



The Shuttle

June 2025

kennet-valley-guild.com

 @kennetvalleyguild

Guild Meeting Dates for your Diary 2025

Sat 5th July / Guild Meeting

AM: Social.

PM: Textiles of the Vikings - a talk by Jen Heath.

Sun 6th July / Workshop

Nålbinding with Jen Heath at Speen Parish Hall.

Sat 2nd Aug / Guild Meeting

AM: Mini Workshops.

PM: Mini Workshops.

Sat 6th Sept / Guild Meeting

A Social Day.

Sat 4th Oct / Guild Meeting

AM: Social.

PM: A Textile Journey - a talk by Guild member, Jennifer Thompson.

Sat 1st Nov / Guild Meeting

AM: Social.

PM: Daniel Harris of the London Cloth Company - talking about his weaving career and the purchase and restoration of the derelict Elvet mill in South Wales.

Sat 6th Dec / Guild Meeting


A social Christmas get together with a shared lunch.

PM: Annual Fashion Show.

Guild Meetings 2025

The typical agenda for a Guild meeting is:

10.00 am	Hall open for sociable crafts
1.00 pm	Guild Business Meeting
1.30 pm	Show and Tell
2.00 pm	Speaker



**Please wear
your name
badge!**

Some meetings are different, and as such are noted above. Please check so as not to be disappointed.

Members are requested to follow any requests with respect to social distancing, masks and similar. Please help your Committee by putting your own and your neighbour's chair away at the end of the day.

Thank you - The Speaker & Workshop Team

Chairman's Chat

Hello Everyone,

Firstly thank you to everyone who voted for me at the May meeting. I outlined some of my ambitions for how the guild can evolve with input from across the membership. Every member new and old is valued and I welcome you all and your ideas equally. I need to spend so much more time getting to know people that I have spent no or so little time chatting to. I am hopeless at remembering names though so please be patient with me. A significant bang on the head and a good dose of Covid has put most of my useful brain cells and memory into sleep mode!

Most people know that I am slightly eccentric and throw myself wholeheartedly into anything woolly. I do love to learn new things and equally important is having fun along the way. For the benefit of newer members who maybe don't know me I have run my own smallholding for over 30 years. It is crammed full of sheep, fruit trees and wildlife areas. A lot of work has gone into building my small piece of heaven but it is still a bit dishevelled - actually rather a lot dishevelled which makes it a great wildlife haven.

I have 40+ sheep and use their fleeces to make wool, rovings, blankets and scarves which I sell at every opportunity. Because they make such splendid wool they don't need to make lamb chops!

I enjoy demonstrating at craft fayres and agricultural shows. I like sharing skills with people but there are so many people in the guild who will do a better job of showing you things.

I do like to have a good adventure so following on from Newbury coat fame in 2011, I have paraded cows down Fleet Street bringing London to a standstill. Fantastic fun. Taken part in a Guinness world record spinning attempt in Huddersfield came 2nd). Been to the Lord Mayors show to see the Newbury coat on the worshipful company of Woolmen's float. I was also in Glastonbury when a whole flock of sheep stormed into Boots the Chemist followed by their sheepdog and flustered farmer. (I played no part in this so I am not guilty but it was fun!)

Linda Scurr - Chairman

Kennet Valley Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

AGM - Outgoing Chairman's Report

from the April AGM Meeting

Thank you all for attending the AGM meeting.

I would like to start by mentioning our new members, I hope you all feel welcomed and supported and inspired to try new crafts. Our more experienced members are always willing to share their expertise with everyone. We have had many workshops over the last year, they have been very successful, and we have all had the opportunity to try a new craft. Our Guild is very lucky to have such talented members who are so willing to share their knowledge and expertise and a wide range of crafts and ideas to try. Thank you to all who have run the workshops for us. I would like to say a big thank you to Lynne for her organisational skills and making the days so enjoyable for us.

Our speakers this year have been varied and engaging. We have had very interesting workshops from some inspiring speakers. Anne, Jennifer and Lynne have worked so well together to arrange our speakers so a thank you for your hard work, many of you have been inspired by the incredible people we have had the pleasure of listening to.

Many of you enjoy demonstrating our skills at various shows and events. We love to share our knowledge and skills and chat to the public who are always interested in what we do. New members have joined us as a result of everyone doing such a good job and making people welcome to join us.

New members are encouraged to join us at demonstrations to show their skills and tell people about their journey and experiences. I want to thank Stef for her hard work and support arranging these events for us. Thanks to Linda Scurr who will be taking over this role. Linda will keep us up to date on upcoming events.

Our exhibition is taking place in September this year at the West Berks Museum. We have a wonderful team who are working hard to keep in touch with the Museum and organise the corresponding paperwork and other essential tasks. Sue, Nicky, Janet, and Julie are your team so please help as much as you can nearer the time. They will be keeping you informed about proceedings and how they are progressing. I thank you for your hard work and attention to detail, you are doing a magnificent job.

I must mention the weavers amongst you, their group meets at Speen Hall on the last Saturday of each month. Thank you to Rosie for running the group. If any of you would like to go along, you will be made very welcome. If you would like more information, you will find details in The Shuttle or just ask Rosie.

I'm sure you are all aware that we have a good stock of equipment for you to hire. It's a good way to hire something different and find out how it works for you. Thank you to all of you storing equipment for us, it's very much appreciated. Thanks to Julie for keeping

an inventory list and constantly updating it hopefully you will all continue to support the new Secretary, Kim, by letting her know when you acquire or store equipment it helps to keep things organised.

As you know there are many trophies to be awarded throughout the year. Jennifer does a fantastic job of informing us of events coming up and encouraging us to try and win a trophy.

We are always keen to encourage everyone to write articles for the Shuttle magazine. Apart from having important information and details of upcoming events we welcome any contributions from our members.

You can tell us about anything you find interesting or maybe a course you have been on or a visit to a show, ideas of new crafts to try or anything that covers our core skills. Thank you to Lynne for producing The Shuttle over the years. It's time for her to stand down and Nicky has offered to take over the production. We appreciate your support and interesting articles and contributions to The Shuttle.

Very sadly we have lost some of our members recently and we feel it's very important to remember them for all they have given to the guild over many years. We would not have our guild run so successfully without their knowledge, dedication, and support over the years. I'm sure like me you are very grateful for what they have achieved and what an honour it is to have known them.

There are many of you who are so willing to help at the end of the sessions to clear up and wash up etc. Thank you to

Kath for her time and support for the Committee.

I will be standing down from my role of chairman. I wouldn't have been able to do the job without the help and support of the Committee who all work hard and are dedicated to the smooth running of our wonderful Guild.

On behalf of everyone and myself a huge thank you to Sue, Jenny, Janet, Stef, Lynne and Nicky and of course Roy for his repairs to spinning wheels and other equipment and the many ways you support us and work behind the scenes helping with various tasks and sorting our problems for us. Thanks also to Lynne Bond for running the Show & Tell table, Sales table, and general support of the Guild.

Jenny, Janet and Stef are standing down from the Committee and am so grateful to them for their professionalism and hard work during their time on the Committee. They have put in a lot of work and their support for me has been exceptional. Thank you.

I have enjoyed my time as Chairman and hopefully have been supportive of all our members. I'll still be around and am always up for a chat and interested in what wonderful crafts you are doing. I am constantly learning and being inspired by you all.

I thank you for having me and I wish the Committee and all Guild members the very best for the future.

Pat Christmas

**Kennet Valley Guild of Weavers,
Spinners & Dyers**

Guild Demonstrations - Why do we demonstrate?

A few people join the Guild because they have heard about us somewhere but the majority of new members have seen us demonstrating at shows and events or have been to one of our exhibitions. That's why we demonstrate. We're spreading the word to attract new members.

There are two ways of looking at the places we demonstrate. One, the venue is lucky to have us turn up and provide them with a free attraction. Secondly, and my way of thinking is that Guild is very lucky that shows and events invite us along to show people what we do. Shows and events give us a free shop window. Usually there is free parking, free entry to the event and we are made very welcome. If we had to pay for tickets, plot hire, parking we wouldn't be able to afford to go. A lot of shows are £20 per person upwards to get in and renting a cheap plot even taking your own Gazebo tables and chairs can be upwards of £100.

The relationships we have with shows benefits both parties.

The Guild attends number of shows every year but there has been a decline compared to a decade ago.

I would like to encourage new and longer term members that haven't been out demonstrating with the Guild to give it a go. If you aren't too sure, ask to buddy up with someone. A demonstration folder will be brought to every meeting. I am hoping we can add information about the events in this folder about distances to walk, quality of toilets, where the best food is and if we need to take our own tables and

chairs etc. Just ask questions.

Please don't just look at the file. The events we go to are not cast in stone. If you know of an event /show/village fête where you would like to demonstrate please speak up and we can help you arrange it.

The most important thing to remember is to let Guild know you are going. That way you are covered by the National Associations' public liability insurance.

Plan ahead. Good footwear and possibly a mat to put your wheel/loom on if it is outdoors and wet underfoot. Read through the risk assessments relating to the event. This is important for both your and the public's safety. This is nothing arduous, it's mainly common sense. Plenty to drink, sun screen etc. Above all just go and have fun!

As for insurance you need to have your own equipment covered by your own household insurance and make sure you are insured to take it out of the house. Never leave your equipment unattended. Tie up and cover wheels and looms. If you are wandering off, tell someone so they can keep an eye out or help you to hide your equipment somewhere safely.

Remember, you probably found out about Guild at an event or exhibition somewhere so share your skills in public to encourage a few more new members.

Your support for demonstrations and our exhibitions is greatly valued. Please take part.

**Linda Scurr
Demonstrations Secretary**

Guild Talks & Workshops

Hello Everyone,

I hope you have enjoyed the programme of talks and workshops we have put together as our first year of programme planning comes to an end. We have started approaching potential speakers/tutors for 2026/2027 and already have several recommendations to follow up.

Whilst we have some of our own ideas we would always welcome your suggestions, whether that is from talks you have attended or workshops you may have done elsewhere. The programme is for all Guild members so we aim to create a programme that will appeal to as many people as possible.

Any suggestions would be welcome so please speak to myself, Jennifer Thompson or Lynne Harper. Thank you.

If you would like to see the 2025 programme list online, use the QR code to view the Diary and Events page on our web site, or via kennet-valley-guild.com/diary-and-events



Anne Reddan - Programme Team Lead

welcome

to our new Guild members

A very warm welcome to the following new members who have joined the Guild since the last Shuttle was published.

Please look out for Carrie, Carol and Cassandra at Guild meetings, introduce yourself and have a chat.



Carrie Hinton

Carol House

Cassandra Ponta

Show And Tell 2025

March

A beautiful
chatelaine by
Maureen Taylor.



A woven piece
by Rosemary
Derwent.



Two silk scarves
and a cotton
scarf by
Cassandra
Ponta.



A rug wool
sample by Jenny
Gribble.



A scarf in
assorted fibres
by Jenny Gribble.



April

A scarf/wrap
made by knitting
hand spun dog
hair by Linda
Scurr.



A beautifully intricate knitted jumper
by Trixie Holmes.

May

A collection of samples from the body
tensioned loom workshop by Lynne
Harper, Janet Dunbar, Ruth Brad,
Pat Snook, Jenny Gribble and
Marianne Dolan.



A book covered with a weaving sampler by Maureen Taylor.



Skeins of plant dyed yarn by Julie Fraser.



A hand spun and knitted shawl by Sue Bramwell.



A selection of fibre from American breeds of sheep, Targhee, Columbia and Natural Coloured, bought at the American Sheep and Craft Festival by Holly Gavin.



Sun printed fabric samples by Anne Reddan and Jennifer Thompson.

Jennifer Thompson - Show And Tell Coordinator

Guild Trophies 2025

At the AGM the June Young Trophy for service to Guild was presented to Lynne Bond. Lynne has been a stalwart member organising the Show & Tell table for a long time and latterly taking on Sales Table duties as well. Her trophy was very well deserved.



At the May meeting I was really pleased to see so many entries for the four trophies. The beginner weavers, beginner spinners, weavers and spinners. My thanks go to Linda Scurr for judging the spinning entries and to Sue Malvern and Lynne Bond for judging the weaving.



The Beginner Spinner Trophy was won by Holly Gavin and the Spinner's Trophy by Sue Bramwell.



The Beginner Weaver Trophy was won by Maureen Taylor and the Weaver's Trophy was won by another beginner, Jo Tuttle. The judges felt that one of Jo's entries was totally worthy of the Weaver's Trophy.

Well done to our winners and many thanks to everyone who entered.

The next trophy will be the Chairman's Trophy, to be awarded this year for the Mayor's choice at the exhibition.

After that we have the Hawkridge Trophy in October. This is awarded in alternate years with the Diddy Trophy and is for an item made from Jacob fleece. It can be a skein of yarn or something woven, knitted, crocheted or felted or anything else that you can think of!

Have a go! I'm looking forward to seeing your entries.

Jennifer Thompson - Trophies Coordinator

Safeguarding - Protecting Children

When I started working in 1984, Child Protection was in its' infancy; there was no cohesive guidance about the need to promote the welfare of children. I worked for 20 years as a lawyer for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and dealt with juvenile offenders and child abuse victims. I had never worked in a voluntary capacity with young people: until I started researching Kennet Valley Guild's duties and responsibilities, I was uncertain about the extent of our responsibilities.

I would like to share with you some of the information that I have found on the subject.

Voluntary organisations do not have a statutory responsibility to safeguard children; however government guidance specifies that any charity or voluntary organisation that interacts with children should develop policies and procedures to safeguard them.

These practices will not only protect children but will also act as a safety net for adults who may be wrongly accused. More recently safeguarding has been extended to vulnerable adults; statutory and non-statutory duties apply in the same way as those relating to children.

A child is anyone under the age of 18. Abuse can occur in many forms and with varying degrees of seriousness including emotional and psychological harm. We have some younger Guild members, and we may have contact with children when demonstrating, putting on the exhibition, talking to schools and interacting with other interested parties. **The welfare of the child should always be at the heart of everything we do.**

As the Kennet Valley Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers' Designated Safeguarding Officer I have overall responsibility for child safety. The KVG has already developed a policy statement and procedural and behavioural guidance. We are working on **child protection risk assessments** for the Exhibition; these will be shared with Guild members once they are fully developed. Further risk assessments will be undertaken, and shared, in due course.

If you have any questions or would just like to talk about safeguarding please just drop me an email (see Page 2 for details) or come and chat at the next meeting.

Sue Davies
(Designated Safeguarding Officer)

A Canopy of Trees

We hope you're inspired by this year's exhibition theme. The possibilities are endless so let your imaginations go wild!

Your exhibit(s) need to include one or more of our core disciplines of Weaving (including Braiding, Lace and Macramé), Spinning & Dyeing.

You might decide to focus on one or more of the seasons, a specific type of tree canopy or part thereof. It could be colour blends that inspire you or you may be a shape and texture person. Get your thinking caps on and think outside of the box!

If you need some help to make your decision, please have a chat to one of the Exhibition Committee who will be delighted to discuss your ideas.

We're encouraging collaborations this year so if you're keen on dyeing for example, you could work on a piece with a spinner or weaver.

The more variety we include in our display will inspire our visitors and hopefully encourage them to join the Guild.

Beginners through to experts, please get involved and enjoy the creative process. It's fun!

Entry forms are available at Guild and Weaver's Chat meetings and online on the Exhibition page on our web site. Scan the QR code to get there.



**Your Exhibition Committee for 2025 are
Sue Davies, Janet Dunbar, Nicky Duncan and Julie Fraser.**

Treasures of Southern India Trip - 7-19th February 2025

Author: Julie Fraser

My local yoga studio and café, The Lotus Retreat, has been advertising its trips to India for a few years now and I have always thought it would be exciting to book onto one of them. Back in November 2024, I finally succumbed to the pull of more exotic travel and, together with a good friend of mine, we booked onto a trip to Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In February, we joined a group of 15 other likeminded travellers, together with Carrie and Hari, our guides from the Lotus Retreat, and Hari our dedicated bus driver for the two weeks. We flew into Chennai and after many hours in the air, together with a layover in Abu Dhabi, we arrived in Chennai and stayed overnight in the most luxurious hotel with a rooftop pool – our reward for a long, sleepless, overnight flight.

The next day, we called into see the temples at Mahabalipuram on our way to Puducherry – some of the treasures of Southern India we were promised. The sculptures were amazing.



This temple on the coast behind me had been uncovered from sand drifts that had encased it over many years.

We arrived in Puducherry, on the eastern coast of Tamil Nadu, to the sights of a former French colonial town, with hugely different architecture to that we had seen so far. This is a picture of St Mary's Catholic Church. There is still a community of French people here, but the largest population is still Tamil. I had long wanted to visit Puducherry after seeing the film *Life of Pi* which is set and filmed here.

Our next stop was Thanjavur, to stay in an eco lodge, the grounds of which were filled with birds, and chipmunks and a resident Indian peacock, which is the national bird of India. Our trip included early morning yoga, nature and bird watching trips and twice daily trips to the tea house for

delicious masala chai, which was a staple drink for the whole trip. We also took the opportunity to cycle into the village to visit a family sari weaving business, with a comical encounter with a herd of goats on our return.



Local traffic!

During our trip to visit the local weavers, I had to give my group a short talk on how a loom worked and the basics of weaving, as none of the Tamil weaving family could speak English.



Sari being woven.



The sample silk saris were exquisite in colour and design.

Our next stop was to visit the temples of Kumbakonum. Our senses were overwhelmed with the highly painted temples, the flower markets, and traffic, animals, and noise levels.



We moved onto Chettinad with its history of wealthy trading people (Chettiars) with links to Burma (now Myanmar). The Chettiars built lavish mansions during the 1800's which now stand empty. Some are now being renovated and converted into hotels. Whilst there, we visited a family of cotton sari weavers and tile makers. I did buy some cotton sari material, but my sewing ability will need to be improved before I can use the fabric I bought!



Cotton sari being woven.

This summary of my trip would not be complete without a few words on food and transport. I was certainly pleased that I did not have to negotiate the traffic myself as the fast weaving of the tuk tuks, bikes, motorbikes, cows, and goats on all

the roads was hair raising to say the least!



A typical thali.

The food on our trip was always delicious and varied, with dosas, daal, and curries and breads of many types, however, by the end of the trip I was looking forward to some simpler fayre on my return!

Next, we got up early for a long journey into Kerala to the Western Ghats and Periyar National Park, where we stayed on a spice plantation and saw black peppercorns, nutmeg, cardamom growing in the garden of our hotel. We were treated to a demonstration of traditional Keralan dancing and a trip into the National Park with the hopes of seeing tigers and elephants. Sadly, these animals proved elusive, but we did see langurs, giant squirrels, bison, water buffalo and black kites to mention a few.



Me on an early morning hike in search of elephants.

Then we headed off to Lake Vembanad, to pick up 4 houseboats for our group to spend a day and a night on the water. I spent a glorious afternoon birdwatching with help from the local guides. I am not an avid “twitcher,” but I certainly enjoyed the afternoon spotting the birds I have not seen on my travels so far. My highlight of the trip was seeing hundreds of bee eaters.



Typical view from the houseboat.



The main boat, where we ate all our meals, which we christened the mothership!

Now off to our final destination, Fort Cochi. Having first been under the control of Portugal, then the Dutch and finally the British, Fort Cochi has an interesting history and lots of different architecture.

After a delayed flight back to England



Our mid-17th century hotel, a good example of the Portuguese colonial buildings in the town.



Paradesi Synagogue, dated 1568, is the last active synagogue in Fort Cochi.

my cats were incredibly pleased to see me and as you can see below, both were vying for a prime spot on my lap.



It was an incredible trip, and I am certainly considering a further trip to India in the future.

Thanks from the Royal Berkshire NHS

I just wanted to say a big massive thank you for you amazing donation brought in earlier this week of blankets and baby clothes. Your blankets and baby cardigans are exceptional and it is easy to see the love and care that was taken into creating these items. We would be very humbled and privileged if you can continue to donate to us in this way. Our patients particularly like the larger blankets.

Once again, thank you so much for your lovely donation and please do pass on a special thanks to the lady who dropped them off.

With best wishes,

Sukhi Sidhu

*Royal Berkshire Hospital Donations
Co-ordinator*

Ed: If you would like to have a look at the RBH donations leaflet to see what they need and the sizing criteria etc, check out the **RESOURCES** page on the **KVG** web site.

kennet-valley-guild.com



A History of Silk

Author: Sue Carter



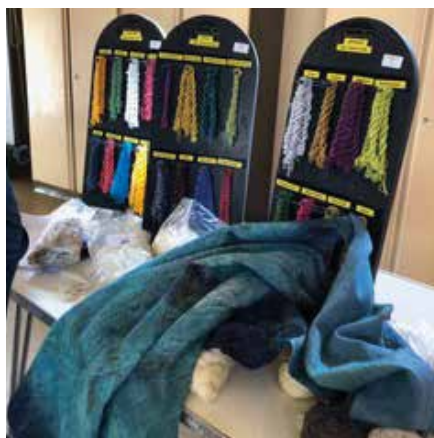
On a beautiful sunny Saturday in March, the Guild welcomed Deby Robertson who is the creative

dyer behind Dyelution. Deby is a spinner, weaver, crocheter, knitter and she also showed us her amazing jacket that she had made by laying silk fibres on top of silk chiffon, wet felting using a garden hose and an electric sander!!

Deby's passion for speciality blends, mostly with silk components or hand dyed silks, absolutely shone through. She gave an amazingly informative talk and covered so many areas, I knew nothing/very little about silk and learned so much from Deby - the origin of silk, its historical importance, the silk journey across the world, types of silks, colours and dyes. Below are just a few facts I picked up during the talk.

Silk is a natural fibre, originating in China within the Yangshao culture and silk production remained confined to China until the Silk Road opened around 114 BC. Apparently, it all started when a silk cocoon fell into a cup of hot tea and a Chinese Empress pulled the threads and discovered silk! For thousands of years silk was used as currency, a

symbol of wealth and the colour of silk worn held social importance. During the Tang dynasty wearing silk was a guide to social class because of the length of time it took for one cocoon to produce enough thread for a robe! As silk was worth more than gold, Government employees were paid in silk. Greeks and Romans referred to the Chinese as 'people of silk'.



Silk cultivation reached Japan by 300AD and around 552 AD the Byzantine Empire obtained silkworm eggs (legend has it that two monks smuggled silkworm eggs out of China) and started to produce silk as did the Arabs. The Crusades took silk production to Western Europe in particular to Italy who exported to the rest of Europe. Between 5th to 15th centuries, manufacturing techniques started to take place with the spinning wheel first appearing at this



time. During the 16th Century, France joined Italy in developing a successful silk trade. The Industrial Revolution made cotton cheaper to manufacture which caused the production of silk to shrink but in the 20th century, Japan and China resumed their significant roles in silk production. China is currently the largest producer of silk, with an annual output of approximately 150,000 metric tons.

Historically natural plants or insects have been used to colour the silk. In Medieval Europe woad and meadow root were used and during the Renaissance period mordant started to be used as a fixative. During Tudor times, Cochineal bugs that feed on the prickly pear cactus were used to produce an intense maroon red. Deby told us the saying 'not got a pot to

piss in' came from the Tudor era when urine and iron sulphate were used as mordant. Apparently, the poor would put out their bowls of urine which would be collected and a coin left in its place. Queen Elizabeth I banned weavers from living within a 5 mile radius of the palace due to the stench!

Over the years many dyers have used their own specific dye names and recipes were a closely guarded secret. The names are amazing and very descriptive, Dead Spaniard (pale tan), Puke (dirty brown), Scratch face (reddy/purple).

Around 1607, King James I bought mulberry trees for every village in England to support the production of English silk but his plan was sabotaged; he was sold black



Painted silk skein

Mulberry trees rather than white and as silkworms can only survive in warmer temperate climates, his plan failed. I found this interesting as we have a very old black mulberry tree in our garden!

How silk is graded, either A or B depends on quality, appearance, thickness, filament length, lustre, evenness, colour and good sustainability.

I hadn't realised there were so many types of silk each of which has its own characteristics:

Mulberry silk is cultivated, very smooth, top quality and has a continuous thread. Produced by the mulberry silkworm, *Bombyx mori*, it accounts for the majority of silk on the market today. A single thread can be a mile long! The silkworm spends 5 days eating, 3 days spinning and then sleeps. The intact cocoons are boiled and the silk filament is retrieved.

Tussah silkworms live in wild forests in trees in South Asia. This silk has a rich texture and deep gold colour.

Peduncle silk is a variety of wild Tussah silk that comes from the 'stem' that attaches the cocoon to a branch. The caterpillar spins this stem before spinning the cocoon. It produces a natural blackish brown colour.



Tussah caterpillar

Muga silk is a variety of wild silk from Assam in India and has a natural yellowish-golden tint. It was previously reserved for Royalty. Princess Diana's wedding dress was embroidered with Muga silk.

Eri is a cultivated silkworm from India. The silk is characterised by its soft texture and natural colours which range from white to pale gold. It is often called 'Peace' silk as people think the worms are able to escape, but in fact they are often sold at markets.

Deby brought her beautiful dyed yarns with her. They were gorgeous vibrant colours, and so soft. I somehow managed to resist temptation to buy on the day, but I do keep looking at her website!

dyelution.co.uk

The 39th Annual Illinois Sheep & Crafting Festival

Author: Hollie Gavin

Over Easter we took a family holiday to visit my mum and sister in Missouri, USA. Missouri is situated in the mid-west of America, with the Mississippi River having played a significant part in the States history. My family live around an hours drive from the city of St Louis however outside of the City the state is built around agriculture, growing corn, soybean and in the past was a producer of cotton.

Whilst there we had the pleasure of attending the 39th annual Illinois Sheep and Craft Festival, just over the Mississippi River into neighbouring Illinois.

The festival reminded me very much of our Berkshire County Fayre, with a heavy focus on engaging 4H (the equivalent of Young Farmers) in rearing and showing sheep.

Sheep, whether it be for meat or wool, are not common within the mid-western States of the USA however the festival was a fantastic day, with lovely people very keen to talk to me about their breeds and crafting.

I was offered a wonderful opportunity to speak with Lois of Raspberry Meadows Farm, Missouri, who raises

Columbia sheep.

Columbias are an American breed established in 1941, being a cross between a Lincoln and Ramboulet. Columbias were bred as a dual purpose sheep for meat and fibre, specifically to support WWII efforts.

Lois, having reared Columbias for many years, explained they are a large, solid but gentle sheep ideal as range stock for upper Midwest grassland. The Columbia fleece is medium 24-30 microns and open faced.

Lois, and her husband, had a fantastic stand at the festival, showcasing her own beautiful crafts and fleece, which I was fortunate enough to buy and bring some home ready to spin.



Lois & husband with Columbia Sheep produce

The festival had a number of breeds presented for showing, including many common varieties we would see back home however also featured

American pure and cross-breeds which often towered over the little British domestic sheep.

This included the Columbia and Targhee, similar breed to the Columbia, also established as part of the War effort) as well as cross-breeds between Columbia, Corriedale and Targhee.



A Show Columbia-Targhee-Corriedale cross Ewe & Hollie.

Another wonderful part of the visit was meeting a fabulous group of spinners and weavers: The Warped & Twisted Fibre Guild, based in and around Belleville Illinois, offering demonstrations on spinning and weaving.

The ladies spent a lovely long time with me talking about their approach to our shared craft and driving forward the same enthusiastic encouragement of keeping these traditional rural crafts alive that we strive for here at our Guild.

A noticeable difference was most of the demonstrating spinners were using a Double Treadle wheel. Julie Loyet from the group, advised it's far more common to see that type of



wheel there, with few more traditional style single treadle wheels. It was also apparent Ashford wheels (one of the more common manufacturers seen in the UK) was much less popular with Louet and Kromski wheels being more widespread.

Like our guild, the *Warped & Twisted Fibre Guild* were incredibly welcoming and I am hoping to maintain a connection with them going forward, hoping joining one of their meets next time I'm in the States.

Those at our May Guild meet would have had the opportunity to see the Columbia and Taghee wool as part of our Show & Tell segment. The wool has a very different texture to what I've sun with before and I'm really looking forward to having a play around with it.



Targhee & Columbia fibre presented at the May Guild meeting.

Body Tension Loom Weaving Workshop

Author: Jo Phelps

I have so many hobbies that I was determined not to pick up any new ones, other than the spinning that I joined the guild to learn. Famous last words!

Weaving has never really grabbed my attention like other yarny crafts, but when Rebecca Connelly came to a meeting and demonstrated body tension weaving I was inspired. Maybe it was the simplicity of it.

Anyway, I found myself signing up for the workshop. I attended in the afternoon, so on arrival had the opportunity to have a nose at what the morning team had been up to. I was really surprised by what they had achieved in such a short time. At the same time thinking that as a total novice I would probably not have much to show at the end of the session.

I found that Rebecca explained and demonstrated just the right amount, and at each stage new equipment appeared. From a beginner point of view, I think that was a great idea, I might have felt a little overwhelmed had it all been out in one go.

We set up our looms, chose our yarns and off we went.

We had just the right amount of

choices to make, which colour yarns, and when to use them, to feel like the design was our own, but not so many that I couldn't make a decision.

I think this was the perfect workshop for a beginner. The timing was just right, and there was no pressure to keep up. I really enjoyed learning the new skill and I did come away with some fabric! It's not perfect, I was trying different things as they came up in conversation with others around the room. It was a great environment for picking up hints and tips from the other more experienced weavers too.

I discovered that I'm a beater and I'd be good at making rugs.

Maybe my son will get that guitar strap after all.

Ed: I recently bought some weaving yarn from UPPINGHAM YARNS. I chose 2/17 Nm (2-Ply) lambswool by Z.Hinchliffe.

The colour range is very comprehensive and the entire online buying process was simple and the delivery prompt.

If you've got any companies to recommend to our members, I can add them to the RESOURCES page on the KVG web site and to the next edition of The Shuttle.

**Just email me at
KVShuttleEditor@gmail.com
Many thanks, Nicky.**

Body Tension Loom Weaving Workshop Report

Author: Carol Hubbard



Back in November, our Guild members were treated to a lovely and interesting speaker called Rebecca Connolly who had travelled to us from Cirencester in the Cotswolds to give us a talk about Body tension weaving. We were fortunate for Rebecca to agree to return to Newbury to teach a body tension weaving workshop on Sunday 6th April at Speen Parish Hall.

Her talk had been inspiring so I signed up for the morning session intrigued to learn the technique myself. Rebecca brought with her all the necessary equipment we would need. A heddle each, lots of clamps, pegs, shuttles, cones of Shetland for

us to use for the warp and lots of balls and skeins of different types of yarns for us to experiment with for the weft and lots of examples of her own work to show us and different designs that can be produced.

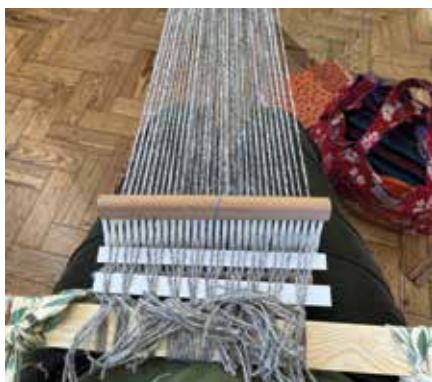
After an introduction chat and a demonstration on how to set up a body tension loom, we all set to and started clamping the pegs to the tables to allow us to begin winding the warp. We worked the yarn through the slots in the heddle and looped around the pegs about a meter apart. I found this process quite therapeutic, and the hall became quiet whilst we were all busy concentrating. Once the heddle was full, we secured the yarn at one end to allow the other ends threads to be cut. This allowed us to then



take a thread from the slot to thread through the adjacent central hole – this allows the shed to be created by lifting or pushing down the heddle.

Once the warp was completed to this stage we introduced the body tension element. We were able to take a strip of fabric and fit this around our waist by tying the ends around a flat stick and tie off the ends of the warp onto the stick. The back end of the warp remained on the clamped peg. We used cut strips of card to spread the warp evenly. Our aim was to create a balanced weave. I chose just three colours to weave three blocks of colour.

I managed to achieve this by the end of the morning session. I was pleased with the result. Everyone created something unique and individual to their own personality, and they all looked amazing!



Rebecca is a highly respected skilled weaver, spinner and dyer and was a great teacher and very skilled at imparting her knowledge. I would just like to say thank you to Anne Reddan for organising the workshop. It's a huge amount of effort to organise the Guild workshops which allow us the opportunity to learn new skills. It was great fun, and I enjoyed the session immensely.

rebeccaconnollydesign.com

Ukraine effort

As you know we send items to Ukraine for refugees and for soldiers.

There is a desperate need for amputee socks both for arms and legs.

I will be printing out and bringing some patterns to the Guild meetings but in the meantime you can find a pattern at <https://suzies-yarnie-stuff.blogspot.com/2009/11/amputees-residual-limb-covers-aka-stump.html>

Although we ask for dark coloured, woollen socks for soldiers on the front line, for the amputees, we ask for the softest, brightest acrylic yarn you have please.

Thank you for everything that you donate. It is very gratefully received.

Jennifer Thompson

Wonderwool Wales 2025

Author: Meg Crowther

On Friday 25th April I loaded up Clara (the car) and headed out to collect Rosie at 9am and we drove up to Builth Wells for Wonderwool Wales.

It was a smooth journey and we arrived at the Royal Welsh show-ground at 1.30pm, much earlier than anticipated. We sat in the exhibitors car park to eat our lunch until it was time to go and find the Braid Society stand and help to set up the display for the weekend.

Once that was all sorted out we caught up with a few friends, one being Deby Robertson from Dyelution who was the speaker at the March guild meeting, and of course everyone from Wingham Wools. After settling in at our B&B in Rhayder we walked to the local pub to meet our friend and ex-Guild member Yvonne for dinner. It was a lovely evening catching up with Yvonne but a bit of a late night!

Saturday morning dawned fair and we got down to the show-ground in good time to make an essential pot of coffee before the show opened. It was pretty cold, four layers of clothing required and the rain mostly held off. The day was really busy and we sold out of a couple of items. The Braid Society doesn't go with the aim of selling, more to promote the Society, so there is only a smallish stock but it was good to see how popular the stand was as well as the booklets and kits.

After another sociable evening on Saturday, Sunday was a quieter day;

more friends dropping by to chat to us and lots of interested visitors.

The great thing about these shows is meeting so many interesting people from all over the country and beyond, there is never enough time to chat to everyone sadly, but with five people on the stand no-one was left unattended for long.

I'd love to tell you about all the interesting stalls that were there but I didn't get time to visit many, other than Wingham Wools, Dyelution and Cornwall's Perran Yarns for some interesting non-wool yarn. Good news for my bank balance, and if I'm honest I didn't mind much because I'd had such a lovely couple of days.

Once the show closed it was a case of packing the stand away before saying goodbye to Wingham and Deby and then getting to the car to try and escape the car park. All that was left was the journey home; the weather was kind with a stunning sunset to be seen in the rear view mirror. After dropping Rosie off I finally got home around 9.30pm. A long day after a very nice weekend end and the journey felt so much easier with such good company in the car.

Rosie's informed me that Wingham Wools will be at Southern Wool on 30th-31st Aug, so start saving now and keep the dates clear. Then start saving again for Wonderwool 2026! I can highly recommend the show, there is so much to see, loads of workshops and heaps of inspiration for everyone.

wonderwoolwales.co.uk

Huddersfield Charity for Ukraine

Author: Linda Scurr

I want to say a really BIG thank you to Jenn T because Jenn asked Rosie and me to drop off some charity donations in Huddersfield. I found it very emotional. The garage was only about 2 miles from the weaving mill we were visiting so it was no bother at all. We will be going again in a couple of months to get the blankets that Pav is weaving so we will be more than happy to take more boxes.



The front of the charity was a garage which had 3 new classic VW campers which I really enjoyed looking at. I don't want one. Behind the showroom was probably the workshop but it was full of a Tesco

delivery. Floor to ceiling. Rosie will remember how many thousand blankets had been donated by Tesco and delivered that morning in an articulated lorry. 4,000 I think. Behind the workshop was a Gym (gutted of gym equipment) again floor to ceiling full of donations. It was very well organised with pallets colour coded as to which town/area they would be delivered to. Deborah and Timothy who organise it all were fascinating to talk to. They have done very careful research to make sure what they send gets to the right



people. There was a full pallet of animal food for animals rescued by two young girls on the front line. The bit that hit home for me was the boxes labelled Trenches. They were full of towels and washing kit. and a little treat in each box. A few sweets, a picture drawn by school children and tiny crochet hearts. Deborah explained that not all donations are welcome, especially broken toys and dirty clothes. Deborah and two other volunteers were doing 60 loads of

washing a week at one stage. We think of the cost of getting our donations to the centre but their cost to deliver the stuff is between £4 and 6,000 each trip. Deborah had been on one trip where she engaged with some of the children and a Man who had lost everything when his house was blown up gave her a tin Sunflower out of his garden. It had bullet holes through it. Another hit home moment for me because Nuffield hospital in Oxford has very similar sunflowers outside. The ones outside Nuffield are standing tall and proud. Those in Ukraine are laying in tatters shot to pieces on the ground. All round the showroom were small items returned from Ukraine as a thank you and a large photo of a soldier that had died. Such emotional stuff. It makes you grab the tissues just thinking about it. After we left Huddersfield we went to Cleethorpes which was seemingly a mad thing to do. We met up with Bill and Jean Skidmore of Newbury coat fame. I say MAD because they live in Rotherham, just down the road from

Huddersfield. They suggested Cleethorpes which was a 2 hour Journey in the wrong direction for all of us! Cleethorpes was good though. Rosie and I had Fish and chips on the pier. We strolled on the beach WITHOUT coats on! We didn't do much beach combing because there was a layer of black stuff in the sand presumably from the two ships that collided. I thought I may have found a couple of pieces of Jet on the beach but it turned out to be coal. We had planned to leave Cleethorpes at a sensible time so most of the journey would be in daylight, 4.00pm at the latest. but I am not very good at sensible. 4 and 5 and 6 came and went and we were still in the pub chatting to Bill and Jean. Thankfully Rosie had sat nav so we just listened to instructions. It was past 11 when I got home and poor Rosie had another 30-40 minutes back to her house. When I go to collect the blankets from the mill I am happy to take another load to the charity so please start collecting. It is a very worthy cause.



Passing on the knowledge

Linda recently spent the day with a group of primary school children. They tried spinning two weeks ago and weaving this week. They were very good and created a peg loom rug for a stool and a wall hanging. They're keeping Linda busy!



Charity donations - May update from Rosie



Once again I say a very big thank you to everyone who has given things for the charities. Now that we are not sending things to Ukraine it gives us an opportunity to help people at home. Hats, scarves and socks I take to the Salvation Army in Reading who give them to the rough sleepers, two were sleeping at the bottom of the Hexagon theatre! It may be nearly summer but it is still cold at night. I'm sure the Salvation Army in Newbury would also be pleased with donations.

At the May meeting I was given five knee rugs; two crocheted by Chris Fletcher, two from Meg using her handspun and also two scarves using Val Bedforths' handspun and Janet had put one together made up from

your squares.

Six inch squares are a really good way of using up odd bits of leftover yarn. I give the knee rugs to the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading to help them get the elderly patients out of bed and so hopefully get them home sooner. We also make premature baby cardigans for the Buscot ward, thanks to Gill. The two duck hand puppets were given to me by a friend in Hungerford for the children in hospital. All our donations are taken home when the patients and babies leave hospital so we need to keep making.

The volunteers at the hospital and the Salvation Army are always so pleased to receive our donations.

Thank you everyone.

Craft Socials

Weavers' Chat

The Guild weavers normally meet at Speen Parish Hall, Newbury, RG14 1RJ on the 4th Saturday of the month.

It is called "Weavers' Chat" but braiders are welcome with inkles, marudai etc and lace makers with pillows, as these are all forms of weaving.

All Guild members are very welcome to come along to see what we are doing and find out what weaving is all about.

All meetings run from 9.30am -1.30pm.

Subs: £4.00 towards the hall hire fee.

Dates:

28th June, 26th July, 23rd August, 27th September and 25th October.

The final meeting for 2025 will be 22nd November from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. with a shared lunch.

Please let me know if you are coming so that there is enough milk, biscuits and maybe cake!

Rosie Price

Aldbourne Braid Days

The next Aldbourne Braid Day is June 15th. Other dates for 2025 are, August 17th, October 5th, December 14th. All are Sundays.

The cost is £8.00 per head per day. Biscuits, cake and hot drinks are provided free of charge.

Please contact me for directions and so that I can keep an eye on numbers.

Sal Shepherd

Moulsford Spinning & Craft Group

We meet on the 3rd Thursday of every month at Moulsford Pavilion from 6.30pm - 10pm.

There are usually spinners, weavers, felters, a basketmaker and knitters there so do come and join us.

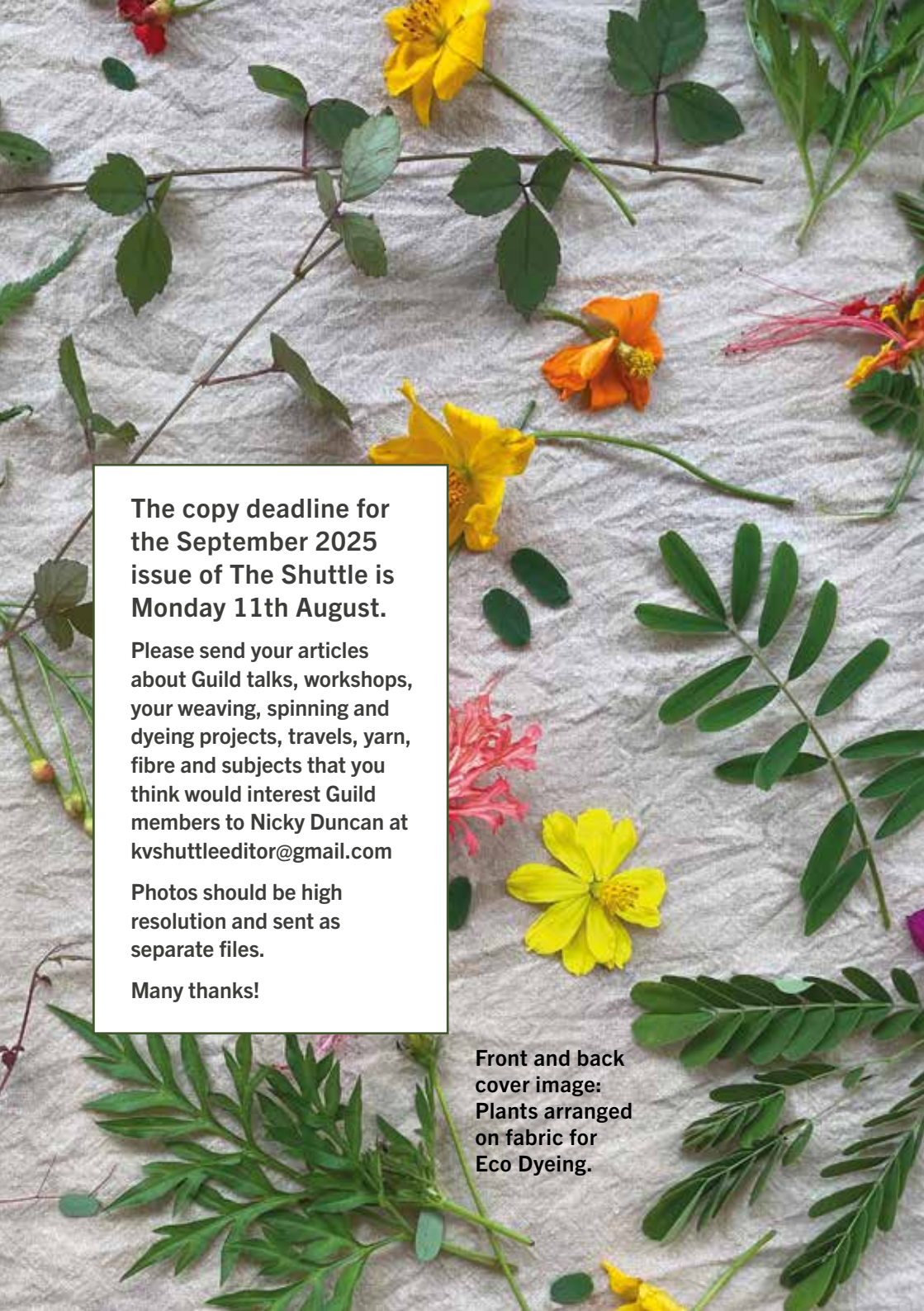
Moulsford Pavilion, The Street, Moulsford, OX10 9JD

**Linda Scurr
Rosie Price**

Newbury Crafters

Newbury Crafters normally meet on the 3rd Saturday of every month at Speen Parish Hall, Newbury, RG14 1RJ from 2 - 5 pm. Come along to this social afternoon with your own craft project and meet people with other craft interests for an exchange of ideas.

For more details contact Sue Davies.



The copy deadline for the September 2025 issue of The Shuttle is Monday 11th August.

Please send your articles about Guild talks, workshops, your weaving, spinning and dyeing projects, travels, yarn, fibre and subjects that you think would interest Guild members to Nicky Duncan at kvshuttleeditor@gmail.com

Photos should be high resolution and sent as separate files.

Many thanks!

**Front and back cover image:
Plants arranged on fabric for
Eco Dyeing.**