

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

Threads



March 2017

Members of the Committee 2016/17

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Vice-Chair	Hilary Hedderick
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Publicity Officer	Asela Ali
Programme Secretary	Sue Prior
Committee Member	Chris Lane

Guild Website

www.westessexeasthertswsd.weebly.com

Guild Programme 2017

<p>Saturday 4 March 10.00 a.m.-4.00 p.m. Roydon Village Hall</p>	<p>Spinning Workshop including spinning from a silk cap – Bring your wheel (or other work in progress) to spin and chat</p>
<p>Thursday 13 April 7.00-9.30 p.m. St Peter's Church Hall, Roydon</p>	<p>Spin and Chat – Bring your wheel (or other work in progress)</p>
<p>Thursday 11 May 7.00-9.30 p.m. St Peter's Church Hall, Roydon</p>	<p>Spin and Chat – Bring your wheel (or other work in progress). Bring-and- Buy sale</p>

We look forward to seeing you there!



Forthcoming Meetings

The next three meetings will be held at St Peter's Church Hall, Roydon from 7.00 to 9.30pm

Thursday 13th April

This will be a Spin and Chat session, where you can bring any work in progress. It will also be an opportunity to develop any ideas for a future Guild Exhibition.

Thursday 11th May

This will also be a Spin and Chat session but we will also be looking at a variety of methods to fasten garments and containers. Therefore if you can bring examples of buttons, buckles, frogging, hooks, loops etc. to the meeting, we can share these ideas. It would also be very interesting for us to see how they were made.

Thursday 8th June

Janet Daniels will be giving a talk on 'Textiles of the Gambia'



Saint Distaff's Day - marking the end of the Christmas break

In times past, January 7th, the first free day after the twelve of Christmas was known as St. Distaff's Day. It had no connection whatsoever with any saint but its place in the folk calendar gives an indicator of the importance of spinning at a time when this was the only means of turning the raw wool, cotton or flax into thread capable of being woven into cloth. The day, which was also known as Rock Day (referring to another name for either the distaff or the spindle) indicated that this was the end of the Christmas festivities and the return to the normality of spinning whenever there was a spare moment. As Anthony Fitzherbert, wrote in his 'Boke of Husbandrie' (1523) 'it stoppeth a gap...it saveth a woman from being idle, and the product was needful'.

Before the invention of the Spinning Wheel, spinning on what is known as the Drop Spindle (a pin or stick weighted by a whorl) was a slow and tedious task. The spinning of one pound of woollen yarn could take about one week and one pound of heavy cotton yarn several weeks to spin. The method had not changed since the earliest times. There are images from as far back as time of the Ancient Egyptians showing how the distaff was used to hang the flax or tow and the spindle to effect the twisting. The distaff was carried under the arm, and the spindle left dangling and turning in the fingers below, and forming an axis round which to wind parcels of the thread as soon as it was made.

Women of all classes would spin. Everyone from the Lady to the peasant was expected to spend time on the task, though the wealthier may have elaborate spindles. In the evening, after the chores of the day were done, there would be spinning, and the spindle would be taken to visit friends as the task could be undertaken at the same time as a conversation.



The woollen industry became in the Middle Ages, the major industry in the land with huge areas gaining their main income from sheep. It is said that many of the elaborate churches in East Anglia, such as those at Long Melford and Lavenham, were financed from the woollen

industry. In the 14th century, Edward III commanded that the Lord Chancellor should sit on a sack of wool - a reminder of the importance of the trade, for not only had home consumption increase but there was now a thriving export market.

It was at about this time the spinning-wheels first started to appear, to replace the drop spindle. There are several depictions of women from this time using the spinning wheel - all show the woman standing at her work, moving the wheel with her right hand, while with her left she twirls the spindle. The introduction of this method speeded up the production of spun wool and the addition of the foot driven mechanism in the 1500s made even more of a difference.

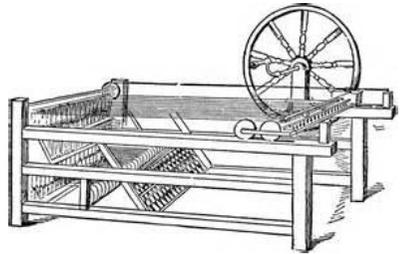
Land use was also greatly affected by the wool trade. Many of the deserted villages that have left their mark on the English landscape, particularly in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire occurred as a result of whole communities being moved to make space for the grazing of sheep between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Spinning the wool became more important than ever and Distaff Day a crucial date in the calendar

But whereas women would recommence spinning on Distaff Day, the men did not return to the plough until after Plough Monday when their ploughs had been blessed. Robert Herrick in the seventeenth century collection of poems 'Hesperides' describes young people maids and ploughboys messing around at this time with the lads setting fire to the flax and in return, the maids soaking the men from the water-pails...

Partly work and partly play
You must on St. Distaffs Day:
From the plough soon free your team;
Then cane home and fother them:
If the maids a-spinning go,
Burn the flax and fire the tow.
Bring in pails of water then,
Let the maids bewash the men.
Give St. Distaff' all the right:
Then bid Christmas sport good night,
And next morrow every one
To his own vocation.'

A further indicator of the importance of spinning in the life of women in the past, is the fact that it has entered the language. Spinster was a recognized legal term for an unmarried woman. In his Law Dictionary, Blount, wrote: 'It is the addition usually given to all unmarried women, from the Viscount's daughter downward.' Similarly the distaff side and the spear side were once legal terms to distinguish the inheritance of female from that of male children-and the distaff became a synonym for woman herself. A French proverb states that "The crown of France never falls to the distaff."

By the 18th century the mechanisation of all manufacturing processes including spinning led to the rapid decline of hand spinning and the movement of the process from the hearth into the factory. The invention of the new machinery such as the 'Spinning Jenny' and Crompton's 'Mule' speeded up the process to keep pace with the technology in weaving. Huge manufactories were built, and houses for workers around the premises so that the men, women and children could get to work easily and quickly to carry out the processes needed to spin and weave the cloth for the expanding world market.



But the efficient production of the cloth was seen by many manufacturers as more important than the welfare of the workforce, particularly with regards to children, who were cheap to employ and were given the most menial of tasks. In 1796 the Manchester Board of Health reported that

'It appears that children and others who work in the large cotton factories, are peculiarly disposed to be affected by the contagion of fever, and that when such infection is received, it is rapidly propagated, not only amongst those who are crowded together in the same apartments, but in the families and neighbourhoods to which they belong...the large factories are generally injurious to the constitution of those employed in them, even when no particular diseases prevail, from the debilitating effects of hot and impure air...The... labour of the night, and the protracted labour of the day, with respect to children,.... tends to diminish future expectations... by impairing the strength and destroying the vital stamina..'

It is said that Lancashire's mass produced textiles destroyed the handloom industry in India. In the 1930s Gandhi came to England to explain why he was encouraging India to pursue independence through the boycott of foreign-made especially British goods. He believed that Indian women, rich or poor, should spend time each day spinning in support of the independence movement. He visited the Lancashire cotton workers, and despite the fact that many of them were resentful of his actions, he received a warm welcome. Little did any of them know that by the end of the century the English wool industry would have declined and India would have emerged as a major exporter and producer of textiles.

Today most High Street brands base much of their manufacturing in Export Processing Zones in the Far East where the basic employment rights of the host country are not applicable. Exploitation can include wages as low as 10 pence an hour, no overtime pay, seven-day weeks, female workers who become pregnant sacked, and factories without fire exits. In the Dindigul cotton mills in Tamil Nadu, India an estimated 950 children are employed. There is old machinery and conditions are unsafe, so that fingers are often cut and sometimes amputated. The air quality is also poor with the fine cotton dust affecting the respiratory system of the workers.



Pressure is also put on farmers to use excessive quantities of dangerous pesticides that some reports say, can literally result in death for those in fields and in the garment factories. Do these people have a 'Distaff Day', do they have a break for their festivals? Writing this article made me wonder if we should bring back Distaff Day - not as a time for us to pick up our spindles, but as a time to consider those who are doing the spinning now...

© Maureen James 2005, Telling History (Thanks to Audrey McNeill)

Happy Crocheting!

Although not all of these circumstances can be limited to *wool* itself, they all revolve around it in some way. From cloth dyeing to yarn-y laws, and right down to the sheep themselves... here are a couple things you just might find *interesting*.



Export = execution:

Ah, Merino... One of the finest wool-producing sheep. So nice, in fact, that the export of Merinos was an offense punishable by death until the 18th century in Spain.

That must be some killer wool.

You're grounded!

On October 26th, 2015, Singapore Airlines flight SQ-7108 was travelling from Adelaide, Australia to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The flight had to be diverted to Indonesia when an **extreme amount of methane gases** from 2,000 sheep triggered the plane's fire alarms.

And you thought your last flight was crappy...

(Thanks to Chris Lane)

Opus Anglicanum



The promise of rail strikes nearly made me miss out on this beautiful exhibition, as there were only a few days left of its run at the V & A Museum. Timed tickets meant that the museum had allowed visitors space to move round comfortably even though it was busy. We had no problem getting close to everything, as the other visitors, most of whom were craftspeople, were very accommodating. You could even borrow a magnifying glass.

Opus Anglicanum is such a highbrow name and could be off putting. Yet it is the name given to what translates to 'English Work'. English embroidery was famed throughout Europe for its skilled stitch work and for the natural looking figures depicted. There was an excellent video showing an embroiderer working with silk threads on a small image. They were two ply strands, which were loosely twisted to give maximum lustre. Nearly all the work was done with just two stitches:

Split stitch (like stem stitch but with the needle coming up through rather than beside the previous stitch).

Couching where a thread is trailed across the surface and a second fine thread is brought up from below to hold it in place. Nue, was a variation of this, where silk threads of varying shades were used on the holding thread to impart shading to the gold.

Sometimes for gold and silver threads, they used a linen thread, which having caught the trailing thread, was then pulled back to the underside, leaving a smooth gleaming line behind.

In an adjacent cabinet were some tools, which had been found in the embroidery quarter of London. They included two embossed metal needle cases complete with thimble, tiny shears and a needle. This had been made from drawn wire with the end flattened and a hole punched through it.



The whole exhibition was bathed in a subdued light to protect the fabrics. Although the embroideries on show were mainly ecclesiastical, they were also made for secular customers. These were extremely expensive and were often re-used when parts became worn out. On the other hand, ecclesiastical vestments, made for the most senior Catholic clergy in the Middle Ages, were often buried with their owners. Therefore fragments or even whole garments were discovered when the tombs were reopened. Some of the best-preserved pieces had obviously been kept in a cope chest as they were in perfect condition.

As you would expect, the themes illustrated were mainly biblical or they depicted particular saints. The figures were graceful and the poses natural. The faces were particularly good and each one was an individual. The shading of the coloured silks gave form to the work as added drape and fold in the clothes.

There was no mention of any dyes used and some may have faded over the years but three stood out. Important religious garments are often red and these had the distinctive colour of madder. The silk or silk velvet background fabrics were as vivid as they must have been eight hundred years ago. The most important vestments sometimes used purple, which came from murex collected from the shores of Italy. There were only glimpses of the purple as the examples were on fragments rather than whole pieces. In the embroidery itself, the blue areas showed little sign of fading. This, like the blue on huge mediaeval tapestries obviously came from indigo.

As well as the copes chasubles, mitres, lappets purses and panels, the curators had included some early, illustrated manuscripts, stained glass panels and some brass rubbings to put the embroidery into context.



The embroiderers were high status specialist craftspeople, based in London. It took seven years to complete their apprenticeship. They had proper workshops with both men and women stitching the embroideries. Even with a magnifying glass it is hard to imagine how they achieved such remarkable stitch work. Their needles were rudimentary and the light cannot have been good.

By Lesley Ottewell



Promoting Coloured Sheep & Wool

The BCSBA exists to promote coloured sheep and the use of coloured wool. We:

- raise awareness of the value of coloured sheep and wool
- promote the use of coloured wool in craft and sustainable commerce
- encourage the diversity of coloured sheep
- act as a platform for coloured sheep related enterprises
- educate flock masters about the benefits of coloured sheep.

Membership of the BCSBA

We have a large and varied membership, which includes

- sheep breeders
- crafts people
- others interested in coloured sheep. You don't have to be British or a sheep breeder to join!

Membership of the Association is open to anybody interested in coloured sheep or wool. It can be an individual, flock, partnership, business or organisation. It gives the right to one vote at the AGM.

Our Guild has a BCSBA directory which can be emailed directly to members upon request.

Putting the Red in Redcoats by Mary Miley Theobald

The cochineal is an odd sort of bug. The female lives her life in a spot on a nopal cactus, or prickly pear. As soon as she hatches, she buries her mouth in the cactus pad and starts sucking. She will live, breed, and die on that spot, parasitically attached to the cactus beneath a bit of cottony fluff. The males have wings and lead more exciting lives, flying about in search of females. But the price for their mobility is a one-week lifespan—their mouthparts deteriorate, and they starve. The female, not much bigger than the head of a pin, lays her eggs on the cactus and continues to feed. Her offspring, if they are not blown by the wind to another nopal, crawl only as far as they must to find a place to dig in, and the cycle repeats.

A bug that never moves makes an easy mark for predators, so Mother Nature protects the females by endowing them with carminic acid, a chemical that some predators find offensive. As it happens, carminic acid is also a vibrant red colourant, ten times more potent than the nearest competitor, and colourfast on fabric when used with the right mordants. That once made the tiny cochineal worth more than her weight in gold.

Close-up of cochineal bugs, source of the carmine colour prized by kings, churchmen, and the military.



For more than a century, inexpensive synthetic dyes have been able to create any colour on the colour wheel, and the world has forgotten the message of power and wealth that intense colour once conveyed. People from the past craved bright colours, but only the rich and royal could afford expensive dyes and the fabrics that showed them off. So tight was the link between the aristocracy and colour that in many societies, laws restricted strong colours like scarlet or purple to the nobility, just in case some nouveau riche lout was tempted to dress above his station. Renaissance Europeans would have considered

today's dress-for-success colours—black, beige, grey, and other subdued shades—fit only for paupers.

Red and its close cousin purple were the most coveted of colours. Down the centuries, reds and reddish purples became the acknowledged colour of royalty throughout most of the world. Chinese and Persian rulers preferred red. The togas of Roman senators bore a red band. The Catholic Church took red as a symbol of its authority, using a red cross on a white shield as its emblem and dressing its cardinals in scarlet robes. The British were not alone in dressing their military officers in red uniforms. Its rarity and its link to status made good red dye almost priceless.

Of the substances that create reddish dyes, none are as bright or as colourfast as cochineal. Deep inside the Palaeolithic caves in southern France and Spain are paintings made from red ochre, which gets its hue from iron rich clay. Cinnabar, a toxic mineral discovered a thousand years ago in Asia, makes a good paint too, but neither ochre nor cinnabar is absorbed well by fabric. Egyptians, Romans, and later Europeans used madder for their reds, a tricky dye that reached its brightest manifestation with the Turks, in whose hands the process took months and more than a dozen steps. The Italians developed the best pre-cochineal red in the Middle Ages from kermes, a Mediterranean insect similar to cochineal. Difficult to gather and to work with, kermes produced a decent red dye for those who knew its secrets, although the cost might well be more than a king could afford.



Spanish conquistadores in Aztec Mexico were astonished at the intensity and abundance of red on native fabrics. They learned that Emperor Montezuma's subjects paid part of their annual tribute in bags of cochineal. It seems obvious that they would think of profiting from the dye themselves, but bugs and dye were beneath the dignity of gentlemen soldiers in hot pursuit of gold and silver. A couple decades passed before Spanish merchants arrived in Mexico and stepped into the breach. Soon these merchants were buying cochineal from native

middlemen and shipping thousands of pounds home to Seville and from there—with huge mark ups—to the rest of Europe. Within a few years, the little dried bugs were second only to silver as Spain's most valuable New World commodity.

Except that no one outside Spain and Mexico knew they were little dried bugs. And the Spanish were determined to keep it that way. Just as the Chinese guarded the secret of porcelain for centuries, the Spanish maintained their stranglehold on Europe's most valuable dye. For three centuries, the English, French, and Dutch resorted to espionage, piracy, bribery, and theft to learn the secret of this fabulous dye and break Spain's monopoly, to no avail.

Amy B. Greenfield, author of *A Perfect Red*, compares the textile industry of that time to today's computing or biotech industries: "a high stakes industry rife with intense rivalries and cutthroat competition—an industry with the power to transform society." Textile production was a complicated and profitable concern requiring a skilled work force. A nation that shipped off unfinished fabric to another country to dye was handing its rivals good jobs and the bulk of the profits. Cochineal was critical to a country's industrial success.

One way to get cochineal was to steal it. Pirates and privateers who stalked Spanish treasure galleons succeeded in snatching their rich cargoes all too often. The largest haul on record was that of the Earl of Essex, Queen Elizabeth's hot headed young favourite, who, with Walter Raleigh, brought home three Spanish ships in 1597 carrying twenty-seven tons of cochineal. The queen took her customary 10 percent, and England had years' worth of dye for its cloth industry. In his *Generall Historie*, John Smith told of his capture by French privateers, who forced him to work with them for two months. During that time they seized a Spanish ship with "fiftie Chests of Cutchanele, fourteene Coffers of wedges of Silver," and much other treasure belonging to the Spanish king.

But pirates were unreliable suppliers. Better to produce one's own cochineal in one's own colonies. English geographer Richard Hakluyt wrote in his *Voyages of 1582* about his hopes of finding "the berrie of Cochenile" in America. The Virginia Company of London had hopes for its new settlement at Jamestown. Two years after its founding, publicist Robert Johnson wrote encouragingly to investors, "there is undoubted

hope of finding Cochinell, the plant of rich Indico, Graine-berries, Beaver Hydes, Pearles, rich Treasure, and the South sea leading to China." He would be disappointed on all counts.

Finding cochineal would have been easier if the English had known what it was. To the naked eye, the dried bits of cochineal look like tiny peppercorns. Some said cochineal was a seed; others said it was an insect or dried worm. Some had it both ways, calling it "wormberry." In an age when rotten meat was believed to spawn maggots and clams were thought to grow out of sand, spontaneous generation was a reasonable explanation for any mysterious form of life. Cochineal, some said, was a cactus berry that turned into a red worm. Hakluyt, collector and editor of volumes of travel tales, wrote in his *Principal Navigations*, "The Cochinilla is not a worme, or a flye, as some say it is, but a berrie that groweth upon certaine bushes in the wilde fieldes." French explorer Samuel de Champlain said in his *Narrative*, "It comes from a fruit the size of a walnut which is full of seed within . . . and is esteemed as gold and silver."

The Spanish encouraged the confusion. They also prohibited the export of live cochineal from Mexico, censored information about it, and forbade anyone to go to Mexico without a permit—which they would not grant foreigners.

Even the first microscopes, which appeared in the early 1600s, did not settle the dispute. The Dutch lens maker Antonie van Leeuwenhoek shared his discoveries, if not his secret, for making good lenses with members of the British Royal Society. Requested in 1685 by the chemist Robert Boyle to examine some grains of cochineal, he declared them seeds—a surprising mistake for someone as experienced as Leeuwenhoek. Boyle took his word for it, until he heard from another, highly reputable source that "the Cochineal is really the hindmost part or tail of the fly." He pressed Leeuwenhoek to look again. Primed this time to look for an insect part, Leeuwenhoek changed his mind. "Each tiny grain is a part of a little animal," he said. The cochineal bits were really "females whose body is full of eggs."

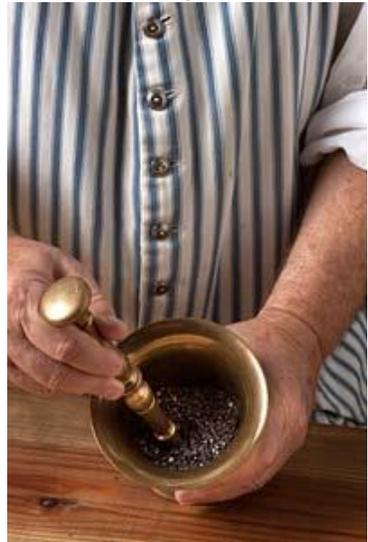
That should have settled the matter, but communication and skepticism being what they were, doubts persisted throughout most of the eighteenth century. There were roughly seventy thousand cochineal granules to a pound. How could humans possibly catch so many tiny

flying insects and then pull off their legs, wings, and heads? Perhaps it was just those nefarious Spanish planting false information.

Because Spain prohibited foreigners from traveling in its colonies, there was no way to find out how cochineal was produced. The key was the Mexican peasant whose Mayan ancestors had bred the wild cochineal to become a larger, more productive dye producer. Indeed, whenever some European managed to discover cochineal in another part of South America, it turned out to be the unsatisfactory wild variety with disappointing properties. Mexican peasants who nurtured the delicate insect in their nopal gardens could eke out as many as three harvests a year, scraping them off the cactus with a brush and drying them in various ways to produce various colours.

Luck was with the Spanish when it came to protecting their secret: cochineal is fragile and finicky. It only grew well in certain parts of Mexico, and it only eats nopal. A flash of cold weather, a hard rain, or the wrong elevation brought death. So even when the occasional French or English spy got his hands on live cochineal, the bugs perished on the way to Europe. Europeans remained dependent upon Spain for their favourite red dye for three hundred years.

The dried cochineal bug is ground into a powder, later to mix with water to create red dye.



Cochineal's primary customers were the fabric dyers, but the little dried bugs had value to other professions. Cochineal was readily available in eighteenth-century Williamsburg from shopkeeper William Prentis on the main street. Colonists who bought cochineal from Prentis Store probably needed small amounts to colour food and beverages. Frank Clark and Dennis Cotner of Historic Foodways use cochineal today in their cooking at the Palace and Randolph kitchens. Period cookbooks like Hannah Glasse's *Art of Cookery*, published from 1747 through 1843, and M. Radcliffe's *Domestic Cookery* of 1823 call for cochineal whenever a red colour is desired in food or beverages. To make

sugared almonds red, Radcliffe directs the cook to "Mix about a tea-cupful of water with sufficient cochineal to produce a good red." The almonds "will be of a beautiful and lively rosaceous or deep crimson colour." The 1754 *Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* instructs "the good housewife" how to make refreshing coolers with lemonade, wine, and spring water, "adding a little cochineal, sugar, or rose-water." Cotner occasionally swaps his spoon for a paintbrush to decorate marzipan delicacies with cochineal for the governor's dining table. He dissolves the powdered cochineal in wine or sherry and filters out the flecks. "It's very bitter, so I can't use a lot," he says.

Artists found that cochineal made a bright and long-lasting, if expensive, scarlet pigment. Leather workers sometimes stained their leather with the red dye. Cochineal was, and still is, used in the manufacture of such cosmetics as lipstick and rouge.

Doctors, too, used cochineal for colouring. Robyn Kipps, supervisor of the Pasteur and Galt Apothecary, said that some doctors and apothecaries believed cochineal would bring on a sweat, energize spirits, and prevent the effects of a poison taken orally, but Doctor Pasteur used it only as a colouring agent. Perhaps he learned this from the pharmacology book that he owned, *The New Dispensatory*, which says, "Cochineal has been strongly recommended as a sudorific, cardiac and alexipharmac: but practitioners have never observed any considerable effects from it . . . in medicine its principal use is as a colouring drug."

Apothecaries tended to order their supplies direct from London. James Carter, whose apothecary was at the Sign of the Unicorn's Horn, imported cochineal in 1758 and 1760 from the same London supplier that Galt and Pasteur used twenty years later.

The invention of artificial dyes in the late nineteenth century destroyed the market for cochineal. The new dyes were cheaper, more consistent, and simpler to use. Parts of the world that depended upon cochineal—the cultivation had spread to Guatemala and the Canary Islands—were devastated. Trade in cochineal almost disappeared.

Cochineal, is neither a toxin nor a carcinogen and is sometimes listed as carmine or E120. It is added to jams, shrimp, candies, beverages, ice cream, sausages, juice, yogurt, cakes and icings, cookies,

maraschino cherries, pie fillings, and other foods, as well as some pills, ointments, cough drops, rouge, and lipstick.

Today, cochineal is sold to the food and drug industry in liquid or powdered form, without the bug parts, minimizing the 'yuck' factor. Vegetarians and animal rights groups may object, but it seems cochineal is back to stay.

2017 Lambing Time at Wimpole Hall, Cambs (Extract from National Trust publication)



Wimpole is one of the largest rare breed centres in the UK.

Rare Breed sheep currently held at Wimpole are: Hebridean, Leicester Longwool, Norfolk Horn, Oxford Down, Portland, Manx Loaghtan and White-faced Woodland. Lambing at Wimpole is advertised as 18th April - 7 May and their website has details of events.

Basketry Workshop with Sue Kirk



On Saturday 11th February, we met in Widford village hall for a basket making workshop with Sue Kirk. Sue had taught us before in 2014 so we knew we would be in expert hands. She had sent photographs of six different baskets and we voted for which one we wanted to make, the favourite being a basket with a hazel handle. As before, Sue had brought a huge selection of different coloured willow in different thicknesses. She started us off making the base – splitting three lengths of willow in the middle with a bodkin in order to pass three more pieces through the splits and then the weaving began! The day passed very quickly - I wasn't feeling too well and was definitely slower than some of the others but Sue was constantly on the go, checking our progress and showing us the next steps. I didn't keep my weave as tight as I should have done but, nevertheless, was very pleased with the end result. Sue said that one of the basket makers who taught her in the early days had told her that you need to make 50 baskets of the same type to be proficient at it!!!



Towards the end of the day, I was beginning to think I would have to finish off my basket without the hazel handle but Sue persuaded me there would be time to get it done. The last three of us finally finished just after 5 p.m. because Sue was determined that we would all go home with completed baskets. As there were so many different colour combinations of willow in our baskets, they all looked quite different and individual. I think everyone enjoyed the workshop immensely. It was definitely enhanced by Sue's patience, the speedy basket makers

who had finished in good time and swept up around our feet as us slower ones battled on and Cate's yummy biscuits and cake which fortified us throughout the day! Thanks were also due to the caretaker of the hall for being so understanding when we were still busy working at 4.30 - she seemed quite happy to come back again later to lock up!

Sue Kirk is teaching at the Cottenham Summer School in July, making life size animals in 3 days which sounds very inviting – perhaps I could make a flock of sheep that don't need feeding!

By Sue Prior



Guild Competition 2017: Creating an Art Yarn

The aim:

To spin a skein of yarn of at least 25g, which reflects the colours and textures of a chosen image

Suggested Sources of inspiration:

- A personal photograph possibly taken for the purpose
- An image cut from a magazine
- An image printed from the internet
- A montage of images put together to make a picture
- A reproduction of a painting

Subject:

There is no limit to the choice of subject.



Fibres:

Any fibre, which suits the chosen image

Suggested Methods:

- Select a range of dyed fibres and blend them using carders or a blending board
- Garnish the yarn with tiny scraps of fibre, yarn and fabric
- Dye some fleece or tops in your chosen colours and spin with or without blending
- Add texture to the yarn with slubs, coils, wrapping etc.
- Spin the yarn and random dye the finished skein

Completion Date:

Please present your finished skein together with the source of your inspiration at the October meeting.

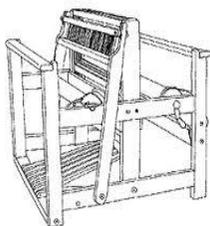
THREADS

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 St Peter's Church Hall

High Street,

Roydon,

Essex,

CM19 5LW.