

The Fibre Guild of Lochac Issue six, Newsletter Guild Day A.S. XL

From the Acting Editor

Greetings all

Here's another bumper issue, as I have finally worked out how to be a drop dead editor. Volunteers please contact me, and perhaps we can get the still informative but more regular newsletter that we all deserve. Mind you, anyone with an article or book review or project notes can send them to me for handing to the chronicler. That certainly will get them off to a good start. Thanks to Lady Tyg for her article on Felt Mittens - I do hope others get to see the finished items, just right for cold Festival mornings.
Morag

Guild Projects

We are continuing with our ongoing project of providing cords for award medallions. Please ensure they are atleast 90cm long, and have a tag describing the technique and material used, and the maker's name. Once again I am impressed with the generosity and skill of our guild members.

Website review: Silk Sources!

Virginia Farm Woolworks in Annangrove NSW do a great mail order...They have all types of fibre stuff (spun, unspun, dyes, mordants, Ashford and Majacraft weaving and spinning equipment supplies) and tell them Eyrika (Sharon) recommends them.

www.virginiafarmwoolworks.com.au

Leofwynn has had good service from Sanshi who are at 115 Palmerston St. Mosman Pk WA. The shop travels to handcraft/lace guild shows and mail order as well. She also has a wonderful range of Japanese 'gold' threads.

Morag has found the shop at the local Spinner and Weavers Guild is also a dangerous place. So is their library, just not as expensive.

Petlin's have also been recommended for their 30/2 and 60/4 silk. They do mail order PO Box 76 NORTH RICHMOND NSW 2754 AUSTRALIA <http://hometown.aol.com.au/petlins76/ph.html> and are recommended for their affordable and useable second hand weaving and spinning equipment.

Challenge at Rowany Festival = fleece to finished

Lady Morag Freyser as GuildMaster is sending out a Challenge at Rowany Festival to all who enjoy the textile arts. Participants will be handed a portion of fleece on the Thursday and will meet on Sunday afternoon to see what has been made of it.

13th Century Danish Felt Mittens ~Tyghra na Tintagel

BACKGROUND

The mittens I have made were inspired by the image at left.¹ As I don't possess the original book I had to make a decision about the technique used to make the textile base. The image was found online in an article file devoted to outfitting a 7th century northern European warrior. As the mittens were from a later period, there were no details other than the label to the image. The only reason they'd been included in the first place was that they just happened to be in the same picture as a range of early period mittens made using the naalbinding technique.

Other than giving the book reference, the label described these particular mittens as 'felt' rather than 'felted'. This could perhaps be a typographical error, but, 'felt' usually refers to the item as wool having undergone the percussive technique rather than wool that has been spun, woven and then fullled. There is a long history of percussive textiles made from various plants and animal fur. The main material used in England and Europe, and indeed almost every country where sheep existed, was raw wool beaten to make felt. It was supplanted in later days by the pelt of the beaver but from the very first days man encountered sheep there existed wool. Too many stories exist about who discovered it and how they did it to list here.

The manufacture of felt in the Scandinavian region can be traced by following the movements of people from the most active felting regions ie the steppe nomad tribes. These tribes were pushed into the Slavic regions by the invasion of the Huns and took this knowledge to Hungary and thence up into Finland who then taught it to their nearest Scandinavian neighbours including Denmark. The Northern Short Tailed Sheep family has a wool that has particularly good felting characteristics and so the northern countries of Europe have a long history of making felt items.

In 1908, in Essex, a seamless felt hat, shown at right, made from blue wool and lined with silk, was discovered in a cavity inside one of the tower buttresses. The following is an excerpt from the Concealed Garments Project website.

"The hat is thought to date from approximately 1350, although its rarity and the lack of comparative examples make dating particularly difficult. It is made from blue felted wool that has been moulded to form the crown and brim without a seam."

Along with many other items made using seamless techniques such as a three dimensional mask representing a sheep's head that was found at Hederby, I decided to make the mittens using a seamless resist technique. The resist is essentially, any item that 'resists' the wool from felting to both itself and creates an enclosed, three dimensional shape by keeping the outside layers of wool from touching each other.

The various items that were used as a resist in period depended, in part, on what culture and what items you had to hand. The Mongolians used a 'mother felt' as they had discovered long ago, that once the wool particles had been intertwined and hardened during the 'percussion' technique, new wool fibres had trouble bonding with the old felt surface. 'Old' wool fibres also lose their scaly surface with time and essentially these 'hooks' on the surface of the fibres are what begins the process of binding them together into felt. Linen, leather and wooden head and foot blocks were also known to have been used in Western Europe.

MAKING THE MITTENS

Not having any wool from a Northern Short Tailed sheep at hand, I decided to use a 100gm of particularly silky unbleached Merino wool that I had bought whilst in Tasmania. It was exactly a year old from the date of purchase so it helped me to establish my first threshold for just exactly 'how old' wool can be, before it won't felt any longer. Happily, year old wool felts beautifully. Nor did I want to sacrifice any of my linen to make a resist so although the technique is period, modern replacements were used for most materials used.

The first thing to do with any felt project is to establish the amount of wool to use and the rate of shrinkage that will occur. A 10cm x 10cm square was made and then remeasured. As expected of Merino wool it shrank by approximately 3cm. Direction of the layering and the number of layers laid in opposite directions affects shrinkage which is why one side shrank more than the other.

A chart put together by the Victorian Feltmakers Inc, recommended 80gm of clean, scoured wool for one oven mitt. I have found their recommendations to be slightly more than I actually used so I decided that 50gm per mitten would probably be plenty. It was duly weighed up into two piles to ensure equal weight across both gloves.

The various essential items were assembled which, shown above, include a soap gel to change the pH balance of the wool. Doing this further encourages the felting process. In times past, urine was often used to change the pH balance. Other items shown include old towels, terylene, the wool tops, rubber mat, the resist and a matchstick blind.

The resist was made from foam rubber. Two were cut to measure 3cm bigger than my hand as shown at right. These were then joined at the wrist using fibreglass tape. The huge double ended hands were then laid on top of the matchstick blind and layers of wool were laid down in opposing directions, wetted down with soapy hot water, rolled hundreds of times, turned around, rolled again and then cut in half.

The process of covering the resist with the alternating layers of fleece.

Each individual mitten was then turned inside out and massaged vigorously from both sides, shocked in hot and then cold water, rubbed on my handmade felting board, thrown heavily at a hard surface, and finally steam ironed to a reasonably dry state..

The final 'dry' mittens shrank perfectly to fit my hands.

Now began the process of decoration.

The original image wasn't clear so I drew over the top to try and make the embroidery clearer. As it was in black and white, colours had to be chosen. It has been shown that certain colours are more popular in different parts of the Norse countries with blues and greens being more popular in the original homelands in the north of Europe than in their farther flung bases of Ireland and England so blues and greens were used to give the mittens some colour.

The embroidery has been completed enough to make them functional but at some later stage I will continue to finish the original design but have decided to wait for my copy of Magrethe Hald's book which holds the coveted original image.

Stop Press!

Tyg's mittens won the Kingdom A&S competition - Textiles for the hand or feet at November Crown.

Well done, and thanks for sharing your work on it.

REFERENCES

Hald, Magrethe (1980). Ancient Danish Textiles from Bogs and Burials, The National Museum of Denmark. Alfson, Tarrach (mundane name unknown). Fig 16 from Clothing of a Wealthy 7th Century Northern European Warrior.

http://home.earthlink.net/~tarrach_alfson/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/clothing.pdf

(last accessed 11/11/05)

Clements, Jan. What Fleece and How Much? Victorian Feltmakers Inc

Paetau Sjoberg, Gunilla. Feltmaking - New Directions for Felt an Ancient Craft

Van Zuilen, Martien. (reprint 1996) Shrinkage of your Felt. Victorian Feltmakers Inc

Deliberately Concealed Garments Project website <http://concealedgarments.org> (last accessed 29/10/05)

The Felted Paths website http://home.paralynx.com/!taylor_york/SCA/FeltedPaths.htm (accessed 29/10/05)

Felting in Mongolia site http://members.tripod.com/~Mongolian_Page/Felting/felting.html (accessed 29/10/05)

Our Ranked members

Weaving	Knitting
Mistress Leonore of Orkney Master Weaver	Mistress Margie of Glen More Master Knitter
Mistress Margie of Glen More Master Weaver	Angharad novice
Mistress Mathilde Adycote Master weaver	
Lady Eyrika von Teklenburg novice	
Mistress Marit the Wanderer novice	

Cording/braiding	Tablet weaving
Lady Teffania Tuckerton Journeyman	Mistress Miriam Galbraith Master Tablet weaver
novices	Lady Rohanna Nachtuele Journeyman
Lady Dominica de Zaragoza	Novices
Lady Iseabail	Lady Catherine de Arc
Lady Alessandra Torrigioni	Lady Eopwn Birdie
Lady Gwendoyrn Regnadatter	Lady Eurgain the Faithful
Lady Morag Freyer	Lady Iseabail
Lord Jacques du Glaces	Lady Morag Freyser
Mistress Marit the Wanderer	Lady Alessandra Torrigioni
Lady Thomasse la Filantriere	Lady Osanna
Lady Eyrika von Teklenburg	Lady Teffania Tuckerton
Eurgain the Faithful	

Dyeing	Nalbindning
Mistress Leonore of Orkney Master Dyer	Mistress Margie of Glen More novice
Mistress Margie of Glen More Master Dyer	Lady Rohanna Nachteule novice

Spinning	Felting
Mistress Leonore of Orkney Master Spinner	Novices
Mistress Margie of Glen More Master Spinner	Lady Tyghra na Tintagel
Mistress Madeline de Bourgogne Master Spinner	Lady Morag Freyser
Baroness Miriam de Mont Noir Journeyman	
Novices	Lace
Angharad	Mistress Mathilde Adycote Master
Mistress Miriam Galbraith	Mistress Miriam Galbraith Master
Mistress Marit the Wanderer	
Lady Morag Freyser	
Lady Thomasse la Filantriere	
Lady Eyrika von Teklanburg	

Please check your listing, and contact Morag and Mistress Marit with the details of your grading - please use the grading submission forms and your personal progress sheets available on the website <http://www.sca.org.au/fibre> . The Guild Masters use the information in the Guild Rolls to show we know we can promote someone in the ranks - which includes a ceremony at the Guild Accession Day.

Controversy Corner: Royalty Gifts

Can we lift to the challenge of reintroducing (and perhaps catching up) with Royalty gifts?
Discuss amongst yourselves, the fibre list and at meetings, with comments summarised in next newsletter .
Decision to be made by Midwinter ASXL.

Local Wardens

The following members have volunteered to be the Warden for their group:

Politarhropolis - Lady Morag Freyser
Agaricus - Mistress Marit the Wanderer OP
St-Florian-de-la-Riviere - Mistress Leanore of Orkney OL
RiverHaven - Baroness Glynhyvar OP
Bordescros Lady Lowry (currently overseas)
Ynys Fawr - Mistress Miriam d' Mont Noir OP

Wardens are our local contacts and Ministers for Enthusiasm. If you are interested in becoming a local contact, just chat to Morag or Marit.

Guild Masters

Mistress Margie of Glen More (Arrowreach)
Mistress Miriam Galbraith (Stormhold)
Mistress Rohese de Fairhurst (Politarhropolis)
Mistress Mathilde Adycote of Menhiot (Politarhropolis)
Mistress Leanore of the Orkneys (St Florain-de-la-riviere)

Webmistress

Lady Gwennie

Contacting the Acting Chronicler:

Lady Morag Freyser
Fibre@sca.org.au