



of
Weavers, Spinners
and Dyers

The Shuttle

March 2025

Website: www.kennet-valley-guild.com

Facebook: @kennetvalleyguild

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 5 th Apr	<p>Guild Meeting & AGM – Shared Lunch AM: AGM Shared Lunch – please bring in items to share, with labels to say if they meet any special dietary requirements, e.g. vegetarian <i>Please ensure no peanuts in anything brought due to a member's severe allergy.</i> PM: Social</p>
Sun 6 th Apr	<p>Weaving on a Body Tensioned Loom Workshop, with Rebecca Connolly at Speen. There will be two separate sessions, AM and PM</p>
Sat 3 rd May	<p>Guild Meeting Social and 'Work on projects for exhibition together'</p>
Sat 7 th June	<p>Guild Meeting AM: Social PM: TBC</p>
Sat 5 th July	<p>Guild Meeting AM: Social PM: Textiles of the Vikings – Jen Heath</p>
Sun 6 th July	<p>Nalbinding Workshop with Jen Heath at Speen</p>
Sat 2 nd Aug	<p>Guild Meeting AM: Mini Workshops PM: Mini Workshops } more details to come</p>
Sat 6 th Sept	<p>Guild Meeting Social</p>
Sat 4 th Oct	<p>Guild Meeting AM: Social PM: TBC</p>
Sat 1 st Nov	<p>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.</p>
Sat 6 th Dec	<p>Guild Meeting AM: Social Shared Lunch PM: Annual Fashion Show.</p>

GUILD MEETINGS

The usual agenda for Guild meetings is:

10.00 a.m.	Hall open for sociable crafts
1.00 p.m.	Business Meeting
1.30 p.m.	Show and Tell
2.00 p.m.	Speaker

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.

The Speaker and Workshop Team

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Hi everyone. I hope to find you all well.

Christmas was busy in my house, but my family helped, and I managed to relax on Christmas Day. My husband arranged for a few days away for us and the dog. We headed for Sidmouth and stayed in a hotel by the sea with a sea view. We have stayed there many times before but in the past dogs were not allowed. Dogs are now very welcome there and I was impressed by little touches for dogs such as a dog bed, bowl and dog treats.

The weather for the first few days was absolutely beautiful, the sun shone, and we had some lovely walks on the promenade. It was such a change to be able to sit on a bench and watch the world go by. I visited some of the local independent shops including a craft shop with a variety of different crafts supplies on offer. Of course I had to buy a few things it's nice to gather something a bit different from my usual haul.

I attended a quilters show (I don't quilt though) and found some very talented ladies demonstrating Japanese embroidery which I found very interesting. It's very delicate and they use beautiful silk threads to embroider with. I enjoyed chatting to various stall holders and finding out about different crafts.

This is my last chairman's chat so I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone especially the committee members for your support over the last 4 enjoyable years.

Pat Christmas

AGM Agenda for April 2025:

1. Apologies
2. Agreement of minutes of the last meeting (to be found in June 2024 Shuttle)
3. Chairman's report
4. Treasurer's report
5. Election of committee members:
 - Chairman
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
6. Proposals
 - Proposal 1*
 - Extend committee positions from 2 years to 3 years
7. June Young Trophy.
8. Any other business
9. Close

GUILD DEMONSTRATIONS

For details of Guild Demonstrations, please refer to the Demonstrations Folder available at the Guild meetings or email kvgdemonstrations@gmail.com.

The demonstration year has not yet started but keep an ear out for shows that will need demonstrators. At the moment we know that we will be demonstrating at the following venues, but there will be more.

- Sat 30th/Sun 31st Aug: Southern Wool Show, Newbury Racecourse
- Sat 13th/Sun 14th Sep: Heritage Weekend, Newbury Museum

If you would like to attend a Guild demonstration day, please sign up in the folder or contact the Demonstrations Secretary by email (kvgdemonstrations@gmail.com).

It is essential that the Demonstrations Secretary knows that you will be attending to ensure that you are covered by Public Liability Insurance. Please note that the KVGSWD will under no circumstances be responsible for any theft, loss or damage caused to B. This includes use of such equipment on Guild demonstrations. Each Guild Member will be responsible for their equipment. They should check their own house contents insurance policy to see if they are covered for use of their equipment anywhere outside their homes.

Stefanie is giving up the role of Demonstrations Secretary this year, so if you are interested in taking the role on, please contact Pat Christmas. The Demonstrations Secretary does

not have to attend the demonstrations but needs to be the link between the organisers and the Guild. This ensures that the organisers provide the appropriate space and tables/chairs etc. She also needs to keep the records of which members are attending and ensure that they have all the information that they need, a suitable number of tablecloths, the A-frame and/or signs, a quantity of 'Fill the Gap' samples and anything else that is required.

Demonstrations Secretary

SHOW-AND-TELL

There is no Show and Tell report this quarter, but it should be back next time. Unfortunately Lynne Bond has had to resign from the role of Show and Tell Co-ordinator, and no one was available to take over.

Thanks to Lynne Bond for all she has done in running and organising the 'Show and Tell' at meetings and writing it up for the Shuttle Each quarter. We hope to have a replacement by next Shuttle.

GUILD TROPHIES

No trophies awarded since the last Shuttle

Dec2024: Christmas Trophy: Joint winners - Maureen Taylor and Lynne Harper

Upcoming Trophies

April 2025: June Young Trophy

May 2025: Beginner Spinners' Trophy
Spinners' Trophy
Beginner Weavers' Trophy
Weavers' Trophy

Hi everyone, firstly, many congratulations to Maureen Taylor and Lynne Harper who were joint winners of the Christmas trophy. This competition usually attracts quite a few entries, and this one was no exception. Many thanks to all who entered and beautifully modelled their items. Lynne had woven tweed and made a poncho for her husband to wear when in his wheelchair and a very fetching deerstalker hat to match. Unfortunately the hat only fitted her teddy! Maureen had woven fabric using a Rigid Heddle Loom, and made herself a beautiful, warm jacket.

The next trophy will be the June Young trophy for service to Guild. This is awarded at the AGM in memory of Roy's wife and the winner is chosen by the committee. You can however suggest anyone that you think would be a worthy recipient.

In May we have four trophies for you to compete for. Two spinning trophies and two weaving trophies.

- **The Beginner Spinners' Trophy** is for beginners and is for a small skein of yarn, any fibre, any thickness. It can be spun on a spindle, a wheel or an e spinner.
- **The Spinners' Trophy** is anyone, but historically this competition has attracted very few entries in spite of there being very many spinners in Guild. Now, I know that lots of our members use hand carders, hackles, wool combs, blending boards and drum carders and would love to ask all of you to make a blend of fibres from your stash, spin a small skein and enter the competition. I have my fingers crossed 🍀.
- **The Beginner Weavers' Trophy** is for beginners, either those on the course or anyone teaching themselves from books or You Tube etc. Any of your beginner pieces/samples are eligible.
- **The Weavers' Trophy** is for anyone, as yet no theme has been decided. I will be talking to the weavers at the Feb Weavers' Chat at Speen to see whether we can come up with an inspiring challenge for this year's trophy and will hopefully be able to let you know at the March meeting.

Jennifer Thompson

Welcome to New Members.

Welcome to the following member who has joined the Guild since the last Shuttle was published. Watch out for them at meetings, and please talk to them and introduce yourselves to them.

Sylvia Beeton	Susan Carter	Edel Izquierdo
Sheila Stansfield	Alison Tarrant	

GUILD TALKS and WORKSHOPS

Hello everyone, I hope you are enjoying the programme we have put together so far. We have endeavoured to cover our core skills of weaving, spinning and dyeing and have been lucky enough to have had two in-house talks by Tricia and Maureen as well. We would

welcome your feedback about the programme so far and would welcome your suggestions for future speakers and workshops.

Also, if you have a particular skill or area of interest please let us know as other members would be interested in what you do. I clearly remember two memorable in-house talks since joining the guild, Linda Scurr gave an entertaining account of her life as a shepherdess and maker and more recently Pat Foster gave an interesting talk about silk.

We really would welcome your suggestions so that we can continue to put together an interesting and varied programme for you. Please speak to myself, Lynne or Jennifer. Thank you.

Anne Reddan, Programme Team

Obituaries.

Sadly, we have heard of two members, and also a past speaker at one of our meetings who have passed on. Jan Shailes, a founder member, and Margaret Jubb, a long term member, passed on within a day of each other during January this year. Susan Dye, who presented an excellent talk and workshop on dyeing left us in November last year. We have a few words from those who remember them.

Memories - Jan Shailes

I first met Jan Shailes in the mid-seventies through my brother's band partner, we would often meet up at either my brother's or Darryl's house and at folk clubs as we were all interested in similar things. I had my first experience of spinning in a tent in the middle of a very wet field at the Berkshire Midsummer Folk Festival when rain stopped play to a degree. Jan and John used to take the Kennet Valley Canal Trusts sales and information tent to many venues and they were there, so we had all gathered in the trust's tent for shelter, Jan had her spinning wheel there so whilst the guys were jamming I had a go at spinning. I didn't take it up at that point as I was busy with work, folk music and amateur dramatics which took up most of my spare time. Over the next few years, I didn't see as much of them because I was working long days commuting to London and Darryl and his wife moved to Yorkshire.

Fast forward a couple of years and I was going up to visit my friends and Darryl asked if I would mind giving their friend a lift up, it turned out the friend was Jan, and I think that was one of the 'quickest' trips to Leeds I ever made. I had started spinning by then and Jan had started horse riding, which I had done for a long time in my youth, we didn't stop talking all the way up, and all the time we were staying with our friends and the drive back home again. From then onwards I went to many of Jan's spinning weekends learning different techniques in spinning and eventually giving her a hand with some of her

students. When she had her hands full with someone, I would help out if another person got in a muddle. Soon after that, she introduced my mother and I to Kennet Valley Guild. I had been a member of the West Surrey Guild but couldn't get to many meetings as they met during the week, from that point on I never looked back, Jan had introduced me to some of my closest friends without realising it. I remember going to her 70th birthday get-together and it only seems like yesterday, we were all gathered at her house in Kingsclere and just chatting, spinning and knitting in the garden, strawberries and cream always reminds me of Jan rather than tennis as her birthday was close to Wimbledon fortnight.

Jan was there through the hardest times for me when I lost my father, then when my mother was ill and when she died, without her and my then guild friends I would have found it incredibly difficult to cope. I have to thank Jan for so many things in my life and I will miss her immensely, the day at Guild when she didn't know who I was a very sad day as I realised what was happening and knew that the Jan we all knew and loved was slowly leaving us. Jan gave so much to so many people, she shared her love of all things woolly, she taught so many of us all she knew about spinning and she was a good friend to so many people. Without Jan and John Shailes we wouldn't have the Kennet Valley Guild, it started in their house back in the seventies, we have so much to thank her for.

Meg Crowther

I first saw Liz Watts doing spinning demonstration in Shaw Church. Then Liz, **Jan**, John and a few others set up the guild. There were already local county guilds surrounding us, so we became the Kennet Valley Guild of Spinners, Weavers & Dyers.

Joan Lay, myself and a couple of others went to Jan and John's home in Thatcham on the very first learning to spin course. Jan was the teacher and John more on the servicing equipment side, a little like Roy does today. They and a few of their friends kept sheep, often in the local old church yards (with special permission). Jan taught us to choose softer downland breed of sheep with wool to make things to wear near our skin. Leave the rougher types for wall hangings, etc. Different parts of the sheep fleece can vary slightly from head to feet and tail and depending on what side the sheep sleep. The average spinner doesn't need to worry about it, just put the smelly bits on your garden and comb out any debris (i.e. straw, etc). The length and colour of the fibre (staple) can also vary. Commercially they try to keep colours separate but we can choose mixed colours like Jacob sheep or dyes to use on white sheep's wool. The guild often does workshops using natural plant dyes, spinning, weaving, felting and many other courses.

Over the years Jan and I took on various roles from Chairperson, teacher, factotum. Sadly ill health and age took its toll but we were still able to continue being members. Jan and I were even invited to cut the 40th Anniversary cake at the guild party in Oct 2019. It's sad to remember the guild members we have lost but nice to know the guild goes on from strength to strength.

Maggy Bradd

I phoned Jan to find out about the guild and she said, 'We have a spinning night tomorrow at our house why don't you come'. I went and I've been a guild member ever since (1982). Jan was a wonderful teacher of spinning, and I had quite a few lovely fleeces from her. John was a weaver, and I liked to see what he was doing. They also used to have Cyril Lyskey come over from Australia with fleeces (in the days when you could). I still have one of the Corridales in the garage! Jan and John were part of the group who set up Kennet Valley Guild. So, so pleased that I made that phone call.

Rosie Price

There are so many fond memories of Jan too. As someone said at the January Guild meeting, Jan was one of the guild founders. Jan is the reason we are all here. Jan is responsible for over 45 years of guild fun. Teaching so many people to spin and how to do broomstick crochet.

My all-time favourite memory of Jan was when she came to demonstrate at the Vintage event in Henley. I always admired Jan for being so well turned out and well groomed, poised and elegant. Most of us demonstrating had been to vintage before so it was important that Jan was sent off to explore the event. You must have a go on the train Jan. Everyone has to have a go on the train. The train is a proper steam train and has to put a lot of effort into getting back up the hill. Jan had stood in the coal cart behind the train. It wasn't just the image of Jan running back up the hill hair all over the place covered in soot but the addition of her joyfully yelling excitedly 'I have just seen a herd of 3-legged deer'. We all dissolved into fits of laughter. Vintage is held in a 1000-acre estate that rehomes 3-legged deer from Tiggywinkles. Jan had indeed seen a herd of 3-legged deer. It was the joy of such demonstrations and the help that Jan gave so generously to all of us that I will remember Jan for most.

Linda Scurr

Many years ago, I met Jan through the Guild. I was a novice spinner and had bought a second-hand spinning wheel. I was struggling with it and Jan invited me to her house to spin with her and have a look at the wheel. Jan spotted problems, replaced various parts and generally worked her magic on the wheel. It was so much better, and I found the joy of spinning rather than fighting with the wheel. She became a good friend and was generous with her help and knowledge. I will always be grateful to her.

Julie Boorman

I only knew Jan for 11 short years and I'm looking forward to reading memories of her from people who knew her for far longer. We did quickly become friends after our first meeting at Guild. Lynne and I had picked up a guild leaflet at the Knitting and Stitching show and, because we were both free that February in 2013, we decided to come along. Lynne had very sensibly brought something to do. I had not. I decided I would just have to wander around and chat and I met some lovely welcoming people. I particularly remember Julie

and Avril from that first meeting and, of course, Jan. I sat with her, and we chatted, and I asked about learning to spin. So, suffice it to say that we began our spinning journey with Jan at our fortnightly spinning group in Royal Wootton Bassett and at Guild. We became hooked very quickly. Jan was a great teacher.

We also visited Jan in her homes and thoroughly enjoyed spinning with her and chatting and learning all about her travels and her sheep. Sadly, in her later days in her care home, she no longer knew us but was still able to enjoy our spinning sessions and even show her carers how to spin. We treasure these memories.

I have some tangible memories of Jan in items that I bought from her or that she gave me. A quirky sheep door knocker that she loved which now adorns the door of my granddaughter's Wendy house. It makes a very satisfying bang. I also have a couple of Jan's spindles which I bought from her even though I had no idea how to use one at the time. Jan was a good friend, and we miss her.

Jennifer Thompson

Like Jennifer, I only knew Jan for a very short time compared to many, but memories of her friendliness and her joy in sharing her knowledge of all things woolly will always remain with me. Jenn and I had decided that the next stage in our craft journey had to be to learn to spin. However, I was so busy with work that I knew I wouldn't be able to attend any formal courses. We went along to our first Guild meeting in the hope that we might find someone to teach us. After chatting with us Jan said that she and her friend, Mary met up to spin every other Wednesday at Mary's house with some others, and would be delighted for us to join them. To my amazement, Mary lived only 10 minutes from my house! I took a day off work, and we went along – just the beginning of many delightful days spent spinning, and they didn't mind that I could only go when it fitted in with my job. Jan delighted in teaching others to spin and in seeing them progress and try things out. It was a privilege to have known her.

Lynne Harper

Memories of Margaret Jubb

I met Margaret outside the ladies at Newbury Agricultural Show. I was wearing my Guild apron, and she wanted to know about spinning. She used to have rescue dogs and one of the ones she had at the time was very fluffy and she wanted to spin it. So, she came to guild and joined when we were at Shaw. She used to mix the dog hair with fleece. She lived at Yattendon, and we did a talk and demonstration at the primary school.

Rosie Price

Margaret was a true country woman who had a great sense of humour and was full of funny stories. Many years ago she had a pet monkey. I think it was called Hazel. One day after a walk up on the downs it was getting dark and Hazel shot up a tree and refused to come down. Margaret unable to go home without her parked her car underneath waiting for daylight when she knew the monkey would come back down. In the middle of the night a policeman knocked on her window and asked her what she was doing. I am sure he was taken aback by Margaret's response..... I am waiting for my monkey to come down from the tree. I would have liked to be there for that conversation.

Margaret was passionate about her animals and when one night a fox came into the garden and caused uproar amongst the chickens, she spent ages looking for them. Not easy as Margaret was losing her sight and lived in a very dark area. Sadly, Margaret didn't find the chickens so eventually gave up and went to bed. To her surprise, the dogs, and chickens were all upstairs on the bed having followed the stray cat. That is where they all slept overnight. Margaret's love of her dogs saw her spin and knit two beautiful dog fur jumpers and when it comes to needle felting Margaret's black bear used over 2 black Welsh mountain fleeces. It was a life size masterpiece.

Linda Scurr

Remembering Susan Dye

We welcomed Susan to our Guild in June 2023 for a talk about natural dyeing and a madder dyeing workshop the following day. She gave an absorbing talk about her work with natural dyes, and I clearly remember the display of dyed materials and workbooks she had brought with her. The workshop was equally memorable, Susan's knowledge was extensive, but she was also curious and humble enough to admit that she was learning alongside us as there was always something new to learn. Her calm guidance, and clear instructions meant that we were all able to produce a range of shades of madder from different sources such as dried roots and powder.

We were incredibly fortunate that Susan was able to visit us as, a year later, she began to experience health problems which were eventually diagnosed as terminal cancer. Susan died on 4th November 2024 and as I dig up my madder roots this year I will think of Susan and her contribution to the world of natural dyeing and, along with many others, feel glad that I had the chance to know her even if only for a short while.

Although the online shop is currently closed, Susan's website, Natures Rainbow (www.naturesrainbow.co.uk), contains a wealth of information about growing and using dye plants.

Anne Reddan

ARTICLES

January Meeting: Mini Workshops.

January saw the hall full of members being busy with one or other of the workshops, along with the usual social spinning and chat in the hall, and in the foyer.

Yet again our members came up with interesting and enjoyable crafts. There were a couple of the subjects that were new to many, and this was obvious by the number of members signing up for these workshops.

The morning workshops started fairly promptly, and everyone was very absorbed in their projects that the end time was not as prompt!! It was mainly the call of food that caused the workshops to finish.

Unfortunately, I don't have descriptions from participants for all of the workshops, and have filled in where necessary from my observations.

Bargello – Jenny Gribble: Jenny ran a fascinating session on bargello embroidery. Many members were not sure what the workshop entailed, but Jenny had provided everyone a kit of parts, and all seemed to enjoy it. She did swap kits with Linda Scurr (see below) and it was interesting to see Linda's subsequent interpretation.

Spindle Spinning for Beginners – Janet Dunbar: I have spindles, in fact quite a few beautiful spindles, BUT unfortunately, I don't know how to spin using one. I have tried. I have actually shown how they work to two whole classes of 10-year-olds at the school of one of my grandsons. I have explained how they work to visitors at Newbury museum's heritage days and watched at Guild how people use them to effortlessly spin beautiful yarn. Still, I couldn't grasp the technique. Imagine my delight when I realised that Janet, (one of the people I watch spinning effortlessly!) was going to do a mini workshop in January.

The day arrived. I brought my collection of spindles and some hairy Shetland fibre as suggested by Janet. What a great teacher. She very patiently went over the basics. Who knew you needed a band on your wrist to stop the spare fibre getting tangled in the spinning? I'd never noticed that before. What a difference it made. She explained how to tie a leader to the spindle or to use fibre to make one. How the spindles differed. Top hooks, bottom hooks, supported spindles, Turkish spindles. Then we were off!

I still couldn't do it at first but after trying my various spindles I found the one that worked for me and very gradually I am beginning to be able to make a continuous and relatively consistent thread. It's still early days and I am trying to do a bit most days but finally I can do it. It was a brilliant mini workshop so huge thanks again to Janet.

Jennifer Thompson

Finger weaving – Kath Clouston: Kath introduced a method of braiding in which the weaving is done completely by hand. The aim of the session was to create scarves for teddy bears (or maybe just bookmarks!) although the same technique could also create larger items. Watching from the outside it looked like a more advanced and complicated form of flat plaiting, and the results looked interesting.

Ragrug Hearts – Lynne Harper: Using the hooky method of rag rugging, this introduced that concept of rag rugs in a way that could be finished as Christmas tree (or other) decorations, or made into a brooch. The design was marked on hessian (of a rather venerable age, having been purchased by my grandmother over 60 years ago) and strips of fabric provided for the hooking. Everyone demonstrated excellent skills at the rag rugging, and most finished in the time, or very nearly did so.

Moving around during lunch, the afternoon sessions were prepared. During this we all wished Roy a delayed Happy 90th Birthday (New Year's day) and enjoyed a piece of cake, and some 'fizz' in his honour. When we did manage to start participants enjoyed the afternoon subjects.

Macramé – Sue Davies and Jo Tuttle: Both Jo and Sue had been so inspired by the Macramé session in Jan 2024, that they had carried it further, and were willing to run a session his year. The design this year was a macramé leaf. It links nicely to the theme of the exhibition this year.

Lucet – Sally Shepherd: I had an enjoyable afternoon learning how to make a lucet braid. Sally showed us a variety of her own braids and talked about the history of the lucet, explaining that they were used by the Vikings and in medieval times also. Using a lucet requires good coordination and a nifty wrist action as it is turned repeatedly, rotating in a left to right direction as the braid is formed. My first braids were lumpy, bumpy creations but after a while it became more of a smooth and relaxing movement. We were also shown how to include a gimp to make a decorative braid, which adds interest to the basic braid. The braids themselves are square in construction and have a degree of stretch as well. Finished braids have many applications and being such a portable craft there is no excuse for not making good use of my stash. Many thanks to Sally for her clear explanations and endless patience as we got to grips, no pun intended(!), with coordinating our hand movements. This was an inspiring mini workshop and, overall, it was a brilliant day of learning. Thanks

Anne Reddan

Chicken Scratch Hearts – Linda Scurr: The title of this workshop had most people 'scratching' their heads. It is a form of embroidery on gingham material and is also known as Broderie Suisse (Chicken Scratch being the American term). Using two colours of thread (white and the colour of the gingham) you sew to highlight or negate

Continued on Page 20



Happy birthday Roy



Jan and Maggy cutting the Anniversary cake

Jan Shailes

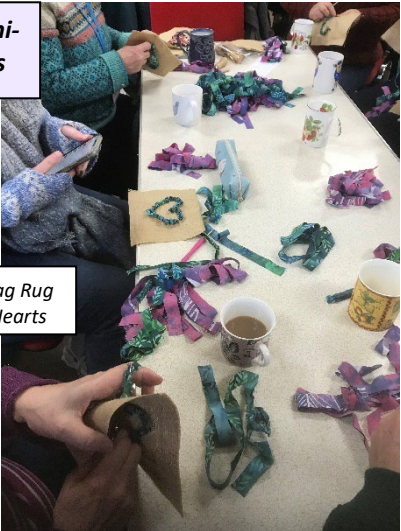


Jan showing one of the carers in the carehome how to spin



Bargello

January Mini-Workshops



Rag Rug Hearts

Not quite bargello, is it BAAAAA-gello?





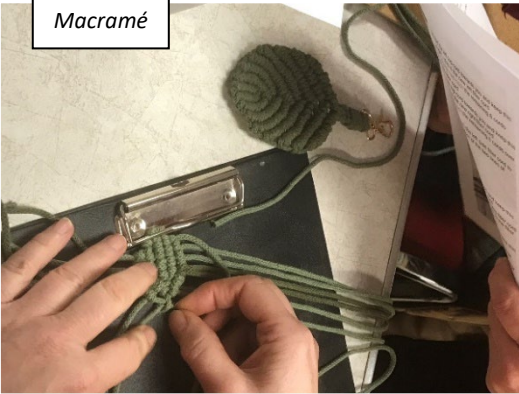
Spindle Spinning



Finger Weaving



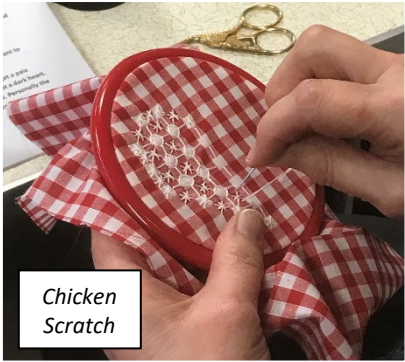
January Mini-Workshops



Macramé



Lucetting



Chicken Scratch



Double-sided Knitting



Linen products



Flax spinning with distaffs



Charity articles

A Canopy of Trees

kennet-valley-guild.com



An exhibition of work by members of the Kennet Valley Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers.

3rd - 21st September 2025



Gallery 5, West Berkshire Museum, The Wharf, Newbury RG14 5AS

A Canopy of Trees

We hope you'll be 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!

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!

The entry form is in this Shuttle.

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

Guild Exhibition 2025 Exhibit Entry Form, one form per exhibit please.

Name:		
Contact Phone Number		Please note: Personal info will not be displayed with exhibit, it is only needed in case of a problem, especially with returning the item. It will stay with the organiser only.
Contact email		
Item		
Fibre/Yarn Used		
Techniques Used		
Other Comments		

GUILD EXHIBITION 2025

'A Canopy of Trees'

- Theme:** Any interpretation of A Canopy of Trees.
- Dates:** Exhibition: Wednesday 3rd September – Sunday 21st September 2025.
Setup date: TBC.
- Venue:** Gallery 5 at the West Berkshire Museum.
- Exhibits:** **Submissions should be inspired by the theme of A Canopy of Trees and must include one or more of the Guild Core Skills:**
Weaving (including braiding, lace and macramé), Spinning & Dyeing.

Information:

- Entry forms are in the March 2025 edition of The Shuttle (printed and online) and will also be emailed to all on the Guild email list. Forms will also be available at the Guild meetings and Weavers Chats and can be handed to members of the exhibition committee, Sue Davies, Janet Dunbar, Julie Fraser or Nicky Duncan.
- **One entry form should be completed for every individual entry and emailed to Sue Davies as soon as possible, or no later than 31st July 2025.**
If you are not sure whether the exhibit will be completed in time for the exhibition, please still submit the form with a note to that fact. *Exhibits turning up on the day, without our prior receipt of an entry form, may not be accepted for exhibition.*
- The Guild Meeting before the exhibition is on Saturday 2nd August, so all exhibits should be brought along to this meeting. Or if you prefer, they can be dropped off at Nicky Duncan's house in Newbury in the lead up to the installation date.
Please email Nicky at kvgwebmaster@gmail.com to make arrangements and cc. Sue Davies.
As a last resort, last minute items may be brought to the Museum on the set-up day between 1pm and 2pm.
- All items should be in a named container, preferably a bag or box, for ease of storage.
- Information regarding collection of your exhibits from the Museum after the exhibition: TBA.
- If you have a specific objection to visitors to the exhibition handling your work, please indicate in the Other Comments section.

The Guild is not responsible for any loss of or damage to submissions when they are on the West Berkshire Museum premises or in the care of a Guild member.

January Meeting: Mini Workshops

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the colour of the square of the material. By sewing with white on a red square you can make it seem white, and vice versa. This results in results that, from a distance, can look as if you have appliquéd a piece of material onto the gingham.

Linda had provided 'kits' with the gingham, thread and embroidery hoops, and had designed a heart pattern to implement on the material in Chicken Scratch. The results were excellent and enjoyed by all.

Double-sided knitting – Jenny Smith: Double sided knitting results is a double thickness product, to those weavers amongst us, similar in concept to doubleweave. You choose two colours and one will be the base colour for one side of the knitting and the second colour for the other side.

So, if you choose Blue and white, one side would be basically blue, with a design in white and the other side would be the reverse, basically white, with the same pattern seen in blue.

Jenny gave an introduction to this technique, which requires manipulating both yarns at the same time. It sounds difficult to start with, but the results are stunning.

I must thank all of the workshop leaders for all the hard work involved in preparing these sessions, both in the preparation beforehand, and in running the sessions on the day. I must particularly thank Kath, who ran a session for the third mini-workshop day in a row – we'll try to give her a day off next time!

Lynne Harper

February Meeting: Growing and Preparing Flax – Simon Cooper

On a lovely cold Saturday Simon and Ann Cooper joined us from Flaxland where they grow, prepare, spin and weave their own flax and linseed. We had a fascinating talk from them in the morning and some of us joined them for a workshop in the afternoon where we learned how to prepare and spin our own flax from a distaff we loaded with the fibres.

Simon and Ann have been running Flaxland for 18 years now and started by letting us know that flax and linseed can be used in any textile making, in anything from lace to ropes and cloth, and then also paints, oils, resins and even in our food. Simon and Ann have always worked on big farms and had the opportunity to try out these crops in smaller areas of the farms, slowly growing into the business they have today.

Flax growing goes back to 30,000BC and the plant itself has seen growing changes from a shrub like plant to a taller annual. What's lovely to see at the moment is flax making a comeback into a plastic world, where we see more people moving back towards a more sustainable way of life with the rise of more eco-friendly fabrics and a move away from fast fashion. It's lovely to see that traditional ways of life still have a part to play in our modern plastic ridden world.

The main difference between flax and linseed is the size of the plant. Linseed is grown among arable crops and is used for its seeds and oils. It's a shorter plant than flax which is taller, making it more useful for the thread like fibres contained within.

Flax has had many uses for many years and when dry can even be used to make baskets, corn dollies and sculptures, a little like willow weaving. Simon is very keen on making sails and fishing nets with more natural fibres so that we end up with less micro plastics entering the sea and poisoning the sea life within it.

Simon and Ann are also very keen on making boats in a traditional way and have experimented over the years with different designs, starting off with the conical boats that date back thousands of years. They started by making these with a cotton canvas covered with a linseed/flax oil-based paint over the wooden skeleton of the boat to make it watertight. But the cotton would easily break quite quickly and become brittle. They soon found that flax was the superior material, leading them to grow their own for future use.

The ancient Egyptians used flax for many purposes and has been found in many artifacts within tombs and in the wrapping of mummies. They would also get children to spin and ply flax by hand, making very fine yarn that was expensive and suitable for the wealthy of the time.

The first evidence of flax use in the UK was found in Wiltshire, around the area of Silbury Hill and Avebury on archaeological digs in the area, dating back thousands of years. Quite a long history has since been lost to time, but thankfully knowledge of flax growing, spinning and weaving is now on the rise as people take back up the older arts and crafts again.

Flax, like wool, can also be dyed and there is plenty of evidence of clothing in museums from nobility that has been dyed in rich colours suitable only for the wealthiest of society. However, we do also have evidence of more utilitarian clothing as well for the normal person, just not as richly dyed and also more well-worn.

When the Romans came to Britain, they showed people the process of retting the plant fibres to get to the fibre and then turn that into cloth. All flax at this time would have been

spun with a drop spindle. When you look at the Bayeux Tapestry, you can just see the amount of work that's gone into it, with every fibre hand spun, taking many, many hours!

When we move forwards to the 1500's all sail cloth was made from flax and hemp, and this was described as the petrol of the time. Henry VIII made sure people were growing flax in good quantities to make sails for his war ships. Most cloth came over from Brittany before this point. Even lace was made from flax in the early days before cotton and was used to show the wealth a person had in the ruffs and lace cuffs of the time.

We then move on to needing so much flax that we imported it from Russia and a lot of this ended up in Dundee mills for spinning into yarn and then into cloth.

The use of flax started to slow down once cotton was discovered, which was easier to spin and also finer. Plus, it made it very handy that it was slave driven so ultimately cheaper as well, so it slowly took over from flax which never really recovered.

Simon showed us some fascinating photos of some of the machinery used for spinning flax, built in the 1850's and still in use today in India! It's crazy to think that we'd make anything now that would still be working in 200 years! This really showed the build quality of times past.

Fun fact: HMS Victory had 15 tonnes of fabric above deck! That's a mind-boggling amount of cloth and rope!

You're able to grow your own flax in a relatively small space, a metre square plot will give you enough flax to make a tea towel. Plus, the added bonus is you can keep flax in its dried form for as long as you like, meaning if you have a smaller space, you can keep a stock of it each year until you have enough to spin what you need!

Flax is quite happy growing anywhere that isn't solid clay, you just need to sow it so that every seed grows evenly, and the plant grows up in one stem, rather than trying to shoot out the sides. You'll want all your stems to be the same thickness, so being careful during planting is important. You'll need around 2000 seed to a square metre of soil as you get one stem per seed. In weight it'll be around 12 grams to a square metre so that it's tightly packed in. You can divide the seeds into 8 lots and place into cultivated ground. Once you place them in you walk over them to pack them down in the soil. Make sure this is ground that has been used to grow something else previously and that it's not been freshly composted as the flax will grow too tall and fall over.

Plant your seeds out in April and you'll start to see flowers by June. The beautiful blue flowers come out in the morning and die off by the evening, with more opening the next

morning. Flax also doesn't like to get too hot, so in the UK we get quite good flax growing weather!

Once the flax is ready to harvest, you have about 2 months to do so once the plants move to a golden green colour and the seeds move from white to brown. When you're pulling flax, you pull it directly from the ground and lay it out for retting. This process weathers the flax in the fields, and it actually grows some mould, and this then helps to break down the pectins and gums inside the plant so you're able to get to the fibres inside.

You can also use water retting and this makes the fibre whiter when it's complete. The darker colour you see in flax fibres is actually the colour of the mould during the retting process of laying it out to dry. The good thing is, you can re-rett flax several times and then in its dry form you can keep it for years. It's quite a remarkable plant!

In the afternoon we were shown how to dress a distaff with the long flax fibres, and then we split off into drop spindle spinning and those on wheels. I managed to make myself a rather hairy flax single on my wheel and there were some amazing attempts throughout the afternoon with constant guidance on hand from Simon and Anne.

What an amazing day!

Trixie Holmes

We can all recognise that some days are better than others. February 1st Guild meeting is one of the good days that I had been looking forward to and it didn't disappoint. I met Simon at the TRAD boat rally, last July so I knew we were in for a great talk and workshop. Both will inspire me for a long time to come.

Breaking with tradition of having guild talks in the afternoon, I set off early to ensure I didn't arrive late for the talk scheduled for the morning. Simon and Ann from Flaxland have been involved in flax since 2008 and brought a vast array of slides and exhibits bringing hands on textiles and visual experience to an excellent and very thorough talk about history, process and growing of Flax.

Brilliant. I have been to several talks and workshops in the past, but this was special, and I learnt so much more than I expected to. Early on in the talk we were told about the difference between Linseed and flax. What we drive past in the countryside is mostly shorter Linseed grown for seed. Flax for fibre is much taller. There were some beautiful slides of boats covered in Linen with the sun shining through the material creating amazing patterns on the water. I found the boat photos magical. There were historical pictures of Flax being grown, enormous Flax stacks looking like traditional haystacks before balers

were invented. Photos of flax, being processed in retting ponds, photos of looms, and photos of linen in use as sails on ship and boats.

We were acquainted with wonderful words such as stook, retting, hackling, distaff, It made me wonder what sort of life my Ancestors had. They were mostly flax dressers and farmers. (600 years ago) A hard life no doubt.

signed up for the afternoon course as I am still struggling with my hands which I hadn't have spells of going on strike and annoying me. On the day though I was given the option to join in and had a truly wonderful time. There was a demonstration on how flax is prepared with a demonstration of traditional tools and simpler small-scale tools that are readily available to someone who just wants to do a bit of processing at home. We were shown how to dress a distaff and it is the first time that I have actually managed to dress a distaff with it looking reasonably presentable. I got down to spinning, not very well, but was pleased that I managed to empty the distaff onto a bobbin without too many lumps and bumps and no wastage left on the distaff.

I am very tempted to have a go at growing some flax but the likelihood of it surviving a full-scale sheep attack is unlikely. If the sheep don't get it the rabbits will. I might just cut out the processing bit and buy some flax ready to go!

Linda Scurr

Respecting Other's Creations

Meg stood up at the Feb meeting and asked everyone to respect other people's creations without laughing or being critical and I want to echo that sentiment.

Many years ago, when I learnt to spin, someone on the course had already spun wool from his own sheep and knitted his own jumper. I was in awe. I thought it was beautiful. It was something I wanted to aspire to. Unfortunately, as he showed it off, other people started to say the yarn was over twisted, he hadn't mixed the Jacob colours very well. The jumper didn't fit, and he had used the wrong size knitting needles. Of course he was devastated. I was upset on his behalf and still remember that awful moment to this day. (This course had nothing to do with Kennet valley and I am sure that everyone in our guild is largely helpful and complimentary.) Ever since, I make a point of always saying something nice.

You don't have to like something to appreciate the effort that went into making it. The point is that whatever someone makes some people will love it while other people will hate it. That is what makes us individuals.

I know the guild puts on amazing exhibitions and that taking part may be daunting to newcomers. Please don't be put off. Whatever you make someone will love it and it is important to show people that we are not elite crafters. We welcome new people to join us whatever their skill sets are. We can all learn from each other. Joining the guild is the first step on the ladder, learning a new skill is step 2, making something is step 3. Demonstrating at guild events or displaying something in our exhibitions means that you are already on rung 4, and in a good position to persuade other people who still have their feet on the ground to come and join us.

Newcomers to the guild are a very important part of taking the guild forward. You all have skills you can add to the mix. You are all very welcome and you are the future.

Linda Scurr

Demonstrating at West Berkshire Heritage Open Days

Editor: This article just missed the December Shuttle.

The historic Cloth Hall of the museum was open to the public during the weekend of the 7th and 8th September (2024). We had a busy two days with a steady stream of visitors showing an interest in what we were doing. Jenn was showing people, young and not so young, how to spin yarn on a spindle or spinning wheel and she had a wide range of fibres on display for visitors to handle. These included many breeds of sheep, unusual fibres such as Quivet, cellulose fibres from plants including rose and seaweed, and different types of silk. People were encouraged to touch and appreciate the differences between the fibres.

I had examples of yarns dyed with plant material in a range of colours together with boxes of dried plant material used to produce some of the colours on display. We also demonstrated weaving from primitive to more technical. I had tablet weaving set up on a board with a post at each end and also a warp-weighted loom which visitors were encouraged to use. This was popular with the children and some adults also had a go.

Lynne demonstrated the more advanced aspects of weaving and had had a silk braid set up on an Inkle loom and also woven fabric on her small eight shaft loom. This attracted the most interest and intrigue and kept Lynne busy during the weekend explaining the mechanics of how complex patterns can be woven on a modern loom. She also had a wide range of examples of her woven garments on display. By the end of the second day, we were all flagging especially as in the final ten minutes there was an unexpected rush of

visitors who came in to shelter from a sudden shower. Would they have come to see us if they weren't dodging the rain?!

The following weekend Jenn had family visiting so just Lynne and myself returned to Newbury to demonstrate in the Town Hall. On arrival we tried all the doors, but they were shut. We were beginning to wonder if there had been a mistake until a door suddenly opened, and we were greeted by a member of the museum staff and welcomed inside. We were demonstrating in the main chamber of the Town Hall, it was an impressive, light-filled room with a chronological display of the history of the town and surrounding area displayed on tables around the room. There were several stewards in the room with us, welcoming visitors and talking about the local history. Compared to the museum where many of our visitors were families with younger children, visitors to the town hall tended to be older couples and just a few family groups with older children. I was carding fleece and people were interested to see how fibre is prepared for spinning. Lynne had brought her small loom which again attracted much interest. It was a very pleasant day, visitors were genuinely interested in what we were doing, and the town hall staff were welcoming and helpful, with two members of staff even carrying some of our bags back to the car at the end of the day.

Anne Reddan

Linda's Ramblings

One thing leads to another, I started 2025 with a good set of New Year's resolutions...

Give up drinking alcohol, stop buying books, deal with the SABLE- don't buy any more wool or fibre and don't start any new projects without first finishing a UFO. Don't take on any new crafts.

For those that don't know, a UFO is an **UnFinished Object** and SABLE is **Stash Above and Beyond Life Expectancy**. My sable is bigger than Everest and my UFOs would excite all the world's alien hunters.

Give up drinking was doomed to fail from day 1 because I always have a glass of champagne on New Year's Day..... How about the others though.

As for no new projects - Guild meeting, 4th January, Thank you Jenny for the bargello kit. I really enjoyed doing something NEW, different and BEFORE I tackled any of the UFOs.

Definitely no more books - Humph, thanks to Marianne in Oxfam and the British Heart foundation shop no less than 6 books had found their way into the house by 6th January. More have been added since.

I don't need any more wool - A trip to the community larder 8th January saw me coming home with several balls of fancy yarns. FREE to a good home. How could I say no? I have already used a couple of them.

Oxfam in Abingdon added to the sable by waving some cotton Bolls under my nose on the 12th January. I now have a large box of bolls and a lot of cotton spinning on the agenda. This is not going to happen any time soon.

Ooops! I also managed to place an order with Wingham wools, adding 3 more reeds to my Knitters loom. I have woven a scarf already, so purchase justified! Although this was a new project I did use hand spun wool from the stash. Does that count as a UFO?

So, I think the conclusion is that I am not very good at New Year's resolutions. BUT I am very happy.

As for finishing UFOs if anyone has any of the old Ashford dyes, especially blue and any Wendy's shimmer yarn clogging up their stashes I would be very grateful to buy these from you as I need both to finish a UFO that is an ongoing project..... There is just enough room to add a little bit more to my craft mountain.

Although I enjoyed doing the bargello I made a few mistakes so I modified the pattern as I went along to include a sheep. The end result is more Baaaaagh! Than bargello..... Rest assured I am still as daft about sheep as ever.

I intend to do a lot of crafting this year. Hopefully I will complete a lot of long outstanding UFO's. I want to spend a lot more time spinning and weaving with friends. I hope everyone in the Guild has great fun socialising and tackling their craft projects throughout 2025.

Linda Scurr

Charity Donations

Once again, a very big thank you to everyone who has given me things. As you can see from the photos there was rather a lot to get into the car! A slight hiccup when I got there! They were only taking warm winter coats, new socks, candles, blankets, bedding, sleeping bags and paracetamol. Not clothes, as where they take things to have been overwhelmed with donations and they couldn't take any more.

But I did manage to find a home for things. I went to Willow House by the Inner Distribution road in Reading which is run by the Salvation Army for the homeless. They were thrilled with the hats, scarves and gloves. They sent me to their charity shop at 522 Oxford Road in Reading and I gave them the rest of the clothes and again they were really

pleased. There is a Salvation Army store by the Robin Hood roundabout on the A4 towards Thatcham I'm sure they would also be pleased for donations. If we can't get them to Ukraine at least we can help locally. I will let you know when the next list comes out with what they want.

The Royal Berkshire hospital is wanting knee rugs and shawls of their elderly patients and prem baby clothes for the Buscot ward. Thank you all.

Rosie Price

Editor's Farewell.

This is my final issue of The Shuttle as Editor. I took over from Janet Dunbar for the March 2019 issue. Janet was a hard act to follow, and I did my best to meet standard that she had provided.

Trying to ensure that there are sufficient interesting articles each quarter is challenging, and over the years I have tried several approaches, with varying success. We also have the limitation that we only have colour for the centre spread, which does control, to some extent the format of the booklet.

During my tenure we had the unfortunate 'COVID' period, when we did not print hard copies, and only provided a PDF version on the Guild website. In many respects, it was easier to edit the Shuttle at this point. We were not limited to where I could use colour, which opened up the formatting of the newsletters, and allowed pictures on any page. In addition, people were feeling so separated from their friends and neighbours that any way to make contact was grabbed eagerly. This meant that I was sent many articles, of differing lengths, about lots of different subjects. Some were about current projects, some about activities, some just about interesting topics. As the lock-down relaxed members seemed to have more to do and so wrote less for the Shuttle – although you would have thought that they'd have had more to write about!

Nicky Duncan is taking over from the next issue. Please support her as much as you can. Write a little about Guild talks/workshops, about your projects, about subjects you think would interest others.

I wish Nicky all the best and hope that she enjoys the new challenge. I look forward to seeing her put her stamp on future issues of The Shuttle.

Farewell as Editor, but I'll still be around the Guild.

Lynne Harper

CRAFT SOCIALS

Aldbourn Braid Days

The next Aldbourn Braid Day is April 13th. The other dates for 2025 are June 15th, 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

Weavers' Chat

The Guild weavers normally meet at Speen Parish Hall, Newbury, RG14 1RJ on the last Saturday of the month from 09.30 – 13.30. **The next meeting will be 29th March 2025.** There is *no meeting in April*. Other dates for 2025 are 31st May, 28th June, 26th July, 23rd August, 27th September, 25th October. All meetings from 9.30 a.m. until 1.30 p.m. The final meeting for 2025 will be 22nd November from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. with a shared lunch. £4.00 to cover the cost of the hall.

It is called "Weavers' Chat", but braiders can come with inkles, marudai etc and lace makers with pillows as it is all weaving. In fact, all Guild members are very welcome to come along to see what we are doing and find out what weaving is all about.

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

Rosie Price

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.

For more information contact **Linda Scurr** or **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 June 2025 issue of the Shuttle is 9th May 2025.
The email address is kvshuttleeditor@gmail.com**