

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

Threads



September 2016

Members of the Committee 2015/16

Chair (acting)	Lesley Ottewell
Vice-Chair (acting)	Asela Ali
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

Thursday 8th October 7.00-9.00 p.m. Harlow Museum	Annual General Meeting and Competition: Dye A Bundle
Thursday 10th November 7.00-9.00 p.m. Harlow Museum	Spinning Workshop – Bring your wheel (or other work in progress) to spin and chat. Show-and- Tell
Thursday 8th December 7.00-9.00 p.m. Harlow Museum	Christmas Social Evening

We look forward to seeing you soon



Fun at Fibre East 2016

This year Fibre East was busier than most despite not delivering workshops. Carolyn, Penny and I were with Gladrags (a rag rugging group) but the Guild was well-represented over the weekend with a number of members attending.



So why do we go along and what do we get out of it?

Audrey McNeil - The annual delight of Fibre East appeared again in July. The annual conversation of I don't need more yarn/fibre/fill in the craft supply of your choice came and went and duly I made the journey.

I did have in mind to try out some looms, but there seemed to be less of the 'try it out' options available this year. The competition entries were few and rather hidden away. The organisers had already declared they would not run any workshops due to poor take up the previous year, so this was really shopping central with added sheep.

There was a lot of yarn, fluff and general accessories and the event appeared well attended. The car park was busier than any year I've previously attended. The layout was different with the demonstrators in the first hall. The rest was much the same. I was interested to see drop spindles made with 3D printers and very tempted to buy one. There was very little on the dyeing front. We only found two sellers with acid dyes and one of those only had three colours. This was a little disappointing.

I travelled with a friend, another yarnaholic with a stash already the size of a well-stocked shop, who managed to add easily to this stash, although mostly sticking to a shopping list this time. I also did my share of stash adding, but again mostly to a shopping list, the one major item being a knitters loom. Having avoided weaving for as long as possible to ensure that I had the hang of spinning and didn't clutter up the house and my time with yet another hobby, I finally succumbed. After a few trials on a Guild loom, I decided I quite like weaving. My husband accompanied me, some might say to stop me spending, but in reality it is to encourage me to do so – his theory being that I can't then complain when he spends on his music. However, I think he secretly

wants to try weaving. He was lying in the sun waiting surrounded by shopping bags, near the sheep, when an official photographer took his photo – he may end up in their newsletter!



I have since managed to weave two pieces and am just learning to finish them off to make a bag for the loom. After that, I see lots of scarves and who knows what in my future.'

Christine Lane - 'I went to Fibre East on Saturday with my friend Wendy who is a knitter; she had never attended a fibre or yarn show and we had a fantastic time. It was a real treat to see the show through her eyes. She was amazed by the range of stalls and the diversity of the crafters attending. Wendy succumbed to a crocheted Polar Bear kit for her new arrival, her seventh grandchild. A craft challenge that she will enjoy.

I bought a new pair of embroidery scissors; I am not sure how I manage to lose them but I do, and lovely bag of fluff from John Arbon. But I had one main purchase in mind; I love drop spindles and a Turkish spindle had been top of my wish list for quite a few months. I am now the proud owner of a bog oak (nearly black wood) spindle with 'gold' inserts on the arms. It is light, portable, spins its own little ball of yarn and I will use it to prepare for this year's Guild challenge. I am delighted with it.'



***ARE YOU READY FOR
THE GUILD CHALLENGE
IN OCTOBER?***

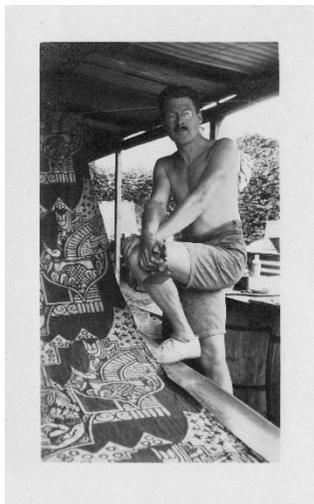
***DID YOU
DYE YOUR
BUNDLE?***

***WOULD YOU LIKE A NEW
CHALLENGE BY JOINING
THE COMMITTEE?***

***WOULD YOU JOIN US OUT
AND ABOUT
DEMONSTRATING?***

***WHAT WILL
YOU SHOW AND
TELL IN
NOVEMBER?***

Talk on Finding Michael O'Connell by Iris Dedman.



Michael O'Connell was born to Irish parents living in Lancashire. After serving in WW1, he trained in agriculture and then emigrated to Australia in 1920 where he began to make pots and garden furniture. He became a member of the Arts and Crafts Society which is where he met his future wife, Ella Moody. She was a textile artist and embroiderer and they worked together on many pieces. They returned to England in 1937 and built a house/workshop, "The Chase" at Perry Green, neighbours to Henry Moore. Iris Dedman, our speaker, lived with her family in Much Hadham and she approached Michael O'Connell, looking for a temporary job for six

weeks until she started work as a secretary at County Hall. He took her on for a trial period of one month at a £1 a week which was then increased to 30/-, at which point she gave up the idea of being a secretary and decided to stay on. Her sister, Betty, was already working for Michael as an assistant.

At that time, Michael was producing large hangings and single bedspreads, drawing out the design which Iris and Betty then enlarged onto rolls of brown paper. The pattern was then pricked out using a kilt pin or tracing wheel onto pre-mordanted, heavy rayon hopsack fabric (72" wide) from Heals and charcoal dust was rubbed over the holes to mark the design. Some of the borders were printed with lino blocks. The dark colours of the design (e.g. black and red) would be mixed into a mordant which was yellow and had to be kept in the dark (presumably chrome?). The mixture was put into a balloon with a tube attached and the outline of the design was piped onto the fabric. Then the rest of the shape was filled in with a brush. The dyes were mixed with china clay so the actual colours weren't revealed until after the final dyeing was finished. This last stage of the dyeing process gave the background colour and was done outside in a tank with an immersion heater element for heating. Apparently sulphuric acid was used in the dyebath to fix the dye! It was hot and heavy work for the

two young women who had to keep the fabric moving to make sure the dyeing was even. Once the dyeing was complete, the fabric was laid outside on a concrete surface and a stiff broom was used to get rid of the grey paste (the mixture of china clay and charcoal dust) before it was hosed down and hung to dry. Dyeing was usually done on a Friday and the piece would be left out all weekend in all weathers. Nothing was ever ironed – instead the fabrics were sprayed with cold water to reduce creasing.

In 1970, a devastating fire destroyed Michael's workshop, most of his notebooks and records and badly damaged his adjoining house. He rebuilt the property with the help of students and friends. Sadly, in 1976, he took his own life.

In 1996, a piece of Michael's work which had been designed for the Festival of Britain was discovered at Reading Museum. This turned out to be one of 7 huge panels, depicting farming scenes from all over Britain which were so large (total size 56m x 4m high) that there was nowhere big enough to display them. In 2014, the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading received lottery funding to extend their property so that one of the hangings could be displayed. The Kent one was chosen and, having been professionally cleaned, will be displayed under glass and dimmed lighting. In recent years, Brian Norman of Moor Place, Much Hadham gave Iris another O'Connell hanging depicting the village of Much Hadham. This was one of a series of local villages – the Little Hadham one hangs in St Cecilia's Church, Little Hadham. The Much Hadham hanging was stiff with dust and cobwebs which Iris dealt with by scrubbing and washing just as they used to do after the dyeing process. It brought the colours out beautifully, making somewhat of a mockery of the time and



money spent by the museum conservators in cleaning up the Festival of Britain panels!



In 2009, Michael O’Connell’s son (Terence who later changed his name to Seamus) and his wife came over from Australia with Professor Harriet Edwhist who was interested in putting on an exhibition of Michael’s work in Australia. This came to fruition in 2012, following the publication of her book “Michael O’Connell; The Lost Modernist”. Thanks to her efforts and those of Seamus, Michael’s work has been given new importance. Several of our members enjoyed the exhibition of his work at the Gibberd Gallery in Harlow in 2013. His unique combination of batik and resist dyeing techniques, along with his vibrant colours typifies the look and feel of fabrics in the 1950’s and 60’s.

It must have been very exciting for Iris to have been contacted by Seamus O’Connell and the Museum of English Rural Life to talk about her memories of working with Michael all these years later. Iris showed us several fabric pieces which she had worked on – amazingly heavy cloth and strong colours which showed no sign of fading. It was quite refreshing to hear a talk given without reams of notes or the back up of a power point presentation. This was just memories, straight from the horse’s mouth, illustrated with books, articles and newspaper cuttings.

By Sue Prior

A Country Show: Toot Hill, Stanford Rivers

They gathered in the central arena and allowed themselves to be transformed into trees, tunnels and even bridges. There was a constant stream of chatter from the man on the microphone. What was going on; a sheep race but one with a difference.

The participants were all young children with the occasional adult to accompany the very youngest. Once the obstacles had been set out properly, four sheep were let out onto the field in pursuit of Gemma who was carrying a bucket of food. The idea was to get the sheep to follow her round the field and back to the pen. Each sheep was wearing a coloured sash and each section of the crowd was detailed to support one sheep by making as much noise as possible. The winner was the sheep, which followed Gemma for the longest time.

The sheep were a motley crew: a Charollais X mule, a hand-reared Charollais X mule, a Hebridean and a Leicester Longwool X Wiltshire Horn. In each heat, the hand-reared sheep was the most likely to win while the Leicester was the least likely. Once its bulky fleece had been removed, a very thin animal was left. The trouble was that this was a grassy field and was quite a tempting distraction for the sheep. Why run about chasing a bucket on a hot day when there was grass to nibble.



This entertainment was featured twice during the day and was well supported by the crowd sitting on the straw bales round the field. It was interspersed with ferret racing, through plastic piping, and classic cars as a finale.

Mary, Hilary and I spent a lovely day at Toot Hill, a new venue for the Guild. The weather was very kind as it was hot with a gentle breeze to

make it more comfortable. We were fortunate to have a small, open-sided marquee, which we shared with the woodcarvers and silk painters.



Amongst the many visitors we spoke to, was an old man who had been apprenticed to Courtauld's in Bocking, where he had worked to a very senior position as a silk and rayon weaver. One of the silk painters had learned to extract dye from leaves and flowers and print directly onto silk fabric. She passed on details of what to do. Another visitor had studied textiles at school and had progressed to the Guildhall School of Art. We had also seen Gemma and her family earlier in the day. Gemma's Farm is a mobile farm, which can be taken to schools, events and even care homes for the elderly. We met so many interested and interesting people that time passed quickly.

I had brought nothing to sell but I did develop a nice line in hair bands. A young girl was having a problem with her hair in the heat. She asked if I had something to tie back her hair. I spun a really thick yarn for her. Later her mum appeared and asked for one as well.

They have already fixed the date for next year: Saturday August 5th. Put my name down please.

By Lesley Ottewell



Foundation Certificate in Spinning

The Foundation Certificate in spinning has been created by the Association to enable those who are new to spinning and others who wish to get a better understanding of this craft.

Registration.

Those wishing to register to gain the Certificate or to get further information should contact the organiser preferably by email (see details below).

The registration fee for this certificate is £55.00. The following conditions apply.

- The registration fee is payable in advance and valid for twelve months.
- The registration fee is not refundable.
- If at the end of the period set by the Organiser (see timetable below) the candidate has yet to complete modules 1 and 2 satisfactorily in the view of the organiser, their registration will be terminated.
- For others registration may be renewed with the agreement of the Organiser for a further and final period by making a second non-refundable payment of £35.00 in advance.

The Certificate

To gain the Certificate you are required to complete each of four modules given in the syllabus in the order they are given. When you complete a module you should send it to the organiser as directed.

The Modules carry the following possible marks

– Module 1 Spinning Technology	20 marks
– Module 2 The Nature of Fibres	20 marks
– Module 3 Spinning in Practice – Longdraw	30 marks
– Module 4 Spinning in Practice – Worsted	30 marks

To gain a certificate you need to score a combined total of not less than 60 of the total possible marks. While it may be possible to pass the certificate by gaining full marks from Modules 3 and 4 combined a certificate will not be awarded unless a minimum of 8 marks are awarded to each of Modules 1 and 2.

How the Foundation Certificate is organised

- The Certificate will be taken by applicants drawn into a Study Group of six to ten applicants.
- Where possible a Study Group may consist of those from one or more Guilds closely located.
- Those wishing to take the Certificate should notify the Organiser who will list the applicants' contact details from which Groups will be drawn.
- Any Guild who wishes to create a Study Group from among its members should register with the Organiser.
- The Organiser will inform individuals of their start date together with a request for payment.
- Fees must have been paid before a student may start to work on the Foundation Certificate.

Timetable

- Study Groups will start quarterly in January, April, July, and October.
- Modules 1 and 2 must be completed and submitted to their Mentor within three months of starting work on the Certificate.
- Modules 1 and 2 must be completed before embarking on Modules 3 and 4
- Modules 3 and 4 must be completed within six months of being given permission to start Module 3.

Mentors

- Mentors act as the first place of support for Students
- A Mentor will be appointed to each Study Group
- Mentors will be appointed on a regional basis
- A Mentor may be allocated more than one Study Group

Workshops

Modules 3 and 4 require practical work. While some Study Groups or Guilds will have access to sufficient practical skills not to need a workshop, others can request for one to be organised for them.

Where a Study Group asks for a workshop

- Each member electing to attend a workshop will pay the Association £35.00 as a contribution towards the cost of the workshop. The Association will pay the remaining cost of providing tutors.
- In addition to the £35.00 contribution towards costs, the Study Group will be responsible for providing and paying for a suitable place for the workshop.

To register your interest or to gain further information, please contact Steve Kennett.

He can be contacted by: Email foundationspin@wsd.org.uk

Post: Steve Kennett High View, Rackham Road, Amberley, West Sussex, BN18 9NR

Phone: 01798 831010

The syllabus details are available on the website. If you would just like to know more about spinning these are some of the books recommended by the Association:

- The Craft of Hand Spinning, Eileen Chadwick, B T Batsford 1980. ISBN 07134-1012-4.
- The Essentials of Yarn Design, Mabel Ross, Self published 1986 ISBN 0-909507-292-13 This book is out of print and used copies are available, but at a high price. So borrowing may be an option.
- The Complete Guide to Spinning Yarn, Brenda Gibson, Quarto Publishing, 2011. ISBN 1-4081-3939-4
- In Sheep's Clothing, Nola Fournier & Jane Fournier, Interweave Press, 1995, ISBN 879-1-931499-38-5
- Spinning wool. Beyond the Basics, Anne Field, Trafalgar Square, 2010. ISBN 9781570764646

Britain back in a spin over cotton production

Britain's first cotton mill for more than 30 years has opened in Tameside, Greater Manchester.

English Fine Cottons will be the sole cotton spinner in Britain with the only plant in Europe producing cotton yarn, from fibre preparation to spinning and winding. The company will produce 500 tonnes a year and plans to double production to 1,000 tonnes by the end of 2017. Marks & Spencer will have the first manufacturing run to use in their fine cotton garments for next year. (BBC News Aug 2016)

A Potted History of Cotton Spinning in the North West of England



During the Industrial Revolution, the UK experienced huge growth in the cotton industry. With an ever-increasing population and an ever-expanding British Empire, the market for cotton was massive, and cotton factories – or mills – became the dominant feature of the North West of England's landscape.

While around 100 sites in the borough still have buildings standing on them, only a handful are still involved in the textiles industry. Tower Mill's 150-foot-tall chimney and water tower are still prominent in the local skyline of Dukinfield. Now, 130-years after it was built to spin cotton, Tower Mill is poised to become home, again, to cotton spinning.

The region was perfect for developing the cotton industry. The climate in the North West provided the perfect environment, as successful cotton spinning relies on high humidity. The original factories needed a constant power supply, provided by the fast-flowing rivers of the Pennines.

Later, large quantities of coal, also found in abundance in the area, provided the power for the cotton factories. A densely populated area, there was a ready supply of workers. The rapidly expanding port of Liverpool provided the region with the means of importing raw cotton and exporting finished cotton products.

Do you remember your history???

- In 1733, John Kay invented the 'Flying Shuttle', which allowed wider cloth to be woven much faster.
- In 1765, James Hargreaves invented the 'Spinning Jenny', increasing the number of threads one machine could spin from one to eight, and subsequently to 80.
- In 1769, Richard Arkwright patented the 'Water Frame', which used water as a power source and produced a better thread than the Spinning Jenny.
- In 1779, Crompton's 'Mule' was invented, which could spin a cotton thread better than any other machine.
- In 1781 Boulton and Watt invented a steam engine that was easy to use in a cotton factory. Instead of rivers and streams, factories were built nearer coalmines.
- In 1812, the first decent weaving machine, Robert's Power Loom, was invented and all stages in the cotton-making process could now be done in one factory.

English Fine Cottons,
Tame Valley Mill, Wainwright St
Dukinfield, Cheshire
United Kingdom.
SK16 5NB.

Out and About by Carolyn Green

New members, or at least, those who have just begun to spin or weave, may well be reluctant to demonstrate their crafts in public. I certainly was sure I would be rumbled as a raw beginner; sure that an expert would see me and raise an eyebrow. More than 20 years after learning to spin, I am still waiting to be found out!

For most demonstrations we are invited as entertainment, not to instruct, although our success as entertainment can often inspire others to want to learn and join the Guild. You need to be aware that - apart from the occasional, rare 'critical expert' – whatever you do is something that somebody may never have seen before and will marvel at.

You may know you are only a beginner who will, hopefully, improve; but most people will believe you are amazingly skilful. Once engaged, discovering you are a novice will only impress your audience further. The idea that you can perform this magic after just a few weeks or months will encourage them to think they too can do it.

There is another reason for demonstrating...it's FUN! There is nothing more pleasurable than talking about your favourite obsession to anyone who will listen; when you find someone whose eyes light up when you describe the process of turning a handful of fluff into yarn. No matter if it's lumpy...that is texture and character. When, at last, you are producing perfect, fine yarn, you will wish you could remember how you made all those wonderfully interesting slubs!



... and finally,

with a little help from our friends....

One of our members has been looking for a way to have some knitting done since her arm has been protesting whenever she knits for more than about half an hour. It's ok when she spins, weaves or crochets, but this is a sock connoisseur who appreciates real wool and really wants more socks!

"I have made a barter with someone to make a pair of socks in exchange for yarn she needed, and even explored the idea of using a knitting machine, but neither of those two ideas are really what I'm looking for."

So, we are helping with a little notice in the newsletter to the effect that we are looking for someone who would like to trade knitting hours for spinning hours. For example, if it takes them 15 hours to knit a pair of socks, she could spend 15 hours spinning some yarn for them.

If you are interested, please contact Mary/ Asela (by email, or the contact page on the website, or at a meeting).

Equally, if you would like to trade something similar, we would like to hear from you, e.g. Asela is soon to teach new learners some basic knitting at a cat café twice a month in exchange for coffee and cake!

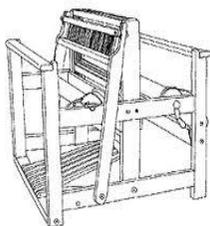
THREADS

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