



Registered Charity no. 518270

## CLWYD WEB

January 2004

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR

### Next Meetings

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>Feb 21</b> | Beginners Weaving (Warping inkle, peg, rigid heddle and table looms)<br><br>Demos by members, simple looms available to try.<br>If you have a project you want to get started on, or if you're totally stuck with some piece of weaving equipment, bring it along, and help will be available.<br>We'll put our heads together and try to solve all your problems! |
| <b>Mar 20</b> | P&M Woolcraft visit.   |

I hope everyone enjoyed the extra meeting that we managed to slip into the calendar in December. A sum of £95 pounds was raised for the Guild, and many cars went home with yarn, fibre, fleece, leaflets and obscure bits of woodwork donated by the families of Howard Hughes and Barbara Roberts. We were also treated to yet more delicious food, and I'm going to try for a members recipe section to replace by usual Back Page waffle. Myra's cream and marshmallow desert comes fairly top of the list of requests.

#### *The All Saints Gresford Crafts Group*

*Have sent me leaflets about:*

#### *February Quiltfest 3*

*To be held at The Gallery, Royal International Pavilion, Llangollen.*

*"Glory of Colour"*

*Mon – Fri. 10am – 4pm. 2<sup>nd</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2004*

*With Sunday Bazaar and Quiltmart 8<sup>th</sup> Feb.*

*Quilting Workshops: £20 each max 12 students at the Memorail Hall Gresford, Wrexham.*

*Contact Val Shields 01978 852856*

*Sat. 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. Woven Stars with Rebecca Collins.*

*Wed 18<sup>th</sup> Feb. Stitch Sashiko on a Furoshiki with Susan Briscoe*

*Thu 19<sup>th</sup> Feb. Manipulate Silk Fibres with Hilary Naghashi*

*Sat. 28<sup>th</sup> Feb Welsh Quilting – My Way with Gwenfai Rees Griffiths*

For those not quite so beginner weavers, I recently found instructions for Twinkle Weaving, which means, apparently, Table Weaving on an Inkle Loom. I was going to add some instructions in this Newsletter, but it ran to 8 or 9 pages. So, If I'll bring a few copies Along to the next meetings for anyone who is interested.

*Eds Note: I mistyped my phone number in last months newsletter and the membership cards – it should have read 01606 47217!*

*Finally – here's a nifty bit of computer software (my Christmas present). It's a Celtic Knotwork Font for PCs. You type letters and each letter is a piece of a knot! The simple one below is made by typing gwe asd zxc !*



## Weaving Humorous Words for the Web-Weary - Peter Collingwood

[My spoof is a reaction to the very basic weavers I noticed when I was starting, over 30 years ago. I am afraid it has fooled at least one reader who said "You do meet interesting people, Peter"... It was intended to be the first of a series but I only got as far as the name of the next "victim", It was to be Major Raddle, (retired); the sort of weaver who goes to great lengths to make a perfect loom with attached spirit levels, humidity gauges, yarn tension testers and so on, but who hardly ever weaves a pick.]

### Weavers I Have Known - Elsie Cutch

Five years ago, I ran across Elsie Cutch at a small crafts exhibition at Bury St Edmunds. Although it was some time since we last met, she greeted me enthusiastically and at once invited me to "Spindles", her house and weavery, as she liked to call it.

As I journeyed there some weeks later I tried to remember all I knew about Cutch, that most basic of weavers. It was of course her desire to get to the root of things that accounted for the fact that although she had taken up weaving thirty years ago she had not, at that time, woven a single thing.

Right at the start she had built herself a wheel and loom, grumbling all the time that the wood was none of her growing and how could she be expected to create a "sensitive textile tool" - a favourite expression of hers - from timber planted and tended by a total stranger, one moreover who probably knew nothing about weaving. The next decade and a half were devoted to growing and spinning her own flax. What with bad harvests and some unfortunate retting experiences (twice the containers of special river water had broken en route from Courtrai in Belgium), it was not till the end of this period that she had produced enough linen cord to string up her loom. Some gloom had been cast over the little party celebrating this event by old George Weld, who with his spindle spinning and primitive waist looms was always trying to out-cutch Cutch. He had announced that loom cord should be laid in a rope-walk, not plied a wheel. But luckily Cutch was in the kitchen, uncorking mead, so she had not heard.

She was now faced with the problem of making the linen aprons for warp and cloth beams, but without a working loom to help her. I do not think anyone really knows how she did this. The only certain thing is that it took her two years and during that time experiments with knitting, crocheting, and even spranging the aprons were all rejected. Personally I believe it was made by a vast darning process carried out in situ.

Cutch then disappeared and no one knew her whereabouts, until some reports of disturbances in a West African cotton plantation filtered into the newspapers. Apparently Cutch, living and working with the indigenous pickers, had been persuading them that the machine ginning of cotton was an artificial process, and the unconvinced had

demonstrated when her attempts at hand-separation began to cause a bottleneck and consequent reduction in wages. This must have been settled satisfactorily, for four years later she returned to England with a sack of cotton. That was the last I had heard of her until out chance meeting and I was looking forward to catching up on Cutch.

I had to ask the way, but soon the sound of a slightly off-key waulking song told me I must be near Spindles. The garden was overgrown, but I recognised dog's mercury and woad showing above a thick layer of compost.

I had arrived at a stirring moment. With a flourish Cutch showed me the cotton warp on the loom and a basketful of bobbins. All the cotton not needed for heddle twine had been spun for this venture, and for the first time Cutch was really throwing a shuttle.

With her characteristic honesty, she told me of the ceremony she had arranged a few days back to mark the throwing of the very first pick. All the basic weavers had been there, including Marjorie Fustic, her neighbour, Sir Indigo -Jones and, of course, old George Weld (who by this time had thrown away his spindles and was dedicated to finger spinning). Having filled all glasses, Cutch kicked off her shoes ("You don't weave in gloves, do you? Why let shoe leather intrude between you and the loom?") and sat at the loom. She pressed a treadle and with great gusto threw the shuttle. There were gasps and splutters as the toast-drinking circle saw the havoc caused by the shuttle ploughing through a very bad shed. Cutch's confident laugh broke into the awkward silence that followed and she dived under the loom to adjust cords, her Gaelic spinning song soon lost in the polite conversational buzz.

I never heard how all this ended, because Cutch broke off the story to get back to work. Unfortunately I had to leave before this product of thirty years effort was cut from the loom. "I can't see you out", she called, swaying on the creaking stool, "mustn't break the rhythm".

Elsie Cutch died a year ago. After her funeral,, Marjorie Fustic told me the end of her story and I think it is one to inspire all purists. When the length of cotton was finished, Cutch had washed and ironed it and then - "this was her finest hour" said Fustic - had methodically torn the whole piece into inch wide strips and used these to make a rag rug. Three days later, having completed this, her life work, she died.

(Taken from \*Quarterly Journal of the Guilds of Weavers Spinners and Dyers\*, No 27, September, 1958)

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