didn't feel obliged to rush my visit. I was slightly disappointed in the lack of Ethel Mairet's work on show – I had seen far more at Farnham and wondered why they hadn't borrowed some of those pieces. There was a basket full of little samples, with handwritten notes by Ethel Mairet but they weren't displayed in a way so that you could see them easily. I would have loved to poke around in there! The museum has lots of events and workshops planned, including talks on natural dyeing, weaving and spinning workshops and a "Notebook/Diary/Sketchbook Day" with John Vernon Lord which involves a circular walk around the village. Lots of reasons to go back if only it wasn't so far!

I hadn't realized that there was still so much in Ditchling connected with the old craft workshops – in fact there are still workshops in the village. It felt quite magical to be there after all I had read about the place. It is a lovely village, right on the South Downs with beautiful views but also lots of traffic (rat run?). We weren't able to book a room at the "Best British Pub of the Year" – The Bull - but we did have a lovely meal there and then retired to a rather basic room at The White Horse which is right opposite the church with its sundial made by Eric Gill. I had to google Gill that evening to remind myself what was so unsavoury about him and then I wished I hadn't! With a map of the village supplied by the Museum, I was able to find "Gospels" and later, on the way out of Ditchling, we passed Elizabeth Peacock's house "Weavers" in the neighbouring village of Clayton.

There is still plenty of time to see this exhibition and, as it is close to Charleston House and Monk's House, it is worth staying overnight and fitting them all in!

By Sue Prior

Spare Time ?!?

By Michele Turner

I think it's been an interesting year with the Guild - I really enjoyed and was inspired by the projects in house. I wear the necklace made with cords - and am still intending to make more. I particularly loved the spinning garnished yarns, it conjures up all



sorts of images in my mind of things I'd like to create - if only there wasn't a need for eating/sleeping/housework etc. I also got a lot out of the box weaving project - I still like the idea of weaving much more than I like the process, although this project fitted into my preferred crafting habit of curling up in a chair with something woolly, which explains why it got finished within the year.

Beyond the Guild I've been moving into dying fabric and not just yarn. I've taught several Shibori classes (which are perhaps more the tie dye end of the Shibori spectrum), and was dramatically inspired by a 3 day workshop I participated in - run by Jane Callender of Callishibori at her house near Diss. It was a delightful 3 days and included all drinks, snacks (cakes) and home-made lunches. Jane showed us 3 methods for making an indigo dye bath - making it so much more simple than any other method I've seen. She gave us a talk on the chemical properties of indigo - which was fascinating and illuminating, and, of course, we learned heaps of Shibori techniques, and that the word Shibori means compression i.e. dyeing can be omitted from the process and it can still be Shibori.

The first day we were shown many varied and beautiful samples from all over the world which were all stitch resists - we then learned the techniques for this, and made a sampler to start with - after which we were allowed to start designing our own pieces. The second day, after more samples, we focused on clamp resists - this is where tie dye comes from, but can be so much more than what is conjured up in the mind's eye when someone says tie dye. The use of special fabrics with geometric folds and shaped resists, together with a variety of ways of introducing the dye to the fabric, creates an endless variety of stunning repeat patterns. On this day we also put some fabric in a rust bath for later use. Again once we'd been shown these techniques we were able to play on our own (but with much helpful guidance). Later on day 2 we were shown some pole dye methods - I'd done some of this before, but was amazed how much more variety could be achieved. Day 3 was when we were able to take our favourite techniques and develop them further. At the end we did a show and tell. The results that the four of us on the course had achieved were wonderful and hugely varied. As always with these things one learns lots from everybody else's work too.

Sadly we weren't allowed to take any pictures while we were there. Jane was very wary of copyright infringement. Having gone away from the course I've become aware of a surprisingly large number of photos of her work out there on the internet - very few of which are credited, so I understand her frustration on this issue.



I knew when I went on the course that the stitching wouldn't be for me - although I wanted to know more about it. Since I came home I've put stitches into any fabric I can find that isn't otherwise usefully occupied. One day I will learn the lesson 'Never say never'!

Marion Clayden at the Fashion and Textile Museum

By Lesley Ottewell adapted from information on the internet

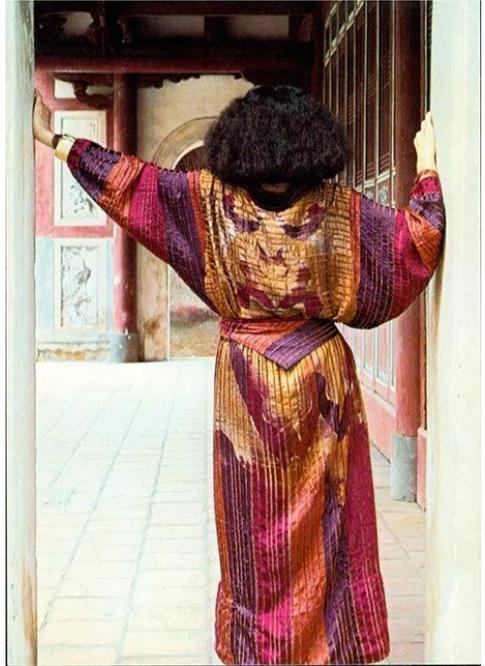
Who was Marion Clayden?

I hadn't a clue and had no plans to see her work until I did a little research.

But, she was a dyer as well as a fashion designer. That was how she started.

Marion was born in the UK but moved to Australia with her husband and young children.

Although she was more well-known in the United States, Marian Clayden (nee Bolton) was born in Preston in 1937. She studied Education at Kesteven College in Lincolnshire and Art at Nottingham School of Art.



Having exhibited paintings at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery in Preston, on several occasions in the 1950s, she taught in primary schools in Nottingham and Chorley from 1957-62, when she emigrated to Australia. There she began to experiment with dyeing. When she and her family moved to California in 1967, she established her own studio in Los Gatos. Soon she was part of the international fibre art scene.

Unusually for the times, she moved from textile art to hand-made limited edition garments and in 1981 established Clayden Inc. where she created what has been characterized as American haute-couture.

Using luxurious velvets and other cloths masterfully air-brushed, discharged and dyed, her increasingly successful collections from 1981 until 2005 resulted in national acclaim and exposure on red-carpet events, with her designs worn by Oprah Winfrey and many Hollywood stars including Whitney Houston and Catherine Zeta-Jones..

From fashion and dramatic accessories to large three-dimensional and sculptural pieces, Clayden has experimented with different shapes and mediums.

She created huge abstract silk artworks using:

Tie-dye, Shibori techniques - stitching designs or parts of the silk are gathered or bound together whilst dyeing sections of it,



Resist dyeing such as stitching designs or clamping - literally clamping shapes into silks and dyeing around them, or using chemicals such as diluted bleach to remove colour from areas. She also began to experiment with 'found' items and processes, such as printing with a sandwich

toaster, using 'G' clamps from the hardware store to hold dye-resisting shapes in place.

Clayden created her own colourful fibres, bounding them together to create lengths of rope to make sculptural works. She also began to experiment with Donkey Straps, where she would burn and brush colour off the straps and then weave them together to create new structures.



Learning to weave on a loom led Clayden to create her own fashion line in 1981. Although her line used bohemian techniques, colours and patterns, it retained a sense of elegance and polish. In the 1990s, Clayden introduced velvet into her clothing, using jacquard-woven cut velvets to create stunning patterns.

The exhibition illustrated Marian's ever changing mediums and style,

celebrating her experiments in dyeing fabrics and fashion design. This included her eye popping silk wall hangings, oozing with 70s appeal; not forgetting a small selection of her surprising structural works using donkey straps and ropes all of which are handmade. We also have 38 garments from her 1990s fashion lines, which were also pieces of art made to be worn in motion.

Marian Clayden retired in California in 2005, where she lived until her death in 2015.



My Bundle of Joy

By Asela Ali

When I was helping put together the bundles for the Guild last autumn, I must admit to a flicker of temptation to mark a bundle containing my favourite colour. But honesty as always kicked in and I made sure that everyone else took their bundles before I did. That left me with a complete surprise but not an unpleasant one...I got pink!

I knew from the time that the project was announced that my bundle was going to contribute to a garment of some description. I have never liked 'tat' so almost everything I make has to have a function, unless it is for someone else. I had also vowed to myself to use up my stash as part of the project and took the lead from Michele Turner by preparing extra fibre for the dye pot. Armed with my New Year present of a sparkly new tea urn I was ready for action.

Carefully following the instructions I immersed the little package. I saw a red spot emerging from the fabric of the cut bundle and hoped for a rich colour but watched the pink water remain pink. I hoped that leaving it to cool in the dye bath would help...but not. I hoped, once dry, the colour would deepen...but not. So the next stage was to look at my stash and see what I had to complement the range of shell pink to pale salmon bundle bits laid out in front of me. The rules of the challenge stated that other things could be added, but each of the bundle bits had to be utilised in the finished item.

My plan was to weave two lengths of fabric incorporating all the yarns and fibres on my knitters loom and turn them into a skirt or dress. The only fibre that gave me difficulty was the hemp yarn. It had turned out very different to the others in colour and was also different in texture so would not sit well within a woven piece. I considered using it to hem the pieces but it would have affected the drape of the garment. I decided it would



be used for some sort of embellishment like a picot edging or embroidery. The variegated way in which the fabric had taken the dye was also disappointing but there were more ideas for its use, mainly consisting of cutting it into little bits!

The warp was a blue-grey 3ply wool interspersed with stripes of silk leftover from our shibori scarf project last year. For the entire garment I wove 2 pieces over 4m long each. The garment was going to have a centre front and centre back panel, so this is where I placed the bundle yarns into the weft to form textured patterning for the top half. The rest of the weft was the blue-grey wool.

I carded the other fibres together and spun a long single. I spun the silk fibre straight from the hank and then plied it with the other single. This gave me quite a bit of yarn weft which I used twice in each centre panel, giving another texture and sheen.

The dress pattern was one I bought at Fibre East from Creative Weaving. It suggested making a rough draft from a similar weight fabric, which I'm pleased I did. I think I learned more about sewing than weaving in this increasingly personal challenge. I found that biased binding is ok when you get the hang of it and there is an easy way to make armholes fit. In turn I learned to check the entire warp thread prior to starting; how leaving an unattended loom for a length of time affects tension; and not to plan vertical stripes until you have read your whole dress pattern!

Cutting my biggest ever hand woven piece of fabric took a great deal of courage. I had amended the original pattern so that I would have gores rather than godets and this reduced the amount of pieces. There was a scary moment when I thought I may need to weave an extra metre, and realised I had laid the wrong pattern down. After all the cutting came the matching of stripes- easier in a commercial fabric with an even weave- fortunately not too much adjustment needed on my part.

I wore the dress to Killerton where the original dress by Sarah Edwards was part of the National Association exhibition. Seeing the original was very different to looking at the photograph on the pattern and taught me a little more about warp choice.



On my return I realised just how much fabric remained, and I hate waste so I felted the thrums together into a scissor purse, to go into a small knitting bag made with the rest of the woven and dyed bundle fabric. But there was still the off cuts and I have way too many bookmarks already. I decided that the only thing to do with a dress and handbag is to have matching shoes! I have since learned that shoemaking is not where my talents lie, but it was fun and I now have an ensemble for my demonstrating days out.

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on

Sunday 15th January 2017

at Marriott Hotel, Old Shire Lane, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 3LX

... and finally,

We had some lovely exhibits at Show and Tell this year and it was gratifying to see how much we all do following inspiration from the Guild. Nina Hedderick-Reid told us how her Dye a Bundle got her crochet projects going.



Dye a bundle project: dyed extra alpaca in same bath, spun singles of alpaca and then rest of fluff supplied (end to end) and plied with alpaca; crocheted yarns end to end and held thinner yarns double with alpaca.



...and a special mention as she has spun her first 110g ball of **home-grown** alpaca!

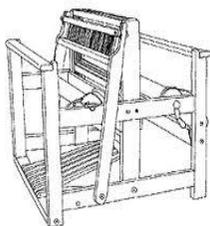
THREADS

If you would like to contribute to the next edition of Threads or would like to add some information to our website, please contact Asela Ali at palmsnpeacocks@gmail.com

Lead Workshops will need to be booked through our Treasurer and paid for in advance.

If you would like to propose a speaker or workshop or would like us to come and demonstrate, please contact our Programme Secretary.

To borrow equipment or books from the Guild library please contact a member of the committee.



Monthly meetings at Harlow Museum
Muskham Road
CM20 2LF