

Threads

Lea Valley Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers

Introducing myself

by Billy Turner

Welcome to the latest edition of Threads. I am sure you will join me in thanking Debs for all her efforts in making Threads so informative and entertaining. As new editor, I will need to work hard to attain such high standards set by previous Editors.

As a relatively new Guild member, I feel a brief introduction is necessary. I am Michele Turner's husband and it is through her years of continuous membership that I feel close to the Guild and have followed its many activities. I shall endeavour to meet you all in the coming months.

I am very much a rookie weaver, thanks in no small part to the great encouragement from both Michele and Audrey. Indeed, it was Audrey who let me use her fabulous Saori loom (very brave of her!!) I also enjoy participating in the noble art of natural dyeing. In my humble opinion, nothing beats the excitement one feels as the samples are removed from the dye pot, as no one is quite sure what the bresults will be!

Although I have a fair amount of experience in editing (Bishop's Stortford FC match programme/local residents Association magazine) and worked for the Herts & Essex Observer, this was all in the 1980s, where typewriters were cutting edge and computers/home publishing belonged only in futuristic movies. I am running to catch up with all this wonderful technology.

I do firmly believe there is a place for both digital and paper. Debbie will continue to produce the excellent Guild website, in addition to her duties as Press Officer.

Threads is your magazine, written mostly by you. I hope to encourage as many of you as possible to send in contributions, no matter how brief.



Audrey and Chris with their skeins ready to heat. A general view of the activity.



Cate joined us for the morning and brought some items to sell. Cate and Mary having a chat and Chris and Beth catching up on events.



A few of us were spinning instead of dyeing. The dyed skeins look wonderful.



Finally, a big THANK YOU to Sue and Robert for putting up with us again. And Sue for the preparations for the day and refreshments.



At last the moment of truth had arrived, and after squeezing the excess moisture from the skeins in a wrapped towel, we could finally admire our finished piece. It was fascinating to see how our choices of colour made each of our yarn look so different.

As they dried in the sun, I decided I was reasonably happy with mine, but mostly, I had so enjoyed the process. I can't wait for my next dyeing adventure. I just want to send my profound thanks to Robert and Sue for all their hospitality, and especially to Sue for organising everything so perfectly.

spinspinspinspinspinspinspinspinspinspin

What is a distaff.....

.by Chris Lane

Until very recently I did not know that a wrist distaff was something that I had always needed. I had seen pictures of spinners with a wooden distaff which appeared to be a 'stick' wound with fleece or flax which looked like candyfloss.

One day I was wandering around online and came across pictures of beaded wrist distaffs. I was intrigued as when I read on this sounded like something that could be really useful.

SUMMER SCHOOL, Writtle College

by Michele Turner

This was my second Summer School. I was lucky enough to get a bursary at my first one, at Askham Bryan College in 2019, which opened my eyes to the fabulousity that is the AGWSD summer school.

This one was local, which meant that I could drive in every day from home, thus saving on accommodation.

There was a fabulous symmetry to these events as, many years ago, I decided to study horticulture, and my two preferred choices were Askham Bryan and Writtle. I really liked Askham Bryan, but was only offered a place on the ND course, whereas Writtle offered me my preferred HND course, Thus, It was that I met Billy Turner at Writtle, and we married in our middle year (This year we celebrated our 30th Anniversary, a week after Summer School). With the Wednesday being a half day, (to allow for trips out etc) Billy joined me in the afternoon, cue happy reminiscing of our times there as we wandered through the Grounds.

I did the Eco Print Course, led by Louise Drosdzol, which got off to a flying start, on Monday, with five samples on silk and some on paper. We covered non mordanted silk with onion skins, mordanted silk with madder and bedstraw roots, using a cardboard resist, clamped between tiles, in the dirty pot. We also did a Eucalyptus sample and flower prints before using the tiles again for our paper test.

On Day 2, we focused on creating a 'library of leaves', to use as a guide for our T-shirt and final piece. We also learned about differing mordant strengths to use with a tannin blanket, to add background colour.

We put some of that knowledge to use, on Day 3, creating a T shirt. I chose a strong mordant base and Myrobalan as my tannin. We had a choice of Myrobalan, pomegranate and Chestnut tannins, which give, respectively, purplish, green and beige tones.

On Thursday we did a variety of samples, using dyed and non-dyed silk with a variety of blankets, including cochineal, logwood and Iron as well as petal painting. We finished on Friday with our chosen project – I printed a linen blouse.

The final day – Saturday – the classes are thrown open, so that you can view the work done by all the classes, which is a delight, as you see a wonderful variety of truly excellent work.

There is also a fascinating exhibition of the Tutors' work – The C of A is on display, plus a trade fair, with supplies of all the things we could want for our respective crafts. I really enjoyed trying a couple of spinning wheels, on the Threshing Barn stand and am already hatching a plan to visit my friend from the Cheshire, so we can try out more wheels!

For those unfamiliar with Summer School, it's hard to get across how much of an experience it is. It is so much more than a course. You make friends with likeminded people from Guilds across the country and there is a wonderful feeling of inclusivity. There are people from all levels of experience, from those who are just starting out through to the vastly experienced, with multiple skills.

I would love to go to Summer School again in the future. It is both exhausting and expensive, but you get so much from the experience! Time to line up my piggy bank and start saving for the next one!

weaveweaveweaveweaveweaveweaveweave

My weaving journey

by Audrey McNeill

'I am not interested in weaving' so said I when I first joined the guild in 2013. I studiously avoided the weaving workshops. I like crochet and I was going to learn to spin to get the yarn I wanted to crochet with and at the same time slow myself down in the amount of crochet I did. Hah! So much for that plan.

I wasn't interested in weaving as it looked tedious and fiddly. It had lots of jargon that meant nothing. The only weaving workshop that I joined in was a tapestry weaving one with Paula Armstrong. I quite like the designs and it appealed to the arty side of me. That said, it was still fiddly.

After a while, I realised that I had yarn that wasn't really suitable for crochet and my spinning had improved to a reasonable consistency, and thought maybe I should try weaving. I ended up with one of the guild rigid heddle looms and produced my first piece of woven material. Nothing to write home about, but I had woven something.

I made a scarf, not perfect, but good enough to be recognisable as such. After a little more practice, I decided to buy my own loom and went for a knitters loom that seemed to be popular and had the advantage of folding for storage and travel. I made a case to carry it as my first loom project. For all I was pleased with the end product, I did not like that loom. The heddle wouldn't stay put and I ended up fighting it rather than enjoying it. After another couple of projects, I gave up and sold it.





The guild then had a Saori weaving demonstration. The whole philosophy of Saori appealed to me. That being not getting too caught up in the outcome, but rather enjoying the process. This attitude can be applied to weaving on any loom. Strictly speaking, Saori weaving is on a Saori loom and Saori style weaving is done on any other brand of loom.

I tried the loom brought in for the demonstration and decided a floor loom was the way to go. I looked at various other floor looms; some were way too big and none had

the ability to thread the heddles away from the loom like the Saori, although some could sley the reed separately. Due to issues with my back, this was an important deciding factor in the type of loom. The fact it folded was also helpful.

One of the points that was stressed as a positive was that you could buy pre-wound wars. As it turns out, this is the least helpful aspect and in some ways positively annoying. They are mainly plain black, you can get other random colours, but it is generally better to wind your own. That way you get the warp you want and can dress the loom in such a way that it is less likely the warp threads will get tangled. You can also dress it either from front to back or back to front, whereas with a pre-wound warp it needs to be back to front.

My lovely husband gave me some money towards the loom as a birthday present. The first warp was already threaded and sleyed, so off I went with the wefting (yes I know this isn't a word, but it should be) and created my first piece.

The thing I have learnt is that due to the weaving process, there are long gaps between warping up. This means that invariably you forget all the things you learnt from the last time you warped the loom. I now have several notes about the order and 'don't forget this', 'must do that'. Very gradually I'm getting there.

About a year on, I bought a 4 shaft kit for the loom. My theory was that I could do some traditional 4 shaft weaving on it with drafts, as well as the Saori. I'm still slightly unsure about having done this, as I don't have the patience or eye for detail that traditional weaving seems to require.

I've taken weaving classes and watched some videos, I've tried some techniques and some I like, some not so much.

I'm only just beginning to get my head around sett and dpi/epi. Plus unless I'm doing something specific, I tend to use a variety of yarn thicknesses, which kind of makes dpi/epi a little odd.

I have bought myself a small rigid heddle for samples and small pieces. I also tried making a cardboard inkle loom. This is what happens when someone (Asela, I'm looking at you!) posts a link to a blog on Facebook and you look in the corner to see just the right size box and know you have some 'dowel' type rods the right size.



I made the inkle loom and started weaving. The weaving took absolutely ages. It should not have done so. The end piece was approximately 20cm long by 1.5cm wide. I have discovered that I liked making the loom, the sense of achievement of something that worked was good.

The Leicester Longwool Breed was developed by the great agriculturalist Robert Bakewell in the 1800's. Prized for it's meat and it's wool it was a very important breed and was used in the breeding of many of the worlds modern commercial breeds. Unfortunately the breed is now very rare, categorised by the Rare Breed Survival Trust as 'Endangered' and declining in numbers.

Our Cowarne Mill Flock is a member of the Leicester Longwool Sheepbreeders Association, which strives to not only increase numbers but to widen the genetic pool and reduce in-breeding by careful selection of rams and ewes put together. Cowarne Mill is a historic watermill in Herefordshire. All the land here is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, protected by law, as it was the site of an important Mediaeval settlement. This means the pasture is unimproved natural grassland full of herbage and wild flowers and supporting a diverse and abundant ecosystem. With a low stocking density our Leicester longwool sheep thrive on this pasture and produce fantastic fleece as a result.

Kind Regards

Lee Hawkins Cowarne Mill Flock Pedigree Rare Breed Leicester Longwool Sheep

ThreadsThreadsThreadsThreadsThreadsThreads

Contacting the Editor

Please send your articles, photos, chatty ramblings to:

**Billy Turner
4 Wyvern
Barnston
Great Dunmow
Essex
CM6 1LY**

**Tel: 07539 427865
bm81turner@gmail.com**

Programme of Events

Thursday 14th October, 7pm – 9.30pm

**Competition “Ruby” – something red to celebrate our 40th anniversary
which the Guild achieved in 2020**

Show and Tell

**Showcase of members’ work during the year.
Bring your wheel (or other work in progress too) to spin and chat.**

Thursday 11th November, 7pm – 9.30pm

Talk by John Miners “Horsehair Tales”

**A History of John Boyd Textiles – the only remaining haircloth weavers in
the UK**

Thursday 9th December, 7pm – 9.30pm

Christmas Social

Shared buffet and mini workshop

**Meeting charges are £2.00 for members and £5.00 for visitors, unless
stated otherwise.**

**Tea and coffee is provided at all meetings. For all-day workshops, please
bring a packed lunch.**

Members of the committee 2021

Chair	Michele Turner shelly.elly@live.co.uk
Vice Chair	Teri Malakouna tmalakouna@gmail.com
Secretary	Asela Ball secretary@leavalleyguildswd.uk
Treasurer	Cate Barnett familybarnett24@hotmail.com
Publicity officer	Deb Cunningham deb Cunningham@virginmedia.com
Programme secretary	Sue Prior sprior@bucklershallfarm.com
Committee outside events	
	Audrey McNeill jamaud@aol.com Chris Lane Chris.e.lane@btinternet.com

A big Thank-you goes to Teri Malakouna for printing this edition of Threads