



**Birmingham & District Guild  
of Weavers Spinners & Dyers**

# Open Day & Exhibition



**Free Entry**

**Parents with children  
welcome**

**Vote for best hand covering in  
Guild challenge**

**Have A Go at Spinning on a spindle  
or a wheel**

**Try your hand at Weaving**

**See displays of members' work**

**Make cards with Dyeing with  
flowers**

**Information Displays**



**Saturday 13th May  
2023**

**10.30-3.30**

**at Quaker Meeting House  
Watford Road, Cotteridge  
B30 1JB**

**next to Pound Stretcher  
Buses 18, 19, 11, 55**

**Free Car Park**



**Cakes, tea and coffee  
Available to buy**

## Chair's Letter

I don't often go to daytime things in London but last week I went to The Stitch Festival at the Design Centre in Islington. It was very much my kind of day - able to get there by public transport, bumped into a Birmingham knitter, had pre-arranged lunch with a WI friend, a variety of textile-based stalls (but not so many to feel weary), and rounded it off with a one-hour sewing workshop. My sister asked if I had a shopping list to which the reply was no, my only self-imposed restriction was not to need to buy an additional bag.

All my purchases were from small businesses, my favourite being some bias binding with "made in 2023" on it which can go on something for my great-niece, born in late February! My plan is to use my new tunic patterns to sew from fabric stash on all the bank holidays in May. Like many other members - one textile craft isn't enough! (and everything did fit in my dalek bag)

Rachel

### **Guild equipment for hire - Part I**

Hopefully all members are aware of our book library (to the right of the front door at the Meeting House). In addition to that we also have equipment for members to hire by the month. Please note that most of it is stored in various members' houses and is not brought to every meeting. If you see something you would like to borrow please email the Guild and we can work out how to unite you with what you want, either at a Guild meeting or elsewhere. Most of the equipment requires a deposit of £35 - this can be in the form of a cheque or via bank deposit/cash which will be returned to you when you hand the equipment back. Hire cost is £5 per month. In the first instance you can borrow equipment for upto 2 months. with the option of extending if no other member is waiting. A full list of equipment is in the logbook in the library. I am just listing some of it here, and suggest you will find a book in the library for most of these subjects (or find out who knows most on that subject in the Guild, or use Youtube)

**Tablet loom.** You will need to use suitable weaving cotton yarn, in at least two colours, as the end result will only be a few inches at most across.

**Inkle loom.** Again - need suitable weaving cotton yarn in at least two colours as the end result will only be a few inches wide at most.

**Knitters loom.** 12" weaving width. Comes in its own carry bag with full instructions. You will need yarn which is smooth, not stretchy and does not break easily for the warp. You can use any yarn within reason for the weft.

## **Open Day – 13 May 2023**

This is our annual exhibition and display day – a chance to show others what we do, and gain new members (and sell some of our work if we want to).

We have a small sub-committee – Sarah, Wendy, Ruth and Kate -organising the day, but we will of course need help. Even if you are not an expert, you have probably done something this year which you could bring for display – and the day is a chance to see what others have done/can do, and take part in displays etc.

### **We need you to:**

Think if you have made anything in the last two years which you would like to display. If you can send Sarah ([sarah@digital-explosion.co.uk](mailto:sarah@digital-explosion.co.uk)) a description (what it is, how you made it, inspiration if you had one) she can make labels in a standard format for all the displays, which helps to give the exhibition a more coordinated feel.

**Find anything you've made at a Guild workshop, even if not finished.**

**Tell all your friends about the Open Day, and invite them to come.**

**Volunteer to help on the day.** We will be setting up the tables/display boards on Friday 12, in the evening (I hope), and organizing the displays on Saturday morning, 9-10.30, for the exhibition to open at 10.30. We will then need volunteers to demonstrate weaving and spinning, help with teas and coffees, and look after the sales table – and to just chat with the visitors. We'll also need help with packing up at the end of the day (3.30-4.30). There is a sign-up sheet which will be at the April meeting, but if you can't get there, please let one of the committee know what you are prepared to do.

**If you have anything you want to add to the sales table** – preferably handmade, or supplies for weaving/spinning/dyeing – you need to fill in a form in advance, listing what you're selling and the price etc. The Guild takes 10%, and if it is paid for by card, there is an additional card sales fee deducted.

Thanks for your help  
Sarah Cage

## Carpet Cool

Saturday 12th February brought the long awaited and several times cancelled talk from **Dr. Anthea Harris-Fry** from the Kidderminster Carpet Museum.

She explained that the museum had been set up 10 years ago with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. They were allowed enough money to run the museum for 3 years and since then they have been largely staffed by volunteers. Anthea has been there since 2019 and she came partly because of her keen interest in history.

We were treated to a short history of carpets with pictures shown to us on a screen. Surprisingly carpets were not meant to be walked upon in the past as they were much too precious. A painting by Holbein shows Henry V111 with a carpet draped over a table. It is a Persian carpet of vivid colours. Similarly a painting by Teerlinc shows Elizabeth 1 standing on a carpet of rush, so we know that only very wealthy and high status people would have carpets in those times.

From about 1735 there was a market for carpets in Kidderminster. At that time carpets would be hand made flat weave, made in a similar way to how we weave on our hand looms at home today. Carpets were reversible and tufted soft carpets were not made until the 19th century. They would have been small, hard wearing and made in small geometric patterns, used for stairs and hallway.

From 1857 carpets were made on power looms after America brought a new steam loom to show at the Great Exhibition in 1851.



We learnt about William Morris and his company designing carpets in the late 19th century and onwards and then lots more about modern carpets and contract carpets. Contract carpets are big business now and we saw lots of examples with some very modern and spectacular designs. They are designed for a specific space such as cruise liners or hotels.



One fact I found interesting was that Wetherspoons have a different carpet in each of its pubs - each one is unique and is designed to reflect something local. Having been in the local Wetherspoons a few times at Kings Norton after one of the walks I lead, I was surprised that I had never noticed the carpet! I was told by Sarah that there are boats on the carpet so I will definitely look down next time I go there.

Sadly there are only 2 carpet making factories left in Kidderminster now. One of them, Brockways, makes carpets from British Herdwick wool, which is good to know.

Thank you Anthea for your very interesting talk, any mistakes above are mine, so I apologise in advance! I am inspired to go and visit the carpet museum now and see all these carpets. I know some members have already visited and found it fascinating.

### **Update:**

I have now visited The Museum of Carpet - It was definitely worth it! I also had one of my train adventures and found it was very easy to get to Kidderminster. The best part of the visit was seeing and hearing the carpet machines in action and listening to Jed talking about the Axminster loom.

A word about Jed- he worked on carpet machines in Kidderminster for all his working life and now he has returned as a volunteer at the museum. He is a mine of information and anecdotes about carpets and machines. I also watched the Wilton loom working. It was very loud and I would be surprised if the factory workers didn't have hearing loss as they were given no ear protection until the 1970s.

I watched how they worked and eventually worked out the difference between the 2 types of carpet. I won't attempt to explain as the best way to understand is to see for yourself. The 3rd kind of loom was the Dobby Loom and this makes flat weave carpet in a similar manner to my Louet 4 shaft at home. It was set up for double weave and this was interesting as I am going to try this myself - hopefully!

**(<https://museumofcarpet.org/>)**

by Wendy from the Guild blog.

The Kidderminster carpet talk was so very good, time passed as though in seconds. Any feedback on the carpet which was brought in?

Some of the red colour was so vibrant even though it wasn't thought to be an acid dye. Question was raised as to whether the red and green figures were animal: head, four limbs and a long tail? Could have a short talk on that carpet, with all its history and how it came to be made, the repairs and how they were so obviously not of a professional standard. And so on.

- Judith Joseph

## Good morning. From Judith Joseph.

Much of this Art UK newsletter is not for WSD but there is an article which might well be of interest: Lucy Ellis on Bernat Klein – textiles, colour, weaving, and art generally. It's further down the page. Throws a new light on how Seurat and others have been interpreted.

### **Bernat Klein: painterly textiles and revolutionary tweeds**

Posted 17 Feb 2023, by [Lucy Ellis](#) on <https://artuk.org/discover/stories/bernat-klein-painterly-textiles-and-revolutionary-tweeds>

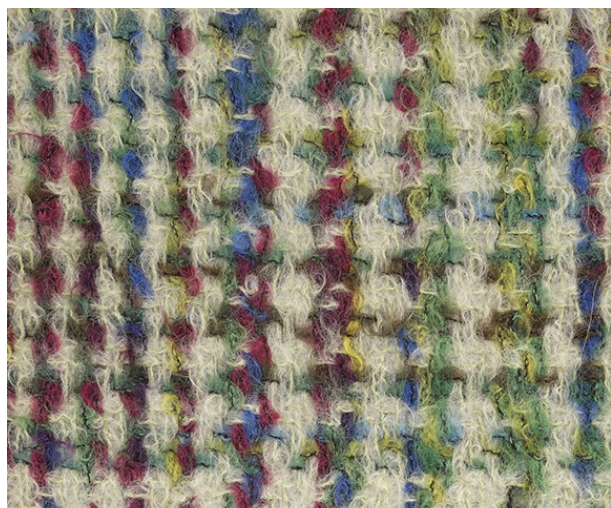
In 1963, exactly 60 years ago, Coco Chanel chose a fabric for her couture collection from a relatively unknown designer of textiles based in the Scottish borders. The fabric was a brilliantly coloured mohair tweed and the designer was [Bernat Klein](#) (1922–2014), now the subject of a retrospective at National Museums Scotland.



Mohair tweed inspired by a painting of a rose and selected by Chanel

1962, fabric by Bernat Klein (1922–2014)

Chanel was not alone in falling for Klein's revolutionary new cloth – in their spring collections that year, London couturiers John Cavanagh, Jo Mattli and Victor Stiebel also used the fabric, described by Ernestine Carter, fashion doyenne of *The Sunday Times* as a 'completely new fabric: soft, woven into broken checks or stained-glass patterns in off-beat colours.'



Loch Lomond

1961, fabric by Bernat Klein (1922–2014)

That summer, at a preview of his autumn fabric collection, Klein exhibited some of his own paintings alongside the textiles, revealing the synergetic connection between the two. Just as the Scottish Colourists broke new ground in painting, here was a designer, and sometime painter, using a forensic approach to colour to revolutionise the world of textiles, and in particular Scottish tweed.

To read the rest of the article go to the Art UK website

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/bernat-klein-painterly-textiles-and-revolutionary-tweeds>

## Art Yarn with Sue Kimber, 11<sup>th</sup> March

There were 13 of us on Saturday for Sue Kimber's Art Yarns Workshop. She had braved the snow and driven all the way from Kent with her husband. She told us she lives in a shepherd's hut without electricity and running water. There were lots of reactions to this from wanting to live there to being horrified. I was one of the latter. She has a small farm with sheep who are all named.



She taught us how to core spin, make boucle yarns, tail spin and more. It was a great workshop and Sue was a helpful and expert teacher. As you can see we all came away with various art yarns in lovely colours, especially Gemma who made loads!! Now we need to decide what to do with them.

There were more members who came to chat and just watch the workshop

By Wendy from the blog



Sue's rug made of art yarn



## Lace Guild AGM and workshop day on 3 June.



You may remember I was wearing a linen shirt with torchon lace when I gave my talk 'Sustainability in Textiles'. I think that wearing lace is useful to make our clothes more lovable, and also it is a great way to promote lacemaking. As well as torchon lace, I am also interested in Idrija lace, which is more free flowing.

For those of you who are interested in lace, there is an event close to us coming soon. The Lace Guild has an interesting day in the 3rd June in Coventry. It is available for members and non-members of the Lace Guild.

More details here <https://www.laceguild.org/lace-guild-agm-2020>

- Teresinha Roberts

## **June's Dyeing workshop – stuff you need to know beforehand**

The day starts at 10 am though this is one workshop where you are welcome to come along at any point. The aim is to go home with a bunch of sample colours, to give you an idea of what can be achieved with plants. If you want you can also dye a larger amount of yarn/fibre with acid dyes. If you don't want to do any dyeing come along anyway as this biennial day is always a relaxed and sociable event. No booking is needed for members – but as there may be a limit on numbers, please let Sarah know if you are intending to come.

**Cost £2 for members, £10 for non-members.**

### **Everyone to bring**

Food for a shared lunch

Your current craft projects to work on while the pots are bubbling

Sun hat if it's sunny, jumper if it's cold

Garden chair if you can. I have 2 picnic tables and half a dozen garden chairs, but may not be enough for all

A plastic bag to carry your wet dyed wool home...

### **For natural dyeing** (either or all of):

2-6 pre-mordanted sample skeins (10g or so) or fleece for dyeing with plants (see below for mordanting instructions); (or you could use squares of wool fabric, no bigger than 5")

1 or 2 non-mordanted sample skeins (10g or so) or fleece for indigo or other dyeing which doesn't need mordant;

### **For acid dyeing**

Clean wool skein/s and/or fibre. Suggest 100-200g.

And/or skein wound into a cake (there will be a ballwinder to use if needed)

Button/s to tie around your dyed stuff so you can recognise it. All the packages look the same once steamed.

Apron

Don't worry – *none of the yarn has to be handspun*. We'll start the first batch of natural dyeing as soon as possible after people arrive (by about 11.00), and do a second batch after lunch.

### **Where to come:**

5 Beaks Hill Road is about 100 yards from The Green, Kings Norton, just off the Rednal Road, and the house is at the end of the road nearest The Green. Buses no 45, 84, 18, 19 and 49 stop on the Pershore Road.





## Plant (Natural) Dyeing - practical details

### Preparation (summary)

I would suggest that you make up 5-10 small skeins of animal fibre yarn and mordant most of them in advance. The best fibres are wool or mohair – without much acrylic as it doesn't take up natural dyes well. Nylon and silk can also be dyed in the same dyebaths. The recommended mordant is alum (with cream of tartar). Alum may be obtainable from some chemists, though you may have to order it (it's used for hardening skin) – or from Fibrecrafts (George Weil).

Two or three skeins could be washed but left unmordanted for substantive dyebaths – woad or indigo, oak dust, possibly lichen.

### Acid dyeing – same day, different colours!

Rachel will be bringing a selection of acid dyes along which can be used with protein (animal) fibres like wool. They don't work with cotton. The range of colours is far wider than with plants, and because you are not limited by doing lots of samples in one bath you can dye larger amounts, e.g. 50g or 100g yarn for a hat or socks or even more if you wish, or fibre dyed in stripes or splashes or anything else.

No preparation is needed for acid dyeing except to wind your wool into skeins, long or short, and make sure they are clean. I'll bring plastic gloves for anyone to wear. You may wish to bring your own apron.

I will bring some white wool fibre/yarn in 100g for sale. I'll wind some of the sock wool (superwash with nylon - 4ply) into long skeins so you can make your own self-stripping sock yarn. I don't know exactly how much the yarn and fibre will cost – probably £8 per 100g. Please bring cash but won't have change.

In addition, Tina has volunteered to show how to dye balled yarn or yarn cakes which gives yet a different gradient effect. If you want to do this yourself you will need to bring your own clean 1k ice-cream tub for this in addition to the yarn (there will be a ball winder if you need to use one).

Fingers crossed we get sunshine, or at least no rain.

*Sarah Cage and Rachel Lemon*

***For full details please see the separately printed 4 page leaflet available at the guild meetings in April and May or emailed following the Spring newsletter.***



## BOOK REVIEW

### 'Three-Colour Pickup for Inkle Weavers' by Annie MacHale

I am a keen weaver of warp-faced narrow bands, particularly on inkle looms. One of my favourite types is Baltic pick-up, traditional across much of the Baltic countries, where these bands were used for many purposes, including sashes wrapped around the waist. There are 2 sets of warp threads, of contrasting colours. One set comprises the pattern threads, which are individually manipulated by the weaver on each pick in order to create the pattern. The other set comprises the background threads which are controlled solely by the loom and are not hand-manipulated by the weaver.

A very good source to learn how to weave standard Baltic pick-up on an inkle loom is 'The Inkle Weaver's Pattern Directory' by Anne Dixon; our guild library has a copy.

In 2021, Annie MacHale published an e-book in .pdf format, 'Three-Color Pickup for Inkle Weavers', sub-titled 'A Modern Look at an Ancient Baltic-Style Technique'.

Annie had studied photographs of ancient sashes from Lithuania in an out-of-print book 'Lithuanian Sashes', and was struck by the more complex colour arrangement in some of the sashes from the small province of Znavykija in Lithuania. Finding no information on how these sashes were woven, Annie herself worked out how it was done. Annie's book explains how to weave this technique, assuming the weaver is already familiar with Baltic pick-up, and includes 100 patterns.

The three-colour pickup technique differs from the standard Baltic pick-up in that the three colours alternate in the warp, and any of the colours can be used ('picked-up') to create the pattern. I found it more difficult to weave initially, because the pattern charts are more complicated to read, but I quickly overcame that barrier.



The photograph includes 3 bands I have woven; the central long band is woven in the three-colour pickup technique, using patterns from Annie's book, and the short bands on either side are woven in the standard Baltic pick-up technique.

One thing I particularly liked about the three-colour pickup technique is that if you choose your colours well, weaving part of you band without pick-up (i.e. just plain weave) creates a very attractive fabric. Thus one could quickly weave attractive long bands e.g. for belts and straps, with just a few motifs in pick-up along the length.

A bonus for me was that soon after Annie published her book, the publishers of 'Lithuanian Sashes', the Lithuanian Folk Art Institute of Canada, found some unsold

boxes of the book, and I was lucky enough to put in my order before they quickly sold out.

It is now possible to buy Annie's book in printed format from America. However, in addition to the significantly lower cost, an advantage of the .pdf e-book is that it contains an active link for each pattern that opens the pattern in a free online band weaving pattern editor called Seizenn, so you can just click on the link and see the effect of different colours, modify the pattern, etc.

The printed versions of Annie's books can be purchased from her Etsy shop or from Taproot Video; both options incur shipping costs from the USA. The e-books in .pdf format can be purchased only from Taproot.

<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/ASpinnerWeaver>  
<https://taprootvideo.com/instructorClasses.jsf?iid=12>

Annie MacHale's website : <http://aspinnerweaver.blogspot.com/>

For those who prefer the simplicity and speed of plain weave, I can also recommend Annie's book 'In Celebration of Plain Weave – Colour and Design Inspiration for Inkle Loom Weavers', available in e-book .pdf format or printed copy; source as above.

- Jane Antill

## **Fibre Clubs for Spinners**

Several years ago I stumbled across Fibre Clubs, where you sign up with an indy dyer for bundles of mystery fibres. I first signed up with Cat & Sparrow in Bristol for Rachel's Fauna & Flora Club. She dyed blended fibres in a colourway based on an animal or plant and once a month I received 100gms of hand dyed wool blended braid or batt with a description of what her inspiration was and its history.

This year I have signed up to Hilltop Cloud's Time Travellers Fibre Club. Katie chooses a woman or group of women from history and introduces them through a letter and club members can opt for 100, 200 or 300gms of the monthly fibre. My first mystery blend was black, white and grey blend of Suri Alpaca, Pineapple and Corriedale in honour of Margaret Bourke-White, an American photographer in the 1930-1950s. My second month's blend is Merino, Linen and Sari Silk. The Merino and Linen is dyed black and the Sari Silk is neon colours combed through it. It was inspired by the story of Cecilia Payne-Gaposhkin, a British astronomer who had to move to the USA to join the Astronomy department at Harvard because Cambridge would not award degrees to women in 1920s and she could not get an astronomy job in England. She earned a PhD in Astronomy—Harvard's first Doctorate in the subject.

There are several other Fibre Clubs in the UK including:

**Fibre Hut** at [fibrehut.co.uk/products/hand-dyed-fibre-club](http://fibrehut.co.uk/products/hand-dyed-fibre-club) which can be bought individually every two months.

## Fibre Clubs—continued

**Coral Rose Fibre Arts** bimonthly mystery braid club also sold individually from [coralrosefibrearts.co.uk/shop/fibre-clubs](http://coralrosefibrearts.co.uk/shop/fibre-clubs).

**Wild Craft Fibre Club** is available in 100 or 200 gm options plus you can add a drop spindle for an extra charge from [wildcraft.co.uk/collections/spinningclubs](http://wildcraft.co.uk/collections/spinningclubs).

**Tiny Acorn Arts** is an Etsy shop selling Fabulous Fibres Box of Batts, a collection of individually wrapped tops, batts roving, silk and plant fibres.

**Hilltop Cloud** also has a Never Ending Gradient Fibre Club which each month picks up a colour gradient where the previous month's braid left off. You can find it at [hilltopcloud.co.uk/fibre-clubs.html](http://hilltopcloud.co.uk/fibre-clubs.html)

At the end of the year a number of fibre suppliers offer Advent Clubs and during Ramadan five Muslim dyers coordinate across the US and UK for the Ramadan Fibre Club.

- Tina Helfrich

## 2023 Committee Members

**Chair: Rachel Lemon**

**Secretary: Amanda Davis**

**Treasurer: Sarah Cage**

**Assistant Treasurer: Ruth Weston**

**Programme Secretary: Charlotte Powell**

**Librarian: Judith Evans**

**Demonstrations Co-ordinator: Wendy Simpson**

**Newsletter Editor: Tina Helfrich**

**Other members: Cyndi Husband, Gill Nakasuji, Kate Batchelor**



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**[www.wbdbirmingham.weebly.com](http://www.wbdbirmingham.weebly.com)**



**Birmingham & District Guild of Weavers, Spinners, and Dyers  
(private group)**



**Birmingham and District Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers  
(public group)**



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