

## 2010 Annual Report

Like my garden, the Guild has continued to grow in the relatively unplanned and organic way in which it started.

For the second year running we have attended Woolfest and Wonderwool the UK's two major exhibitions- both by invitation not by paying for a stand. For the first time this year we have been invited to other Guilds to give workshops and demonstrations. These have been very successful and I see this as a privilege and a great opportunity. A long draw spinner in every Guild in the country would be a great help in our mission to encourage and support long draw spinning. The feedback from the workshops has been very encouraging and we are booked to attend several more in the coming months. We have demonstrated at various public events, most recently at Irnham, Lincs, which was in response to an invitation arising at Woolfest. Irnham was the home of the Luttrell family who commissioned the 14th Century psalter from which our logo is taken. We have recently run a two day, residential workshop at Knuston Hall and been invited to repeat this. Our internet presence is currently assured with our website and the longdraw spinners group on Ravelry. We can now even twitter on the long draw spinners twitter group! There are so many untapped opportunities here but the basic groundwork is in place and with a little investment could help support long draw spinning a million times more effectively and efficiently than 'on the ground'.

On the ground we now have 30 or more members, some scattered all over the world but the majority living within driving distance of Stoke Albany. Around 12 members regularly attend meetings in the village hall. All members currently pay £10 year subscription but those who attend the village hall meetings contribute up to a further £60 year. As a result of this and our visits to other Guilds, we now have funds of over £500. Can we afford our own Great Wheel? We are gaining new members each month and, if we all turned up to the same meeting, would not have room to make a long draw. We may soon need a Great Hall too! Our regular meetings have been enhanced this year by a published programme of events; this included learning to use a drum carder, dressing a distaff and making felt bags, all of which were great fun. The talking table at meetings continues to be laden with work of some astounding quality.

The success of the Guild is due entirely to the quality of the membership and the generous way in which members have given their time and talents over the past few years. But this success and growth needs to be controlled and managed if we are to be sustainable. Like my garden, the Guild is a rich resource, and currently very healthy and productive; but unless we make some changes it won't stay that way. I feel we need a Chair with a different set of skills to mine, skills that are equal to the task of managing a successful and growing organisation and giving it a new dimension in terms of vision. I am absolutely delighted to hand over to Janet as the new Chair. Apart from possessing the highest academic qualifications anyone could ask for, Doctor Janet Jackson is a spinner and knitter of exceptional skill. There are many, many more ways to support and encourage long draw spinning than what we have done so far; I am certain that with Janet as Chair some of them will happen.

As this is my last report I would like you to bear with me while I record how it all started for the benefit of history and those who do not know...

This year we attended two exhibitions and ran some very successful workshops at one of them; something I have wanted to do since my first visit to Woolfest in 2006. A number of things happened there which prompted it. While queuing to get in with a group of people whom I had taught, Judith, Ros, Vicki and Sheila, someone whom I had not seen since I learned to spin some twenty years earlier rushed up to say hello; 'Weren't we lucky to be taught by Elizabeth Palmer - people can't spin nowadays - they sit there with both hands next to the flyer and can't speak for concentrating!'. And indeed the few spinners we did see at the show were all spinning short draw and making it look hard work. There was an advertisement for a 'Masterclass' on long draw spinning; 'What's long draw spinning?' one of the group asked; we only did long draw. The final realisation that something needed to be done came as we watched someone trying to demonstrate a great wheel. Unless you can spin long draw, with your left hand, you simply cannot spin on a Great Wheel. And so, the idea dawned that we needed a Guild for Long Draw Spinners - and the logo must be a Great Wheel. A search on the British library website revealed several images; I was tempted by one called 'An amorous encounter', but if you look it up you will see why we opted for the Luttrell Psalter one instead.

So that is how the Guild started; no real planning, just in response to conditions prevailing at the time. May I take this long overdue opportunity to thank you all for your help and support during my time as Chair and most of all, thank you for putting up with me and my eccentricities.

Pamela Austin. Chair

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