

The Red Threde



Newsletter for
The Royal Fibre Guild of Lochac

~ Midwinter ~

~ Contents ~

- 1 *Message from the Guildmaster*
- 2 *The Baldishol Tapestry*
- 3 *Ramblings from the Chronicler*
- 4 *The Perils of Cut Velvet Appreciation*
- 5 *Links to articles on Medieval Textiles*
- 6 *Arts & Sciences Competitions*
- 7 *Guild Regnum*

~ From the Guildmaster ~

It's been a quiet quarter for the guild. Personally, I've been recovering from the fun of Rowany Festival and Canterbury Faire, and readying the garden for the onset of winter. With this quieter indoor weather, we tend to want to move about less. For me that's meant instead of a lacklustre performance as one of the dance teachers at my college one week, I brought along string and started quietly braiding in the corner as another teacher taught. Sure enough, I soon had participants wondering what I was doing, and then braiding themselves.

A request for specific colours of cord (red and black) and a purpose (sword lanyard) reminded me that the uses we describe for cords and colours we use can be a big difference on the appeal of our crafts to different genders and demographics.

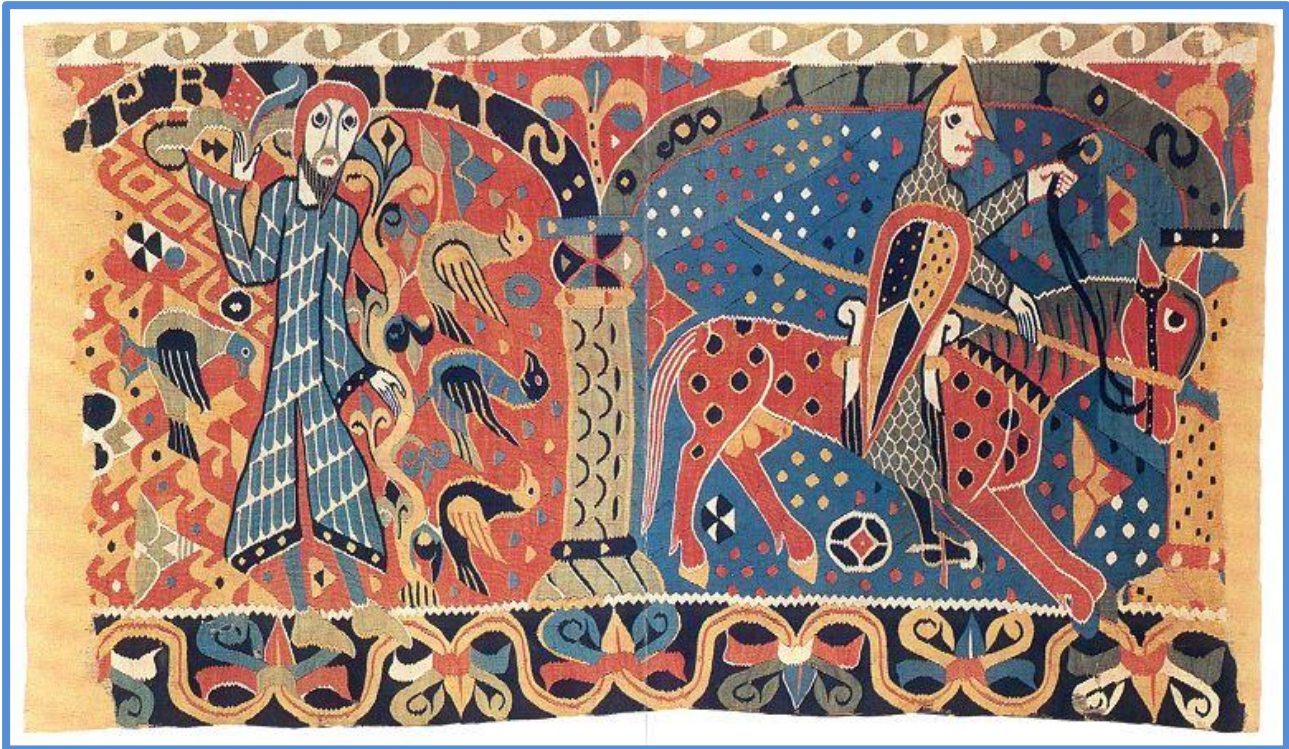
I find men are just as interested in learning if they can overcome the social stigma of doing something which might be considered less masculine. The mechanics of weaving appeal more to men than women generally. I know many men who braid and weave, but I see far less than this involved in the guild. The very presence of so many women may be a little intimidating, so my special appeal to our members this month is to especially reach out to the men and boys you know who practise fibre arts and make them feel extra welcome to join or participate in the guild. And when you teach a fibre art, consider if you can add some more masculine elements to your teaching method (eg fingerloop braids were used to lace samurai armour, see <<http://www.lmbric.net/n7/n7.html>>) to overcome the gendered perceptions of our art.

As this goes to press, I'm waiting to find out who will be the winner of the competition to see which guild member could make the most award cords between Rowany Festival and Midwinter. Hopefully we will have had many cords to present to their incoming majesties Crown Prince Henri de Montferrant and Crown Princess Beatrice Maria at Midwinter

Coronation. Your part in making award cords for the Kingdom is a vital contribution, be it only one or many.

And if you didn't get any cords to Midwinter Coronation, fear not, for more cords will be needed at 12th Night.

Baroness Teffania de Tuckerton
Guildmaster



The Baldishol Tapestry

Is housed in the **The Oslo Museum of Applied Art**. It is believed to originate from the very end of the 12th century. The part which has been preserved - the two months of April and May - is a fragment of a larger tapestry designed as a frieze which most likely consisted of 12 motives - one for each month of the year. More information on how it was made and its lucky discovery can be found at –

<http://www.aldus.dk/baldishol/default-eng.html>





~ *Ramblings from the Chronicler* ~

It's always interesting to hear what people are working on, fibre-wise. Sadly though, we seem to rarely discuss our latest addiction on the group's email list. Probably because we're all so busy working on them!

My latest fibre foray has led me full circle back towards tapestry weaving. This came about due to the Fibre Department at the Australian National University (ANU) running an introductory course over four Sundays, for free. Yes, free! This is because it'll be Canberra's 100th birthday next year and they're putting together a design for a large tapestry to hang in the Legislative Assembly chambers. The design will feature icons of Canberran life and they're hoping to get the community involved with weaving it. There'll also be an exhibition of individual tapestries woven by the various participants.

As I studied tapestry weaving quite some years ago now, it has been interesting to see how quickly my fingers remembered the routine of rolling the tapestry specific bobbin through the warp threads and then beating the weft down, whilst making sure all the colours line up. As each row of weaving can be made up of literally dozens of colours, one needs to be mindful of which direction the wefts are moving in, and that ends are meeting so that warp threads don't show through. It's an artform that has always been highly prized throughout history, with tapestries being worth their literal weight in gold as booty on the warfield.

Although today, tapestry weaving techniques vary a little from the medieval period, it is still remarkably similar in many ways. Although Australia is relatively young, we are lucky to have one of the few remaining professional tapestry workshops in the world. Located in Melbourne, the Australian Tapestry Workshop still undertakes large commissions for clients around the globe. More info can be gleaned from <http://www.austapestry.com.au/> Classes are conducted there as well as at the ANU, and South East Victorian TAFE runs online diploma courses.

As there aren't any minutes to report, and as there aren't many articles from members for inclusion, this quarterly newsletter is a little on the thin side. My thanks go to Aoife for her story. I'm sure it's happened to many of us, or will!

I hope you enjoy the images of period tapestries!

Mistress Damiana Tigre de Sylva
Guild Chronicler



Detail from the Baldishol Tapestry, Oslo



~ *The Perils of Cut Velvet Appreciation* ~

... in which our protagonist is nearly arrested in her attempts to get near a piece of extant Italian velvet

So... the titles pretty much gives you all you need to know. In fact, it sums up neatly what I am about to tell you. Though, saying "nearly arrested" is certainly an exaggeration. Allow me to set the scene.

The year is 2010 and I am travelling in the USA with some dancing friends of mine. We have ten days in New York, and finally the day comes when we decide to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The very first section we walk into is early medieval. They see my eyes kind of glaze over in ecstasy and say "We wanted to check out the Ancient Egyptian exhibition, do you want to catch up with us when you're done?". I nodded vaguely. I positively floated through the medieval section looking at jewellery, books, furniture, statues, pottery. Eventually I was getting into the later medieval period and finally I hit the Italian Renaissance section. The experience had become spiritual, I suppose, everything was so cool it was overwhelming.

So now I'm in the Italian section, everything is Fourteenth and Fifteenth century. There is a plinth in front of me and on it rests a large chest of drawers and to its right a lovely chair. These are quite beautiful but what actually catches my eye is the panel of beautiful red and gold cut velvet hanging on the wall, behind glass, just behind and slightly to the right of the chair. It's a bit tattered in places, but you can still see the glorious floral pattern, vines and leaves in scarlet, the backing in thread of gold. Naturally it became imperative to get as close to the velvet as possible and examine it. How deep was the pile, how thick is the gold thread, how tight does the weave look. So many questions!

I walk around to the right hand side of the plinth, I have to lean over it and kind of behind the chair to get my face right close to the velvet. And it was so beautiful, the colour was still so vibrant, and the gold thread was thick, I could see the fine filaments of the gold as they coiled around a base thread. The pile of the velvet was about 7mm I

thought, more than half, not quite a proper centimetre. There is an obnoxious beeping sound. An alarm. I look around, and the security guard is giving me a meaningful look.

"Please step away from the art ma'am."

Length of Velvet

Date: late 15th century
Culture: Italian (Venice)
Medium: Silk, metal thread
Dimensions: 58.4 x 375.9 cm
MMoA Accession Number: 12.49.8

Sheepishly, I do. Then it's a bit too awkward to be in the room with him, I was a bit embarrassed about the whole thing. I get a text from my friends, it's time to go. I felt a bit better about my own infringement of the museums alarm system when it turned out that one of my friends had actually rested on a Sphinx in the Ancient Egyptian exhibition. She actually leant against it. I get the impression she was more severely told off than I was too.

So there you have it. Much less dramatic than the title, but something that I am certain all people with a vague textile obsession come up against.

Lady Aoife inghean Uí Conchobhair



Editor's Notes:

Out of curiosity, I went hunting for this beautiful sounding piece of cut velvet and found the image that I used to accompany Aoife's article. Although it's not likely to be the same piece she came close to being arrested over, it gives you some idea of how beautiful these cut silk velvets were and are. As this particular item is actually housed within the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I like to think it might just be the one that caused the Aoife Incident ☺

An accompanying article on "Renaissance Velvet Textiles" accompanies this item. Aside from describing just what velvet actually is, there is a fabulous slide show displaying other velvet lengths and finished items made from velvet. It can be found at – http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/velv/hd_velv.htm

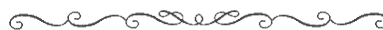
They also have a freely available pdf on **medieval fabrics** that can be found at –

<http://www.metmuseum.org/pubs/bulletins/1/pdf/3258789.pdf.bannered.pdf>

The eight Metropolitan Museum of art galleries that focus on the broad medieval period can be found towards the bottom of this linked page – <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/galleries>

The Cloisters, also belonging to the MMoA, can be found at –

<http://www.metmuseum.org/visit/visit-the-cloisters/>



Tapisseries de l'Apocalypse

can be seen in Angers Castle, France. Only 70 remain. They were conceived and executed by Nicolas Bataille and Robert Poinçon between 1375 and 1382. The history of the tapestry's survival is fascinating in itself

The front cover of this newsletter is another close up detail from this series of beautiful tapestries.

The importance of silk textile production to the economy and society of Italy during the Renaissance was expressed by one sixteenth-century writer:

"The silk craft is a very noble art, worthy of being plied by any true gentleman . . . It is a craft that exalts the rich and helps the poor; and great skills are needed to ply it since it involves an infinitude of operations; no one is to be found who is capable of doing on his own the many tasks that it involves."



detail from the Lady and the Unicorn tapestry series, designed in France, woven in Flanders, 1485-1500



Arts & Sciences Competitions



Midwinter Coronation, this weekend has a category for within the Kingdom Arts & Sciences competition for 'An Item made of Wool'. Looking forward to hearing more about the entries.

November Crown is to be held in the Shire of Adora (Wollongong, NSW) at a particularly lovely location (I was lucky enough to attend a wedding there). Personally, I work best when there's a goal in mind or a technique that I've always wanted to try out or refresh myself with.

Luckily, there are two categories that we can all work towards. The finished item will also be useful as ongoing items in our garb stash or as presents.

A Period Item Constructed from Handmade Non-Woven Fabric – eg sprang, felted, knitting, etc and ***A Belt or Garter*** – this item can be woven!

Again, these categories are tailor made for us all, or should I say 'fibre' made!

For more information about the competitions go to - <http://lochac.sca.org/artsandsciences> but also feel free to raise any questions on the Fibre Guild email list, or contact any of the people listed in the Regnum at the back of this newsletter.

~ Guild Contact List ~

- ❖ Website - <http://lochac.sca.org/fibre>
- ❖ Email List - <http://lochac.sca.org/mailman/listinfo/fibreguild>
- ❖ Guildmaster - Baroness Teffania de Tuckerton
<http://lochac.sca.org/fibre/about/contact/>
PO Box 8029, Monash University LPO, Clayton VIC 3800
- ❖ Webmistress - Lady Fíne ingen uí Scolaighe
- ❖ Chronicler - Mistress Damiana Tigre de Sylva (Tig)
tig @ fastmail . com . au (remove spaces)



Local Wardens



- ❖ **Politarchopolis (ACT)** - Fru Ragnrildr Freysteindottir
- ❖ **Rowany (Sydney, NSW)** - Mistress Caristiona nic Beathain
- ❖ **Agaricus (Sthrn. Sydney district, NSW)** - Mistress Marit the Wanderer OP
- ❖ **Okewaite (Goulburn & Sthrn. Highlands, NSW)** - Mistress Damiana Tigre de Sylva OL
- ❖ **St-Florian-de-la-Riviere (QLD)** - Countess Leonore d'Scotia OL
- ❖ **River Haven (QLD)** - Mistress Glynhyvar OP
- ❖ **Bordescros (Albury, Wondonga, Wagga Wagga districts, VIC/NSW)** - TH Lady Lowry ferch Gwynwynwyn ap Llewelyn
- ❖ **Ynys Fawr (Tasmania)** - Mistress Miriam d'Mont Noir OP
- ❖ **Southron Gaard (Christchurch, NZ)** - Lady Amalie von Brisache
- ❖ **Aneala (Western Australia)** - Lady Aoife inghean Uí Chonchobhair (of St Basil's)



Above left & right – details from the Baldishol Tapestry, 12th century, Norman, Oslo Museum

Left – Tapestry woven panel, Copt Egyptian, 4th-5th centuries, wool and undyed linen, V&A Museum