

## FEBRUARY SPINALONG 2020

Welcome everyone to the latest newsletter. Firstly I am sorry that the Lucet cord making workshop has had to be cancelled. This was due to the fact that only one person signed up for the course. We cannot afford to run these courses at a loss, so if you want courses to be held you must sign up and pay for them beforehand.

The next course in March is Corrugated Weaving -a small bag, so please see Sue Bird at the February meeting to sign up.

Our January meeting was very well attended and we had some new members join, welcome to them.

I have put some photos on our Facebook page of items on the show and tell table, and also put them below.



We have decided to have a Guild challenge this year, details below

A cushion cover, any medium on the theme of 'Seasons'

Max size 16" x 16".

To include a description of how this was made, not more than 50 words.

Only 1 per member.

This will be judged by an external person at the November meeting.

There will be a small prize.

We would still like your suggestions for new books for the library, please tell Cristina, also can you please remember to sign out books, and to sign them back in again. The books should only be kept for 2 months. Could you all please check that you do not have any outstanding books as we are doing a stock check.

Don't forget Wonderwool is getting closer. There will be a list going up for you to put your names down to help over the 2 days. Also there will be the usual collection of items for sale. Please see Sheila Morgan for any details.

I know the next AGM is a way off, but 3 of our members will be standing down from the committee after 3 years of service and we will be needing new members for the committee. If you think you would like to stand and bring new ideas to the guild or want any information please speak to one of the committee members.

I am pleased to say that £38 was raised from our raffle and sent to the Welsh Air Ambulance.

## SINGING THE BLUES

Just after I joined the guild, Margaret Dixon gave me a black rubbish bag full of fresh indigo plant stems as she was clearing out her poly tunnel. She had heard that I was a keen indigo dyer and wanted the plants to be used. I had never processed fresh indigo leaves before so out came all my books and my research began. I am fortunate to have attended a residential long weekend indigo dyeing workshop in 1998 and learned so much about this amazing dye from Jenny Balfour-Paul and her trained assistants and have been a keen indigo dyer ever since. However, I had only used indigo in its powder form. Previously I had grown and dyed with woad with differing results. I now know that to ensure a strong blue colour on a skein of yarn using fresh woad leaves you need at least three or four times the weight of woad leaves to yarn and extremely careful and time consuming preparation. I was therefore doubtful about using the fresh indigo leaves.

After a very short time doing my research I realised that the fresh indigo leaves could not be prepared in the same way as woad. I finally settled on the Jenny Dean method which involved liquidising the fresh indigo leaves with ice cubes several times and straining the liquid. This method made a vivid green liquid and the end result was a pale turquoise green on silk and pale



duck egg blue on yarn but did fade a little in time. (The photo shows the colour developing before rinsing)

Last summer I was able to grow my own indigo plants not only in tubs and boxes in the greenhouse but also outside in my vegetable patch with good results. Having moved house to Cardigan and learnt a lot from Barbara Harper's eco printing workshop, I realised I lived a short way away from Barbara and that we shared the same passion for natural dyeing and growing natural dye plants.

Quite by chance I came across a video on the net which showed a Japanese method of scrunching up fresh indigo leaves with your hands using a small amount of ordinary salt to extract the dye liquid. Once the dye juice starts to appear fabric is added and kneaded with the indigo leaves. Even though the video was in Japanese the actual process was easy to follow.

So fortified with strong coffee and rubber gloves, one drizzly Summer morning Barbara and I carefully stripped leaves off enough indigo stems to fill two buckets, which was laborious and took us over an hour. We added approximately four tablespoons of ordinary table salt to each bucket and some pieces of unmordanted silk, linen and cotton. We kneaded and scrunched the fabric into the leaves. It was hard work but eventually the leaves turned dark blue and dye juice began to flow. We obtained quite a good turquoise colour but the cotton did go a blue grey shade, somewhat patchy, when dry. The best result was on the pieces of silk.

In conclusion, I have not achieved a dark blue colour with woad or indigo using the above methods but using salt with fresh indigo leaves does give a good turquoise colour and its very eco friendly.

Cristina  
January 2020

Some more photos from Cristina and Barbara.



Carole Lovell  
February 2020.