

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

Threads



Dye Edition - September 2017

Members of the Committee 2017/18

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 2017

<p>Thursday 12 October 7.30-9.30 p.m.</p> <p>St Peter's Church Hall</p>	<p>Annual General Meeting and Competition: "A skein of hand-spun yarn"</p>
<p>Thursday 9 November 7.30-9.30 p.m.</p> <p>St Peter's Church Hall</p>	<p>Show and Tell – Showcase of members' work during the year. Bring your wheel (or other work in progress) to spin and chat</p>
<p>Thursday 14 December 7.00-9.30 p.m.</p> <p>St Peter's Church Hall</p>	<p>Christmas Social Evening</p>

We look forward to seeing you soon



DARTMOOR DYE PROJECT

This will give 48 different shades, tints, tones. Some piles of colour will be evenly dyed, some will be two-tone. It's a great colour exercise for a group and it pays to be well organised beforehand.

Each stage will produce 16 colours so 3 stages will give 48 colours.

Materials

- 4 kg raw (unwashed) fleece
- 10gms of each powdered acid dye colour in red, blue, yellow and any good green acid dye. (See note below) Test the dyes out beforehand as some may have lost their potency or may not dissolve.
- Take care when measuring dry dye powder. Gloves and mask is advised.
- Put each dye colour in a large glass jar, dissolve in a little hot water, and make up to 500 ml each with cold, which gives an average 1.0% depth of shade over the project.
- 1 litre white vinegar
- salt

Equipment

4 large cooking pots
4 gas rings or other heat sources for pots.
4 buckets or bowls (for rinsing fleece)
4 sticks
A timer
Tongs
Plastic labels from bottles & waterproof pen
Gloves for all involved
48 netting bags for the fleece

4 Glass or plastic jars/bottles for the 500ml dye solution
scales
paper and pen for labelling
large sheet to lay fleece on
Essential - a camera to record the fun and the results!



Method. First dip

3. Before starting, weigh the dry unwashed fleece into 16 bags of 85g and wet them out with warm water and a little washing up liquid. This will also lightly scour the fleece. Squeeze as much water out before putting them in the dyepot.
4. Label each bag with each dye used. Use plastic tags made from milk bottles and label in advance with a permanent marker to avoid washing off
5. Put plenty of newspaper down as there will be lots of hot water splashes

6. Into each pot of warm water add 125 mls vinegar, 3 tblsp salt, 1 250 mls dye solution (one colour only to each pot) so that there is a blue pot, a red pot, a yellow pot and a jade pot.
7. Add 4 of the bags of wool to each pot. Bring to a low simmer and simmer gently for 30 minutes. Squeeze as much liquid out as possible back into the dyebath; remove wool and rinse.
8. Save 1 bag as clear colour. Put the other 3 bags of each into the other 3 pots. (The blue wool goes into red, yellow and jade, other wool colours distributed similarly) Bring to simmer, simmer 30 mins.
9. Have large containers of warm water ready for rinsing. Remove all bags, rinse and dry.



Second dip

1. While the first dip is simmering, prepare the second batch of 16 bags of fleece and wet them out as before.
2. Replenish dye baths(now getting a bit soupy) by adding 125 mls vinegar and half the remaining dye solution to each pot to maintain the red, blue, yellow and jade dye baths.
3. Use the second batch of new fleece. Repeat steps 3, 4 and 5 above.

Third dip

1. While the first dip is simmering, prepare the third batch of 16 bags of fleece and wet them out as before.
2. Replenish dye baths as before. It's all quite soupy now!
3. Using the last 16 bags of new fleece, repeat steps 3, 4 and 5 again.

Finally

1. Have a grid on your drying sheet in case a label comes off and replicate it on paper
2. Lay out all fleece to dry. Have ready labelled freezer / paper bags to hand for the dried fleece
3. Now arrange all samples on the sheet in shades and tints of the various colours, with all the primaries and secondaries. Admire!
4. Plan in advance where you will hang the 48 bags to dry



Note

Each dyepot will dye 21 bags of fleece over the three stages, which is over 1.75kg. It may be wise to make up the dye to 15g or even 20g of powder to make a stronger dye solution and use up the exhaust dye on surplus fleece at the end.



Farm cats keeping an eye

Dye Day at Bucklers Hall Farm, 8th July 2117

We were all invited by Sue Prior to her delightful farm for a dyeing day.

The plan was Dartmoor Dyeing – I believe the instructions were issued ahead of time but I don't know about everyone else but I hadn't read them – just the ones for getting there!

Dartmoor Dyeing is a New Zealand system to dye fleece in several different dye baths, ending up with 48 different shades.

Hilary had worked very hard on making 48 – yes 48 net bags and labels ready for the occasion and Lesley, Sue and the team had amassed all the dyes and other necessary ingredients and equipment. We were a good sized group with some lovely new members who were very keen to get involved so the fun began.

We had 4 kg of unwashed fleece which had to be divided equally into the 48 bags - ie 85g in each bag and a label attached to each bag.

The dyes were mixed – 10g acid dye powder dissolved in 500ml water – 4 colours, Red, Yellow, Jade green and Blue and secured in containers. Four dye baths (pots) were prepared with a non-specific quantity of the

suspension medium (water) and 125 ml mordant (vinegar) and 3 tbsp fixer (salt) added to each one.

Obviously there was much discussion at this point but this has been edited out.



250 ml of the dye solution was added to the dye bath (one colour in each bath), 16 of the bags were marked with the colour they are going to be introduced to.

Now we are ready to go – into the dye bath go the bags and the timer set – 25 minutes!! Time for delicious cake and coffee. Oh no!! Disaster! The yellow dye seemed to be a problem and was not strong enough and the colour was too pale so at this point the team had to re-imagine the situation and deal with it in an innovating way (cheat!).

So..... another squirt of vinegar and some more yellow dye and the time extended for another 20 minutes for all the dye baths.

Now it was time for lunch!

All the bags needed to be rinsed twice – lots of water sloshing over our feet and then 1 of each of the bags put to dry. The others were all re-marked and 1 of each colour put in each of the other dye baths. Cook for 30 minutes.

Notices! Then more rinsing.

Batch 2 of 3. We added another 125 ml vinegar and 125 ml dye to each dye bath to re-invigorate the colour and 16 fresh bags of fleece were marked and added to the dye baths. 30 minutes cooking time.

By now I was lost but Nina was very, very patient and explained the maths to me!

After the rinsing there was a lot of swapping going on and I'm not sure that Nina has much hair left after tearing it out whilst sorting out all the dyed bags into a logical order on the drying sheets but with her usual methodical and determined way she managed it.

By the time we got to batch 3 of 3 we were a machine!! We had honed the process and discovered a hose to aid

the rinsing process – albeit we were a bit over-enthusiastic and soaked some of the members bags, but never mind!

We finished up with 48 bags of dyed fleece all in very neat rows BUT we didn't get to see the results as they were left to dry in their now pretty coloured bags till we meet in August so all will be revealed then.

It was such a fun day with lots of chat and laughter – wonderful cake and such a warm welcome from our hosts.



Thank you all. I look forward to the next stage!!

by Sue Pulham

Doulton Dye Weekend !

by Asela Ali

Inspired by the Dartmoor Dye day and having my annual solar dye reject for this year still to do, I decided to combine the two. For the last few years I have solar dyed sock yarn in sweet jars using Koolaid, however, knowing we have the Saori weaving workshop coming up I thought it might be fun to dye a yarn I could weave using black warp. Fortunately I was going to Fibre East and planned to pick up a cone of silk, but as there were no weaving suppliers there, I opted for lace-weight Falkland yarn instead.

From the beginning I understood why this is a group event and why my planned day turned into a weekend. Aside from making labels I had to calculate and make up the 48 skeins. I used the base four colours: Lemon-lime (green), Mixed Berry (blue), Cherry (red), Lemonade (yellow).



Using the instructions for the Dartmoor project I planned to use 1 sachet for the jar and half of each to top up in the second and third rounds. But the lemonade was very pale and because of the quantity of citric acid in each sachet,

absorbed very fast. The fun part of using an unknown media is that you have to think on your feet. I decided to use a full sachet of lemonade to top up each dye bath and only top up the water level in the second and third rounds.

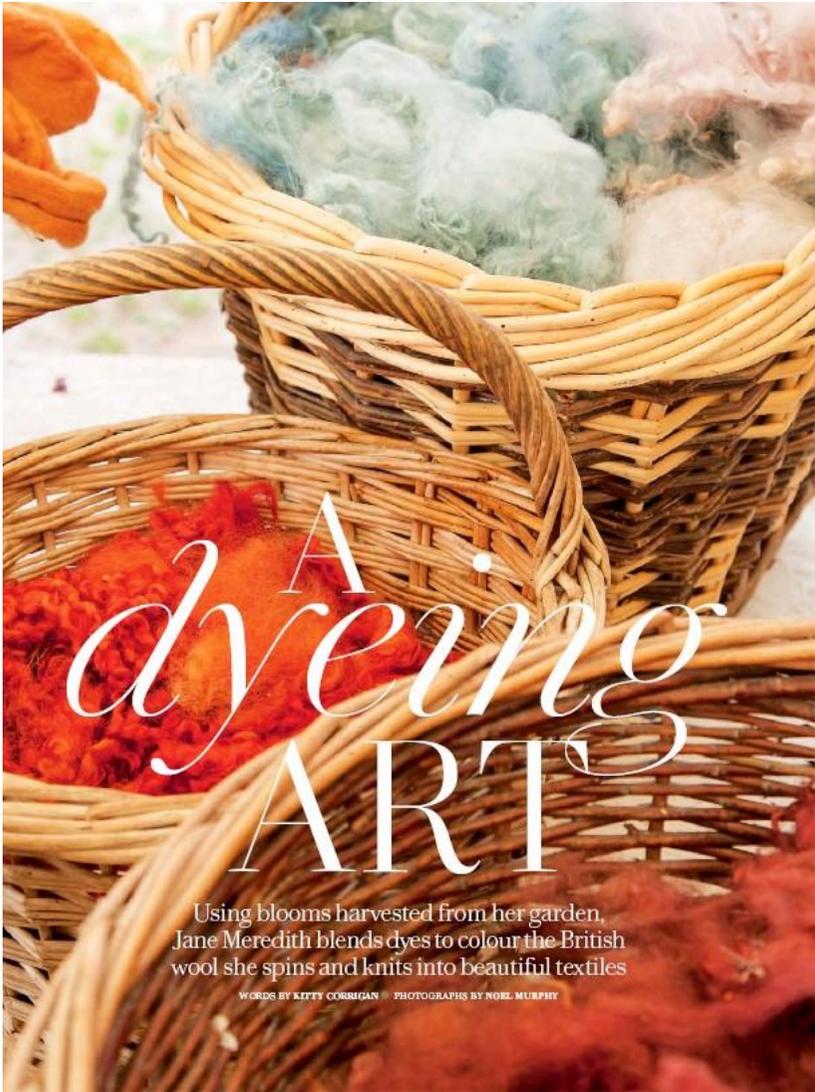
The other issue was the weather. Although it was a fairly sunny weekend, the time of day affected the absorption rates. I ended up with some interesting colours, and learned a great deal, but to make them usable I will be overdyeing the yellow using Kemtex.

My own
supervisory cat



Will I be doing the whole project again? Absolutely, I have Falkland roving that I shall be dyeing using Kemtex in the microwave and felting into a garment.

Why Doulton? I did have skeins sitting in china dishes to be rinsed but actually it's the name of my road and not nearly as pretty as Dartmoor!



A *Dyeing* ART

Using blooms harvested from her garden, Jane Meredith blends dyes to colour the British wool she spins and knits into beautiful textiles

WORDS BY KITTY CORRIGAN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY NOEL MURPHY

Using hand-grown blooms from her garden, Jane Meredith blends dyes to colour the British wool she spins and knits into beautiful textiles red and yellow and pink and green... the rainbow of colours in Jane Meredith's garden live on long after the flowers have faded at summer's end. Through the ancient art of dyeing, they are transformed into the myriad shades on her handmade shawls, throws, blankets, cushions and rugs. In the wooden studio adjoining her house in the Herefordshire hamlet of Byford, the shelves are piled high with finished items in tactile textures – from finely spun wool to chunky raw fleece – while a work-in-progress sits on her hand loom in the corner. Here she can design and create, away from domestic distractions. The walls are clad in tongue-and-groove, a woodburning stove adds warmth and cheer in the colder months, there are colourful kilim rugs on the floor, and a bookcase is well stocked with craft books for reference and inspiration.

Late summer is harvest time, when Jane gathers armfuls of blooms, leaves, bark and berries to dry in handmade apple baskets under a large canvas canopy attached to the house. Wire vats bought at auction hold Cotswold fleeces drying in the August sunshine. The rambling one-acre plot slopes down to a stretch of the meandering River Wye, a stunning location where kingfishers flash past, egrets perch and swans drift by. Willow grows along the bank, and meadowsweet, St John's wort and tansy are in abundance. Jane adds all these to her dye recipes but takes care not to pick too much too often.

Plant Dyed Wool is a business that Jane first began as a hobby 32 years ago. Now it takes her to exhibitions around the country, where she demonstrates spinning, weaving

and felting, and sells her unique looms, which she makes with her husband Julian, a woodcut artist and printmaker. From April until September she runs workshops at home on all aspects of woolcraft.



In her garden, cottage perennials – penstemons, lupins, delphiniums and hollyhocks – grow alongside traditional dyer’s plants – marigolds, foxgloves, goldenrod, coreopsis, woad, weld, madder, gypsywort and camomile. Remnants of raw fleece are laid between rows to suppress weeds. Strolling along the winding paths, Jane explains how every plant earns its keep. Blackcurrant leaves can be used to make a yellow dye after fruiting is finished, while poisonous rhubarb leaves are the source of a natural chemical, oxalic acid, which acts as a mordant – the substance that binds dye to the yarn so that the colour won’t fade. “When we started looking for a house in Herefordshire – to be near a Steiner school for the children – we didn’t even ask about the number of bedrooms,” she explains. “My only requirement was a large garden.” In Victorian times the house they found was a pub called The Boat Inn, and barges would stop to deliver barrels of cider. Later it became a smithy and today is still called The Forge. They rented it for nearly 20 years until Jane inherited money from her parents in 2015, which conveniently coincided with the owner’s decision to sell. “It was serendipity,” she says.

When they first moved in and were raising their daughters – Skye, Nada and Freya – in the 1980s, theirs was a simple, self-sufficient lifestyle. They grew most of their own food – “I used to spend £5 on a weekly shop at Swaffham market” – and kept a cow, four goats, pigs, chickens, geese, ducks and bees. “I miss the goats, especially at kidding time, but not the twice-daily commitment of milking,” she adds. “It was a chaotic household when the children were small and we had very little income. We ate a lot of wild food.”

No one was more surprised than Jane that she took so enthusiastically to living off the land. Before she met Julian in the late Seventies, she had led a peripatetic lifestyle: as a taxi driver in Oxford, a deckhand on a boat to Australia, and a backpacker on the hippy trail through Asia and Africa: “At that time I wasn’t into gardening, but suddenly I found myself growing vegetables and keeping animals.”

Like everything else in her life, the business evolved naturally. When she acquired a spinning wheel from a friend who showed her how to use it, she became addicted. “I loved the rhythm of it. It was the only time I relaxed,” she remembers. “I also took up knitting and made every imaginable item of clothing for the children. Everything I did had to be useful, but I discovered that I had an artistic talent for putting colours and patterns together.” Jane added peg-loom weaving and felting to her repertoire, and with a



group of friends started to experiment with making dyes from plants in the garden, cooking them up in pots on a bonfire. The results were fairly hit and miss, but the alchemy fascinated her. Today her technique is more sophisticated, though recipes still come about through trial and error. First, she prepares a dye bath in a large stainless steel container, tearing up leaves and sprinkling in petals and roots. Water to cover is added, brought to the boil over an open fire, and left to simmer for an hour or so to extract the colour. She knows what she hopes to achieve, but the results can never be guaranteed. "That's where the magic comes in" she says, "and yet it's very simple. People have been dyeing cloth and wool for thousands of years". Students attending courses in Jane's tranquil garden can learn every step of the dyeing, spinning and weaving process, from fleec to fabric, and leave with several items they have made themselves, sometimes with a loom in tow. Jane and Julian are the sole suppliers of the Brinkley loom. "It was invented by a Mr Pink who lived in the village of Brinkley in East Anglia," Jane says. "It was my first loom and I thought it would progress to something bigger and better, but I have never found any that suits me quite as well. We eventually acquired the business and now we make and sell Brinkley looms."...

It is this love of the British countryside and the crafts born from it that sits at the heart of Jane's business. From the flowers and plants in her garden to the techniques she uses to process her fleeces, her knowledge is in-depth and born from passion. It's a passion she passes on to the students who come to her home, ensuring, far from being a dying art, the craft is very much alive....

Printed in Country Living (UK) August 2017

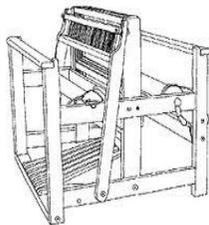
THREADS

If you would like to contribute to the next edition of Threads or would like to add some information to our website, please contact us through the contact page on the website.

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 from the Guild please contact a member of the committee.



Monthly meetings in Roydon village.
Please see website for up to date details.