



EDINBURGH GUILD OF WEAVERS, SPINNERS & DYERS

Newsletter August 2021

Welcome to the August edition of our monthly newsletter. Next month's newsletter will be circulated about the date of our September meeting (Saturday 18th September) so please do think about sending something for inclusion and many thanks to those who have sent contributions for this edition. Just email anything to pennyskett@gmail.com.

The Guild meeting this month is on Saturday 21st August. It will be a zoom meeting and following last month's interesting discussions about natural dyeing Isabella Whitworth (<https://theloomshed.com/meet-the-team/isabella-whitworth/>) will be talking to us about 'The Colour Purple'. The meeting will start at 10.45am and Isabella's talk will commence at 11am. Just email pennyskett@gmail.com for the zoom link if you are able to join the talk.

Below is a brief summary of the natural dyeing discussion at last month's meeting.

Madder dyeing *Dyeing with madder roots produced good colour from a deep brick red to lighter peach as the dye bath got more exhausted. The deepest colour was probably obtained when heating the dye bath but a good colour could also be obtained from dyeing in cold/lukewarm water for 24 to 48 hours. When using a heated dye bath it was important it didn't go above 80 degrees as the colour tended to get browner with higher temperatures. Madder also worked well in solar dyeing and the experience was that the colour just went on and on. It could be used in conjunction with other dyes in solar dyeing.*

The chopped roots did just shake out after dyeing so it wasn't essential to put the roots in a piece of muslin or muslin bag (an Aldi vegetable bag was suggested as an alternative if muslin wasn't available). When putting the roots in a bag what was being dyed would have to be regularly moved in the dye bath to prevent a patchy result.

When dyeing a hank of yarn make sure it is only tied loosely as if it is tied tightly the dye doesn't penetrate so well where the fibres are close together and the depth of colour varies as a result. On the other hand this is one way of getting a variation in shade if that's what is wanted.

To get a deep colour from madder an equal weight of roots to yarn is needed i.e. 100 gms madder root to 100 gms wool.

Solar Dyeing *Solar dyeing was recommended as a very simple method of dyeing with generally good results.*

Woad Dyeing *It was generally agreed that dyeing with woad could be tricky and that results were mixed. However it was agreed by those who had tried it that the miraculous transformation of yarn from green to blue as it was taken out of the dye bath was well worth all the effort and uncertainty. The ph level of the water is important in dyeing with woad – it needs to be fairly alkaline at around 9. As alum is acidic it is best to avoid using it as a mordant for yarn which is to be dyed with woad as the experience was that it neutralised the alkalinity of the dye bath and little blue was obtained.*

Yarn could continue to be redipped in the dye bath to increase the depth of colour.

Woad seeds and spreads easily but a lot of leaves are needed for dyeing – at least double the weight of leaves to the

amount of yarn. The timing of picking woad leaves seemed to be important – July/August probably. Results had not been so successful when they'd been harvested later.

Indigo had also been grown but the result when then trying to use it for dyeing had not been very successful.

Fungi Dyeing Marilyn had some stunning examples of the wide variety of colour she had obtained when dyeing with fungi. She had got a magnificent purple from a bracket fungus when adding ammonia. Katrina had achieved a brilliant deep blue with bracket fungus. Marilyn encouraged others to consider joining the Scottish Fungi Dyeing Group.

Other Natural Dyes Turmeric was suggested as a very easy dye to use and readily available.

Nettles produced a yellow dye (as well as young nettle tops being good for cooking) and could also be used to produce fibre. They had to be soaked and then beaten to remove the outer layer and access the stringy fibres in the middle of the stalk which could then be spun – the same process as for flax.

Henna was suggested as a dye. On a textile visit to India Erika had also seen cow dung being used to produce a light green.

The colour produced from dyeing with berries tended not to be fast and faded quickly – a purple produced on yarn from dyeing with blackberries had changed to a beige over a couple of years even though there had been no exposure to light.

Tansy flowers produced a good yellow but tansy was quite an invasive plant and so care had to be taken when growing it.

Useful Books

Suggestions from Frida:

The Complete Guide to Natural Dyeing by Eva Lambert & Tracy Kendall. (Techniques and recipes for dyeing Fabrics, Yarns and fibres at home)

Wild colour by Jenny Dean. This is a very good book with helpful charts etc and it also addresses the cultivation of natural dyes.

I also have another book by Gail Callahan *Handyeing Yarn and Fleece*. I have not really used it yet but it talks about Dip-Dyeing, Hand-painting, Tie-dyeing and other creative techniques.

Suggestion from Katrina:

Natural Dyes by Judy Hardmand and Sally Pinhey

Published 2009

It has an alphabetical list of plants with a photograph and a drawing for identification, where and when it grows and what parts of the plant to use. Also shows expected colour results. Includes information on how to use plant materials, how to store dye plants and ideas for creating a dye plant garden.

After our meeting Marilyn tried dyeing some fibre with woad leaves grown in her local park using a variety of methods and this is a picture of her basket showing the different resulting shades she obtained.



Scarves and Yarn For Sale

Here are pictures of some of the wonderful yarns and scarves which Alison Crawford in Edinburgh has for sale as she has decided to sell her loom and give up weaving. If you are interested you can email Alison at weavermusic@gmail.com.



Great Scottish Canvas Exhibition

Trisha Gow has had her Tapestry weaving “Runes” selected for the Great Scottish Canvas exhibition which will be online for a year.

The opening of the Great Scottish Canvas virtual exhibition will take place on Saturday 18 September and is one of the events featured during the [Climate Fringe Week](#) (18-26 September), a week of climate events in the run up to COP26 in Glasgow.

Runes will also be featured in the Great Scottish Canvas book which WWF will bring to the UN climate conference, COP26, in Glasgow this November, to kickstart conversations about the future the people of Scotland want to see.

Royal Highland Show Handcrafts 2022

The schedule for the Royal Highland Show Handcrafts Championship 2022 is now available. The overall theme is ‘Celebration of the Countryside’ and the theme for the Handspinning, Weaving and Dyeing section is ‘Birds and Bees’. It’s a great opportunity to display our crafts so do think about putting in an entry next year.

The six classes in Section F Handspinning, Weaving and Dyeing are:

24. Hank of Shetland Yarn – 2 ply for knitting. Hand spun from Shetland sheep. Include sample of fleece staple.
25. Three hanks of Hand spun yarn using different natural fibres and dyes inspired by the title – mounted on card identifying plant sources.
26. Hank of fancy yarn i.e. slub, loop or spiral. Specify intended use and include a small worked sample.
27. An article in Hand spun yarn – knitted, crocheted or woven.
28. Wall hanging inspired by the theme. Any hand weaving technique – able to be hung.
29. Tote bag in any hand weaving technique.

‘July Fields’ Tapestry

The Scottish Gallery in Dundas Street currently has a Joan Eardley Centenary exhibition as part of this year’s Edinburgh Festival and it includes a magnificent tapestry of her ‘July Fields’ painting which was completed in July by Naomi Robertson at the Dovecot Studio. The exhibition is on until 30 August and the tapestry (and exhibition) is well worth seeing if you are in Edinburgh. More details can be found at <https://scottish-gallery.co.uk/exhibitions/joan-eardley-centenary>

A Lockdown Marathon

Lorna Reid has sent an account of her 'lockdown marathon'!

MY LOCKDOWN MARATHON

Just before the first lockdown I had taught myself to make the crocheted Mitred Granny Square. I thought it looked really nice and I enjoyed making them. When we went officially into Lockdown, I came up with the bright idea of making one of these squares for each day of Lockdown. I would then make them into baby car seat blankets and give them to charity. Little did I realise what I had let myself in for!

I challenged the family to guess how many I would have to make, and then said I would stop when the shops opened, however I then added a caveat, when a specific shop opened! (Of course, it was one with a large craft section!). Unfortunately, for me, it opened more than a week later than other shops! I ended up making a total of 121 squares. I used approximately 968g or if you prefer, that's over 2lbs of yarn I have 10 ends on each square to darn in, that's a total of 1210 ends!!

PS. I'm still trying to make them into car seat blankets and second Granddaughter won with 88 days being closest!



Gifts to the Guild

The Guild has received two donations this month. Trisha Gow has kindly donated a copy of The Scottish Fungi Dye Groups's publication 'Fabulous Fungi Dyes' to the Guild library. In addition Caroline Curry, who was a member of the Guild many years ago, has generously donated her Ashford Traditional wheel (pictured below) and lazy kate for hire to Guild members.



Next Month

Next month's newsletter will be circulated at about the third Saturday of the month (18th September).

It is hoped that it may be possible to have an in person meeting in September for those who wish to participate. However at present we are waiting to hear when Craiglockhart Church is able once again to make facilities available to outside groups. If an 'in person' meeting is not possible on 18th September then a zoom meeting will be arranged.

The newsletter will be continuing for the next few months so please do keep sending any photos of your craft projects and contributions to pennyskett@gmail.com.

Don't forget this month's zoom meeting is **Isabella Whitworth's talk about 'The Colour Purple'** and is on **Saturday 21st August at 10.45am**. Just email pennyskett@gmail.com for the zoom link.