

June 2025

Saturday 28 June in the morning

Fleece Fair

Our June meeting opened with our annual fleece fair. The fleeces of fifteen breeds of sheep were available, which included native and rare breeds. The selection included a Llama fleece which has a coarse outer coat, but a wonderfully soft undercoat. It has no lanolin which is *great for spinning* because it is very workable.

As usual, the stall holders were generous in sharing their knowledge of the different characteristics of the fleeces which is so useful in making choices of which fleece to use for your project.



Wolfhanger Shetlands



Upland Down Shetlands



Peregine Sisters

Show and Tell

There was a wide-ranging display of members' projects and members enjoyed hearing the story behind each project. This is a particularly useful time for members who are learning a new skill, we all need to be encouraged to try something a little different – whatever the outcome.

We were delighted that our speaker, Carey Fleiner, showed us her contribution – a bag using the sprang method of weaving. Sprang has been used for 3000 years and looks a bit like netting and is created when warp threads are twisted around one another - it predates knitting and since there is no weft it is not weaving either. Now, that's an idea for members to try!



A full 'Show and Tell' table

Competition - The Fortescue Trophies

There were two competitions:

- a) for 25g skein of wool prepared and spun by hand from the fleece
- b) for 25g skein of yarn spun from any commercially prepared fibre

The skeins for both competitions were labelled with details of the breed of sheep or fibre that had been used and the purpose the skein will be used. There were some fine examples of beautifully spun yarn entered. Our speaker, Carey Fleiner, agreed to be judge and was generous in her observations of the entries. In the end someone had to win and for both trophies it was Frances Fletcher. **Well done, Frances!**



a) Skein of wool prepared and spun by hand



b) Skein of yarn spun from any commercially prepared fibre

Saturday afternoon's talk

Myths, Fairy Tales and Saga - spinning and weaving in the ancient and medieval world

We were in for a real treat with a fascinating talk by Dr Carey Fleiner, a lecturer at Winchester University and historical expert in Roman and Medieval spinning and weaving. Carey talked us through the fascinating world of not only the myths, fairy tales and sagas using the words spinning and weaving but also how these crafts were embedded into everyday life.



Carey kept our attention going with the many instances where women overcame impossible situations using weaving and spinning. An example was when Penelope, the faithful wife of Odysseus, waited 20 years for her husband to return, by promising her father-in-law that she would find a suitor after finishing her father-in-law's shroud. However, she unravelled her work each night, effectively stalling for time and gaining some control of the situation.

Sunday 29 June - Workshop on Nalbinding

Eleven members spent a fun Sunday being taught the basics of nalbinding – a Neolithic method of turning short lengths of yarn/fibre into cloth.

The workshop was led by Carey Fleiner. Carey explained that although nalbinding was a very ancient craft it remained popular, particularly in Scandinavian countries, until recent times. Mainly used to make hats, gloves, socks and bootees, there are still a few early samples in museums.



Nalbinding in all its glory!

Quick tip – when working a hat from top to brim, use the span of your hand to judge the size of the crown.

The morning was spent mastering the 3 basic stitches:

Josephine knot (a backwards slip knot) & simple loops.

Coptic stitch – back stitch through the row above.

Coppergate stitch – back stitch through the row above and the 'live' row.

Using a simple wooden needle and chunky, single ply, gently spun yarn (and after a bit of swearing over the slip knot) the basic stitches were mastered and small woolly domes started to appear. In the afternoon, demonstrating slightly optimistic enthusiasm, the class persuaded Carey to move on to the more complex Oslo stitch – this is a more versatile stitch, worked over your thumb, and for some, was a stitch too far!



Carey guiding her budding nalbinders!



Nalbinding in action

All students went home with the various samples they had worked, their lovely wooden needle and enough yarn to spend the evening trying to bash out a pair of socks, a woolly hat, or possibly just an egg cosy.....

And this is what we made! →



This was a really fascinating workshop, with a great teacher. Everyone learnt some new skills, as well as an insight into the lives of the women who went before us.

We would definitely recommend asking Carey to return and steer us through the complexities of Sprang.....

Carey (in the red top) and her enthusiastic students

