

# Edinburgh Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers

## Newsletter

### July 2023

#### From the Editor (Jane Howorth):

Hello, and welcome to your new-look Newsletter. I hope you will find it an interesting, entertaining and informative read.

Thank you for the many contributions I received for this issue; it really makes the job of creating this newsletter so much easier for me.

**Your contributions for the August newsletter can be sent to me at [janehoworth@live.com](mailto:janehoworth@live.com)**

**Deadline for contributions: 6<sup>th</sup> August.**

#### Guild Committee Update:

At the Guild's AGM in June, Jane Howorth was elected to the role of Secretary, and Sam Case was elected as the Membership Secretary. Penny Skett has decided to step down from the Committee, but will remain, an active and valued member of the Guild. I know we are all very much appreciate the positive impact Penny has had on the life of the Guild during her time as Secretary.

#### Here is a message from Penny:

Thank you all for making the role of Secretary so easy over the last eight years. It is members who make the Guild the interesting and welcoming group that it is and I have really enjoyed being Guild Secretary. I am delighted Jane Howorth has agreed to take on the role and am looking forward to continuing to be part of the group. Unfortunately, I'm not able to join the Ashford visit on Saturday but I will definitely be at the Broughton Gathering in August and I look forward to seeing everyone then.

**The June Meeting:** We enjoyed an entertaining, illustrated talk by Erika Hollingdale. Her talk was very evocative of her travels in Assam, India, the ways of life she encountered there, and the weavers she met. Erika brought some of her Indian textiles to show us, and after the talk these were seized on enthusiastically by many, to marvel at the colours and the skill involved in their creation.

**The July Meeting:** This month sees the visit of Guild members to Ashfield House, 61 Melville Street, EH3 7HL, on 15<sup>th</sup> July between 11.00-2.00 pm. There will be a tour and an opportunity to see some of the artefacts belonging to the Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh, to which the Websters belong. Contact [katrina@ewsd.org.uk](mailto:katrina@ewsd.org.uk) if you'd like to come along and have not already booked your place.

## Royal Highland Show Success

**Guild members achieved terrific successes in the spinning and weaving competitions at the recent Royal Highland Show:**

**Laura Baigrie** was awarded the Jean Parker Prize for Best Exhibit of 2-ply handspun, extra fine, Shetland Yarn for lace knitting, as well as placing first in that category. This was Laura's first entrance into the show, having been encouraged/inspired by members of the Guild to enter. As a novice entrant, having spun her hank of yarn the day before, and submitted at the latest possible time, Laura definitely did not expect her yarn to be marked well, never mind place!

Laura attended the show on the Sunday to attend the awarding ceremony, and was delighted to discover that her shawl entered into the 'item in handspun yarn' category had been placed second (although it was displayed wrong-side up!).

The lace yarn was spun from sheep local to Laura, and the shepherd who raised them is very proud his sheep were involved in winning a prize.

**Sam Case** won the Mabel Ross Memorial Prize for best exhibit of a fancy hand-spun yarn.

Both **Penny Skett** and **Frida Bleakley** entered the Woven Shopping Bag category, with Penny placing second, and Frida third.

What fantastic achievements: Very many congratulations to all.



*Laura Baigrie with her prize-winning entries*



*Sam Case's winning art yarn*



*Frida's bag (right)*

*Penny's bag (below)*



# Out and About

## A round-up of the events and exhibitions visited by our members this month

**A visit to the V&A, Dundee:** To celebrate their 5th anniversary, the V&A Dundee has a new exhibition called "Tartan". The exhibit explores the creation and symbolism of this quintessential Scottish textile from its murky origins to the present day.

Objects demonstrate both the traditional uses of tartan such as a Jacobite jacket and trews, and more avant-garde examples such as a dress from Charles Jeffery's LOVERBOY collection. My personal favourite object is a tartan jacket, skirt, and cloak worn by American fashion editor turned Highland lady, Frances Farquharson.

Weavers may be particularly interested in the section featuring historic pattern books and archival videos of craftspeople at work. After working on the conservation and mounting of this exhibit I feel inspired to improve my weaving skills and create my own tartan fabric!

Tartan will be on display at the V&A Dundee until 14 January 2024.

*Frances Farquharson outfit  
before installation in the exhibit.*



**Isabella Rossi**

**Kitty and Frida go to Hawick:** Frida Bleakley got a tip-off about a Bernat Klein exhibition at the Borders Textile Towerhouse. It sounded interesting, so she and Kitty Johnstone boarded the X95 and travelled to Hawick. It was a great day to be travelling through the Border Lands, with spectacular views on all sides. The Bernat Klein exhibition was excellent, with many colourful exhibits, and the video was informative; it included the last interview Klein gave.

Following their hour-long visit to the Klein exhibition, the rest of this charming museum had to be viewed. The room devoted to the technical history of textile manufacture caught the imagination, as did the displays of how the bosses lived and worked. There were exhibitions of artwork pertinent to the textile industry, the Unions and social history. On the ground floor they met Diane, the denizen of the desk, who was friendly and welcoming, able to discuss the exhibits, and willing to share snippets of news about exhibitions to come. Sadly, the Klein exhibition ended on 8<sup>th</sup> July, but information about future exhibitions at the Towerhouse can be found here: [www.liveborders.org.uk](http://www.liveborders.org.uk)



This gem of a museum encourages interest in textiles. They have a vibrant knitting and stitching outreach too. Hawick has a number of restaurants and cafes, there's something for all budgets and tastes within easy reach of the Museum.

**Kitty Johnstone**

### ***Regenerative Textiles Scotland at the Dovecot:***



*Woven linen samples and wraps dyed using red cabbage*

*Handwoven jacket of Cheviot wool from Balgarvie Weaving, dyed using madder root and marigold [www.balgarvieweaving.co.uk](http://www.balgarvieweaving.co.uk)*

In early July, Jane Howorth went along to the inaugural exhibition of Regenerative Textiles, which supports and enables the new textile economy in Scotland.

Work by recent graduates was featured, along with established names like Di Gilpin. Interesting examples of naturally-dyed linen weaving were displayed as well as woven alpaca, and wool items.

You can find out more about this organisation here:

[www.regenerativetextilesscotland.com](http://www.regenerativetextilesscotland.com)

**Jane Howorth**



# News

Information about future events and happenings:

## A New Shop in Edinburgh

After months of frenzied DIY, Guild member **Tara McGilvray-Guard** has finally opened the doors to her new shop in Causewayside, called Wheel of Fate.

In addition to teaching witchy folk craft workshops and selling art from local artists, she also has a small but growing selection of carded batts, rolags, and roving for spinning or felting. Soon she will also be offering custom batts and rolags as well as locally dyed and hand-spun yarn.

The shop will also be holding fibre arts workshops after August.

Find the shop at 63 Causewayside in Newington, Edinburgh.

Tara says, "Please come and say Hi if you're passing!"

***Tara McGilvray-Guard***

This beautiful shop sounds like a much-needed addition to the Edinburgh shopping scene, and we wish Tara all the best with her new endeavour. I for one will be checking out the roving very soon  
– JH



**Create at Poldrate Arts and Crafts Centre:** There is soon to be an exhibition showcasing the tutors and self-help leaders who teach at the Poldrate Arts and Crafts Centre in Haddington. This is an opportunity to learn about the range of arts and craft classes at Poldrate, and see the work of the very creative and experienced artists who teach the classes there.

The exhibition is at the John Grey Centre, a gallery adjacent to Haddington Library. It will be open during library hours, and runs from 17<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup> July.

For those who are interested in finding out more, there will be an Open Day at the Poldrate Mill on 26<sup>th</sup> July, which is located at 11 Poldrate, Haddington EH41 4DA.

Find out more at [www.thepacc.org.uk](http://www.thepacc.org.uk)

(I can recommend The Loft Cafe for lunch or coffee, and if you visit on the last Saturday of the month, you will find your visit coincides with market day in Haddington).

***Frida Bleakley***

**BobCat Alpaca Day, Sunday 3rd September:**

Guild members have again been invited to provide a spinning demonstration at the BobCat Alpaca Open Day at Bonaly in aid of Marie Curie. It will be on Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September from 10am to 4pm. We had a great time last year with lots of visitors and plenty of alpaca fibre to spin. If you are interested in coming along to the event contact Penny Skett on

[pennyskett@gmail.com](mailto:pennyskett@gmail.com)

*Visitors 'having a go' at spinning at the BobCat Open Day in 2022*



***Penny Skett***

## Did you know?

The world's heaviest sheep fleece was a merino fleece which weighed 41.1 kilos. The fleece is now housed by the Australian National Museum. In 2015 the sheep, dubbed 'Chris the Unhappy Sheep', was rescued near Canberra, sheared and cared for by the RSPCA.



# Hints, Tips and Techniques

## Members sharing their good ideas!

**Carmen Wright** has found an interesting website for rigid heddle weavers. Packed with articles and information, it includes some free projects which may be interesting for all our small loom weavers. If the recent warm weather has made you feel at all summery, you might be interested to look at the free project about weaving with flower stems and grasses. Take a look at the whole site here: <http://bit.ly/43synUc>

**John Palmer** has positive feedback about by his recent purchase from Weaving Yarn Ltd, describing them as having a nice web-site, offering well priced yarns and an efficient service. Some of you may recall that this company took over the yarn side of the business from Helen Brotherton, who sold yarn through the 'My Fine Weaving' site. Weaving Yarn Ltd have a massive range of weaving yarns on offer, many of which are hard to get elsewhere in the UK. Take a look at: <https://weavingyarn.co.uk/>



Since acquiring a rather large weaving loom, **Jane Howorth** has had to devise a way to store all those reeds, warp sticks, temples, lease sticks etc, aka: 'bits of wood'. The solution was to buy two 'Hutten' wine racks from IKEA, <https://bit.ly/3rp9oDR> and glue them together, one above the other. "Buying a new stand for reeds costs about £150, so I am very happy to have made this one for £20", said Jane, "even if it does not look quite so nice."

## And finally...

Q: How many spinners does it take to change a light bulb?

A: One, but you have to tell them it's an S-twist