

# Edinburgh Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers

## Newsletter

### November 2023

**Thank you to everyone who sent in contributions for the newsletter this month. It is very much appreciated.**

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

**Deadline for contributions: 1<sup>st</sup> December**

**The October Meeting:** This was our dual meeting, held both in our usual Church Hall location and in Shotts. Members who took part in the dyeing had a great time, and I believe much home baking was consumed. You can read more about their day on page 6 of this newsletter.

Members who didn't go to Shotts had a lovely, relaxed spinning and chatting session at the Church Hall. Carmen Wright was presented with the engraved Chrissie Ann quaich that she won at the Broughton Gathering. You can see photos of this on page 8. We were also delighted to welcome three new members to our Guild.

**The November Meeting:** At about 11.00 Carmen Wright will be presenting a talk about her large collection of Japanese Edo and Meiji period paper stencils. She will be sharing her knowledge about how these stencils were used by dyers to produce patterned textiles, and bringing examples of the stencils along for members to see.

There will be a meeting for committee members at about 12.30

The Weaving Interest Group will also be meeting on this day, at about 1.30.

Sales, Donations, Library and Makes tables will be available as usual. Please bring along anything fibre-related you want to sell, or offer for donation to Guild funds. If you have made anything fibre related, or have a work in progress, please bring it for the Makes table for others to see.

A reminder: please label anything you put on the Sales or Makes tables with your name. Things on the Sales table should also have a price attached. Any sales transaction is made directly between the buyer and the seller, and the Guild does not take a commission.

**The December Meeting:** To mark the end of an enjoyable Guild year we will have a Christmas fun day. There will be a bring and share lunch and a few games and competitions as well as a Secret Santa. Join in as much or as little as you want. More details will follow a little nearer the time, but there is some more information about the fun day on page 3.

**Name Badge Reminder:** If you have a name badge, please wear it at meetings. It helps new members in particular to learn who is who. If you do not have a name badge, please ask Sam Case (Membership Secretary) to make you one.

# Guild News

There are two role vacancies in the Guild, one for the Equipment Coordinator and one for the Librarian. These roles can be carried out by members, and it is not necessary to be a committee member to have one of these roles. Jane Buxton used to carry out both of these roles, but cannot continue with them now that she is the Guild President.

Jane B has provided an outline of the roles:

## Equipment Coordinator

I currently store the equipment when it is not being hired. Previously, several members of the Guild stored a piece of equipment each, and the committee wants to reinstate this. The Co-ordinator checks that the hirer is a member of the Guild, has paid the hire fee and deposit before putting the "hirer" and "storer" in touch to make arrangements for a handover (usually at the next Guild meeting). The Co-ordinator should also -

- keep a record of who has each item
- check the condition of returned items
- arrange maintenance and repair as needed
- buy new items as approved by the committee
- sell any surplus items for Guild funds, as approved by the committee

## Librarian

The Guild has a number of books that are available for loan, and also several that are kept for reference only at Guild meetings. The Librarian role involves -

- safely storing the books
- bringing the reference books to each meeting and the books relating to that month's Interest Group to the relevant meeting
- keeping the catalogue up to date
- keeping records of which books have been borrowed, and by whom
- checking that books are returned in good condition
- collecting the loan fee of £1 per month
- occasionally asking for suggestions from members about new books to add to the library
- offering for sale any duplicates that have been donated for Guild funds

Items will only be bought or sold with agreement from the Committee.

Neither role is as difficult or time-consuming as it sounds. Jane B is available for informal chats about the roles, she will do a handover with the new post-holders and will be around to answer any questions.

The committee hopes that two Guild members will be able to take on these roles as we will have to consider withdrawing these activities if no new post-holders can be found.

# Guild News

## The Guild Banners

We have two banners that were created by Guild members many years ago, and have been in storage for several years. We have found that they are now difficult to use at events because many venues do not have space to hang them or do not allow holes to be made in their walls. We are also wary of their potential flammability and compliance with health and safety regulations. The Guild now has a modern vinyl banner with eyelets which is lightweight and easy to store and hang at events.

We now have to decide what to do with the old banners. The "heads" and "squares" banners were displayed at October's meeting to give members a chance to have a good look at them. They will be on view at November's meeting too. We are looking for suggestions on their future, so please share your views with a committee member.



## Christmas Fun Day

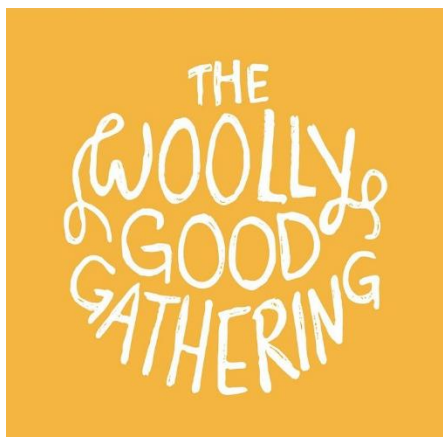
We are planning on having a **Christmas decoration competition** at our December meeting, and are giving advance notice of this for those who want to get going on it now. Members are invited to make a Christmas decoration that can be hung from a tree, and which must be predominantly made using one or more fibre craft (hand-dyed or handspun yarn, crochet, felting, knitting, weaving etc). Entries will be anonymous and the winner will be chosen by popular vote.

**Bring and Share lunch:** There will be a signing up list for lunch items at the November meeting. This will just be to say whether you will be bringing a sweet or a savoury item to share, so the committee knows we have enough of both.

We will need a **'Kitchen Crew'** to help with setting out and clearing away, washing and drying crockery and cutlery, and ensuring everything is left tidy. There will be a signing up list at the November meeting, but it is hoped that all members will help with this task as needed.

There will be other activities at the fun day which will be detailed in the next newsletter.

## Showtime... Showtime... Showtime...



A group of local fibre-related businesses have got together to launch a new fibre event in Edinburgh.

Planned for April 2024, this will be on a much smaller scale than the previous Edinburgh yarn show that some members might remember. The plan is for this show to be based in Summerhall, and it will be very much community-focussed... and our Guild has been invited to attend! We said yes (of course).

More details to follow...



Jane Howorth and Jane Buxton drove out to the Borders recently to meet with members of the Tweed Guild and one of the organisers of the Tangled event at Galashiels.

After tea and cake and a very positive discussion, it was agreed that Tweed Guild and Edinburgh Guild will share a display space at the Tangled event next year.

More details to follow...



A small number of Guild members were delighted to be able to take part, at short notice, in the Scottish Smallholder Festival at the RHS in October.

We shared a space with members of the Central and East Scotland Guild.

We have been invited back for next year, which is fantastic news for us.

Read more about our day on the following page.

These are all new and very welcome opportunities to publicise our Guild, engage with the public and spread the word about our crafts. Members will be kept up to date with developments, and there will be opportunities to volunteer for demonstrating and engaging with the public at these events.



# The Scottish Smallholder Festival 2023



Four Guild members attended the Smallholders' Festival on Saturday, 14 October at the RHS in Ingleston. It was the first time that the festival was held in Edinburgh, its former home being Forfar.

The main focus of the festival was to showcase animals, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, alpacas in the main shed. This area also contained a number of stalls linked to outdoorsy things e.g. woven baskets, woodturning, clothing, animal feed, and the agricultural college. We all had the opportunity for a quick walk-around to see the stalls and animals, but unfortunately none of us managed to see the 'pig agility' event.



We had a stall together with the Central and East Scotland Guild to do spinning demonstrations, encouraging people to have a go and talk about the Guild in general. We brought a couple of Guild spinning wheels with us, spindles, samples of spun yarn, tops, a number of woven, crochet and knitted items and information about the Guild. We noticed that the other Guild was more equipment heavy, with more fibre prep tools, table looms and spinning wheels. Together, both Guilds made an interesting and comprehensive display.

Visitors came from all over Scotland and further south. We encouraged them to contact their local guilds as a way to get into spinning, to borrow equipment and also sell fleeces from their smallholding.

We all agreed that it was a good event to take part in. We had a steady flow of people at the stall and many people were interested in watching us spin, some had a go and others asked interesting questions about the technical aspects of the spinning wheel. It was pleasing to see how many younger people were interested in having a smallholding, keeping animals and using their wool.



*With thanks to Margon van Tuyl*

Entries in the Knitted Beanie and Handspun Yarn classes at the show



## The Guild Dyeing Day at Shotts



Despite Storm Babet and the long drive there was a good turnout for the dyeing workshop.

After a wee bit of chat we got down to work, dissolving up the dye powders in hot water and choosing our colours. There was the option to cook it up in a pot or wrap it in cling film and zap it in the microwave and everyone tried both techniques. Some went for a more solid colour while others went for 2 or even 3 tones.

There was a good lot of experimenting going on. Laura tried the same dye on different fibres. Geraldine opted for a fabulous strong red. Sheila did pretty pink and blue Wensleydale curls and Kitty created the attractive pastel shades. Margaret showed us how to dip dye a skein of wool and Karon produced lovely blue/green tones by mixing colours to see what turned out. Judith and Bethany space dyed the skeins by letting the colours bleed together and “cooking” the fibre in the microwave.

Everyone had a good day and Andy really enjoyed the baking, presents, gin and company, and would be happy to host it again. Definitely an occasion to dye for!





# UK Fungus Day celebrated in Edinburgh

To celebrate UK Fungus Day, the Edinburgh & Lothian Fungus Enthusiasts (ELFE) organised a 2-day event on 7<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> October, held in Holyrood Park Education Centre. On the Saturday a foray was held for ELFE members to explore the park. Despite it being a very wet day, a good number of participants gathered fungi which was taken to the Education Centre building to be classified.



Guild members Trisha Gow and Marilyn Caddell have joined ELFE as one way for them to pass their extensive knowledge of dyeing with fungi on to the next generation. They are concerned that, to their knowledge, only 6 'fungus dyers' are currently active in Scotland, from a high point of 43 in the 1990s.

ELFE members are very interested in Trisha and Marilyn's use of fungi, who hope that ELFE members' knowledge of fungi species will help them to locate their 'Dye Fungi' in Scotland.



Take a look at Trisha and Marilyn's displays to get an idea of the available colour range - if they can find the right species!

On Sunday, Trisha and Marilyn displayed their fungi dyed textiles, in conjunction with displays and information from other fungi-related groups. Visitors were able to see the Fungi found on the previous day, go on short forays with an ELFE mycologist, and explore the displays. Visitors to Trisha and Marilyn's displays were amazed when they saw the range of colours it is possible to obtain from fungi, from the wonderful purple dye from a brown bracket fungus called *Hapalopilus nidulans*, to a lovely range of golds and greens from a hard woody fungus called *Phaeolus schweinitzii*.

## Chrissie Ann Trophy

Carmen Wright was presented with the Chrissie Ann trophy at the October meeting. The trophy was awarded for her woven shawl, which won by popular vote at the Broughton Gathering in August.



## Steeking in Glasgow

On Sunday 22nd October, our member Leonor Calaça attended a steeking workshop at The Glasgow School of Yarn. It was taught by Janette Budge, a Shetland native with many years of experience in Fair Isle knitting and (of course) steeking. Here's Leonor's report:

For those who have never heard of steeking, it's a technique whereby you cut into a knitted project to turn a tube into a flat surface. This allows you to knit in the round and avoid purling, and once you are done you turn your jumper into a cardigan with minimal effort. Well, I say minimal, but it's certainly nerve-wracking putting scissors to yarn!

The workshop lasted two hours and asked for us to bring homework with us in the form of a fair isle tube. I misunderstood the instructions and missed the part where it said I should have used "grabby" wool, and instead used some leftover superwash yarn I had laying around. It made for slippery steeking, but I got it done in the end. Janette was actually pleased with my oversight because this allowed everyone else to see how the techniques taught could work with any type of yarn.



At the end of the workshop, I had learned three different methods of securing the sides of the project before cutting, as well as the best way to pick up the stitches to create a button band.

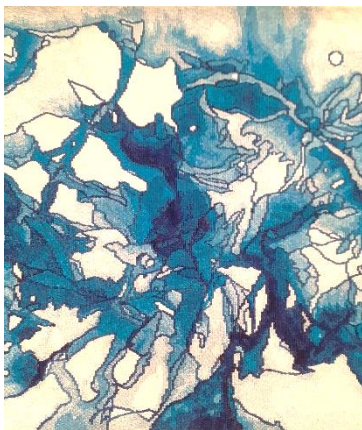




**Coffee break read:** An interesting read about the decline in the making of traditional washi paper in Japan. Check out the photo of the (stunning) paper lanterns:

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2023/02/12/general/washi-industry-decline-fukui/>

**Out and About:** If you have been to the exhibition on women artists at the Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh you will have seen three wonderful tapestries on display. If you haven't been, here are some photos for you to enjoy:



**Top left:** *Richer Twilight, Venice* (2019) Victoria Crowe

**Above:** *Irises* (1987) Elizabeth Blackadder

**Left:** *Lively Blue* (2023) Sekai Machache

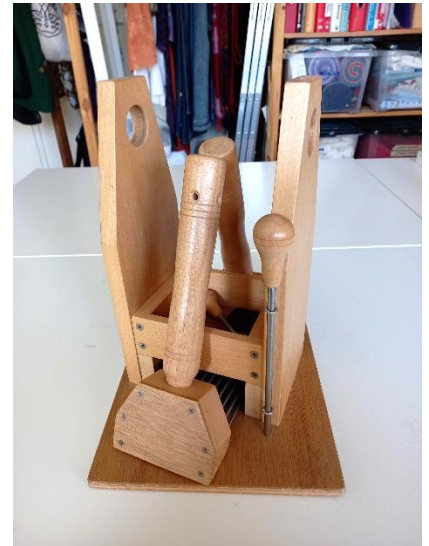
(All photos show details of the works)

The tapestries were all made at Dovecot Studios

**Louet alert:** Ange of Weftblown has decided to stop stocking Louet products. She is not placing any more orders with the factory, so now is the time to buy any Louet items you have been thinking about buying from Weftblown. There may also be some ex-demo items available on her website next week, so keep an eye on [www.weftblown.com](http://www.weftblown.com) if interested.

**Woolly Wednesdays:** Birkhill House in the Borders at Earlston, TD4 6AR is hosting free weekly workshops to process and experiment with different breeds of fleece. These happen on Wednesdays, 2-4pm [www.atbirkhillhouse.co.uk](http://www.atbirkhillhouse.co.uk)

## For Sale:



"Peter Teal" English Wool Combs by Wingham Woolwork: £250 o.n.o. (current price £305)

From Jane Buxton: I'm selling my wool combs because I prefer to card fibre, but these are beautifully designed and made. They are for the preparation of long staple fibres, e.g. Wensleydale, BFL or Teeswater for worsted spinning. They come with a tine-straightener and a diz. For full details, please see the link to Wingham Wool. There is also a link to the first in a series of instructional videos by Amanda Hannaford. The rest of the series is on YouTube. She goes through the whole process from fibre preparation and gives advice on safe and ergonomic use of the combs. Please contact Jane Buxton at [jdbuxton@hotmail.com](mailto:jdbuxton@hotmail.com) or on 07469 887 958.

<https://www.winghamwoolwork.co.uk/wingham-wool-comb.html>

<http://www.mandacrafts.co.uk/Video.html>

**For Sale:** A new copy of 'Inspired to Spin', the recently published book by Cath Snape and Alison Daykin.

The book covers preparation of many types of fibre: wool, cotton, flax, luxury fibres etc. Blending, spinning, fancy spinning, plying and yarn design also have a chapter each.

There's also a section to help people studying the AGWSD's Certificate of Achievement.

368 pages, hardback. Cost £40 plus £5.75 postage.

Will sell for £30.

Contact Jane Howorth [janehoworth@live.com](mailto:janehoworth@live.com) if interested.

<https://beechwoodcrafts.com/new-book-inspired-to-spin/>

