

Tapestry Weaver

The British Tapestry Group • Issue 17 November 2015



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the BRITISH TAPESTRY group

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Acting Chair's Report June 2015

During the summer two Regional exhibitions have been held. In June, members of the London Group held their exhibition "This is Woven Tapestry!" at the Hepsibah Gallery, London. The Scottish Group's exhibition "Golden Fibre" ran from the 25th July to the 18th October at the Verdant Works, Dundee.

We are celebrating our 10th year in this edition of Tapestry Weaver so I thought I would share a little of what we have accomplished. At the 2008 AGM a new committee was elected. In response to an appeal for members to join the committee I was co-opted in September 2008. At this meeting, and high on the agenda, was the need for a new constitution. As this was one of my areas of expertise I offered to undertake this task and the constitution was adopted at the 2009 AGM/conference in Stirling. Since then we have been documenting the way we work and developing the policies needed to underpin our activities, some of which were legal requirements. For instance, in the members section you will find information on data protection, health & safety, protection & safeguarding, copyright and also how to take good photographs of your weavings! We are proud of our journal Tapestry Weaver, which started as a newsletter and is now a full colour magazine filled with interesting articles.

The current BTG website was designed to showcase members' work and provide information/news for members and the public. The members' directory and the Regional Groups have helped us make contact with

each other and many exhibitions at local level have been held. In the last 10 years we have held five national exhibitions. On social media BTG Facebook and Twitter are getting the BTG name out there . . .

So I believe we are meeting our aims in promoting woven tapestry as a contemporary art form. We raise public awareness through professional exhibitions, networking and regional initiatives. We encourage the public to learn tapestry weaving through courses and seeing demonstrations. We also offer a choice of membership; 'Associate' for those starting on their weaving journey and 'Full' for active weavers eager to exhibit.

In the last few months the committee and members of the exhibition committee have been working on the exhibition policy and strategy. We are grateful for all the work that went into formulating this document and we are pleased to be looking at some of the ideas for future exhibitions. Making contact with arts professionals, looking for venues /galleries and developing exhibition proposals is both exciting and creative. If you are interested in helping with this, even if only for a limited time period, please get in touch.

So thank you all for your support and encouragement as BTG moves on into its next decade!

Trisha Gow, Acting Chair



Editor's Report

What a pleasure it is to be the Editor for this 10th Anniversary Issue! I hope you like the diversity of the articles. I am always astounded by the imagination of the weaving community and the works of art that are accomplished by them. We have articles from the founders of BTG and I am sure you will join me in thanking them for their foresight, imagination and endurance. We are also showcasing some exciting talent for you to explore further. There is something for everyone. So, sit back and enjoy your read!

*Hilary O'Connell
Editor*

Why We Need a Tapestry Group

Ten years ago four relatively local Yorkshire tapestry weavers answered Ros Bryant's call to meet and discuss how to promote tapestry weaving and help weavers form a more cohesive group. At this point there was only local and spasmodic communication between weavers and tapestry weaving in the UK was in decline. There were very few exhibitions in the UK that showed tapestry exclusively and it was being absorbed under a much more general 'fibre art' title. There was very little awareness of it beyond practitioners and craft galleries and rapidly dwindling educational opportunities for young people.

I have been a practising artist/tapestry weaver for 50 years and it has always been hard to communicate with all but a few other weavers; a very isolating existence. I think it was seen as a bit of an anachronism in the 20th/21st century! Before the digital age, communication was slow and more locally based; we could not instantly find out if anything was happening in other parts of the country, let alone internationally. Many curators in galleries were unaware of tapestry weaving and its history. We still struggle to make an impact in today's contemporary fine art establishments but it is easier for everyone to find information. You only have to 'google' 'Tapestry Weaving' to find the British Tapestry Group (BTG) site and many others, but there still seems a reluctance to accept tapestry weaving as a valid fine art medium even with its unique qualities and long history. There is no easy answer to changing this attitude but with a well organised group like BTG, a good website, magazine and exhibition catalogues, we are more likely to change these attitudes and perceptions.

Unfortunately tapestry weaving seems to fall into a gap - seen as not quite fine art, not functional craft object. Progress seems painfully slow at overcoming this - one of the reasons why BTG has to maintain a very high professional standard in the events and exhibitions staged.



Tapestry Halifax Photographer Jerry Hardman Jones

but by providing a network and forum for beginners and established practitioners alike and, most important, making tapestry weaving visible again. We are now a cohesive group with more power to influence people and promote the future of tapestry.

It is still hard work for committee members and needs commitment and dedication, but a group has been developed which can now reach out to everyone. This, of course, would not be as easy without the internet. It would have been fantastic to have had this facility and a national tapestry group earlier in my career. The email newsletter gives us regular information on exhibitions, exhibiting and educational opportunities, possible commissions, group events, and stops the feeling of isolation common previously. Before this we had to rely on word of mouth, magazines such as Craft and Artists Newsletter, postal communication from the likes of the Craft Council, much more limited and less regular and less specific sources of information. Now we are able to find out what some of the regional BTG groups are doing, some being more successful than others in organising themselves. The magazine gives us interesting and very varied articles and yet more information on every aspect of tapestry weaving. All this takes a lot of hard work by the members who have volunteered for these jobs. BTG is a huge strength giving more power, prestige and confidence to weavers, as well as informing the many people who have little or no previous awareness of tapestry weaving.

The difficulty still is getting the contemporary art world to accept tapestry weaving as a viable, relevant medium. This is far more likely to happen with a well organised, professional group approach than as



Tapestry Today Photographer Bill Major

Setting up BTG, organising the initial exhibitions 'Tapestry Today' and 'Tapestry 08', finding venues and getting funding was immensely hard work for five people, but, in retrospect, effort well spent. It is gratifying to see how BTG has grown and evolved, perhaps not always in the way we had first imagined,



'Pilbara' by Beryl Hammill Photographer Terence Hammill

individuals. It is crucial to publicise every exhibition we have as widely as possible.

One of the things to strike me most in the exhibitions we have had has been the breadth and diversity of work being produced. This never ceases to amaze and inspire me. It is also good for less experienced members to have the opportunity to exhibit alongside those with more experience. I am sure this gives them confidence and is an incentive to develop their work and keep weaving, always the hardest thing to do on your own. I know it would have been a big help to me earlier in my weaving life.

I hope the BTG will continue to thrive, evolve and develop as it has done in the last 10 years. For this to happen members have to be willing to participate in the organisation, whether nationally or regionally. Without this it will not survive. I feel passionately that tapestry weaving should not just survive but flourish and get the recognition it deserves. I am proud of our achievement in setting up BTG and I am sure that Ros, Janet, Shirley and Nicola feel the same.

Beryl Hammill

Hanne Skyum

Weaving and Printing Nature

I recently visited a tapestry weaver in Denmark. It was an inspirational visit – finding an artist who works in a range of ways which feed each other, including art printing and working with the wooden printing surface.

Hanne Skyum is a tapestry weaver with a background in fine art. She trained as a tapestry weaver at the Art Academy of Jutland in Aarhus at a time when tapestry was considered on a par with other artistic disciplines. This textile line no longer exists, but the legacy of the training can be seen in Hanne's work, which is painterly, organic and uses colour in subtle ways.



Hanne's Studio

In her studio new and older work lie side by side. The room has a large Lervad tapestry loom on one side, which unfortunately did not have any weaving work on it; but remaining threads of a warp hung loosely down suggested a tapestry removed and hung on display somewhere. Instead she had piles of many fine prints and also there was her current work being developed - a printing commission for the Danish Ethical Council based on the theme of hunting.

Her work deals with the natural environment; trees have been an ongoing theme, but you find moths, birds and echoes of vegetation throughout her work. She uses linen in her weavings, which she dyes herself. The linen creates a light, robust sort of cloth, and by using muted colours, the work has a soft firmness and a slight sheen.

Her most recent tapestry, Black Crows, has been

accepted for the International Textile Triennial at Lodz next year. What an honour it must be to be recognised in this way; it is comforting to know that beautiful and meaningful textiles are still able to stand alone as art works in their own right.



Black Crows

Hanne's work has some of those qualities of Scandinavian tapestry that retain a traditional edge, yet speak with a contemporary feeling. I think you can detect this Danish way of thinking about the craft of tapestry in Hanne's work - a sensitivity to the chosen materials, mainly linen and a bit of silk and wool, but also the wood she uses in her carved printing blocks.

She was clear that both art forms feed into each other - the printing enables her to work in building up striated images of plant life. This layering of shades of greens or browns or yellows build up an overall impression which suggest stylisations that could be applied in weavings. She also carves images into larger panels of hard birch wood plates which are later stained using contrasting shades - she showed me one that carried the crow motif she has recently worked with in her tapestries. These larger blocks are not used in printing, but are art works in themselves.



Weaving and Wefts

Hanne does not keep sketchbooks, but draws onto sheets of paper. She also takes her own photographs using a digital camera, although she does not manipulate these images in any way. The hand is integral to her design process. Drawing, painting, making all develop through the combination of creative thought and the hand in the emergent process of making. Danish design education nowadays is increasingly teaching conceptual work using computers and this leads to handcraft taking a secondary role. This sounds like a move away from the craft tradition that made Denmark famous in its furniture designs. It is a relief to know that some artist-makers still consider craft to give life to the value and quality of their artistic expression. Hanne Skyum's work certainly has gained much from the considered reflection of her themes in the development of her art, be it tapestry or printing.

Lorna C Goldsmith

All photos by Lorna Goldsmith

Ties that Bind

Ten years of connection, and change

One of us thought out loud, where are all the other weavers? We were a small group of people meeting to weave together. Somehow a spark took hold and plans for an exhibition flared up. Tapestry Today was an exhilarating rush of shared work, of people and tapestries coming and going, spilled paint, strained deadlines and humours, and budgets (we had nothing). The result was a stunning exhibition, seen by hundreds, and which paid for itself and left us determined to have a go at doing the job "properly".

From there, the British Tapestry Group has grown, connecting weaver to weaver and taking tapestry out to excited audiences. If you're reading this, then you're no doubt a part of it. We owe a big thank you to the members who are doing the ongoing work - pioneering is exciting, the long haul can be less so.

I've spent most of the intervening years in Orkney where in a similar flurry Northlight Studio emerged from a derelict butchers shop. In through the door have come artists to hang exhibitions - the space changes, visitors come, students come to weave, explore, share ideas and cuppas - and Millie (scruffy, amiable and a collie), and I live in the butchers back room. My loom, over time moved from the studio to the back of a van parked at the beach, the changing 'airts' of Orkney wind and tide my perennial subject.



Northlight Studios



The Big Stromness Tapestry

Made by 38 weavers, over 3 months and is 8ft in width, woven mostly in linen which we dyed. It is a celebration of the lively harbour village we live and work in, and of there being sufficient weavers here who could do this. I'd never worked at this scale before, nor on a group project. None of singly would have made this piece, together we did it!

For me there is the added pleasure of having had my mum, by then quite frail and living with Millie and I, sharing the many cuppas and biscuits that kept us all weaving.

So much happy connection, but by the time this is printed, Northlight Studio will have been handed on, and I will be living on the smaller Orkney island of

Westray. At a traditional steading called South Hamar I hope to make home and studio for myself, and a space for visiting artists to come to stay and work.

Several miles from the nearest streetlights, it looks out to sea and other islands over farmed land; the nearest neighbours are cattle.

If there's anything I can say about the BTG, and my own 10 years experience, it's this - that we need each other, and the sharing that happens amongst weavers is a huge benefit - the group has done a great deal to enable this. But - in order to make really good work, we also need solitude, and to be prepared for long hours of working alone, and we need good teaching to start off with.

Now we are ten, I feel the BTG is now 'grown up', and has work to do in raising the next generation, particularly the 'professional' tapestry weavers.

My personal journey from discovering tapestry to becoming a weaver was through a pretty narrow gate. The opportunity came in the form of a small Arts Council grant, a willing and well qualified tutor and the liberty to radically alter my lifestyle. I suspect these privileges would be even rarer now than they were then.

I wonder who, in the future will make the kind of awesome tapestries that have excited us?



Detail of Harbor



Detail of Ghost Boat



Detail of Two Boats



Detail of Mountain

Dedicated tapestry courses are not going to return to higher education in the short term, so maybe some form of 'journeyman apprenticeship' whereby a student works and studies alongside 'masters', might be what's needed. If we could find and support one young weaver with serious intent each year, we'd soon have the excitement of watching them blossom. Between us, we could perhaps offer accommodation, equipment and yarns, open up our studios, homes and purses. The resource needn't be huge. I'd be pleased to hear from anyone else interested in thinking how we might manage this, and can be contacted by email: rosbryant.northlight@gmail.com, or mail: **South Hamar, Westray, Orkney, KW17 2DR.**

Here's to the next ten years of tapestry weaving!

Ros Bryant

All photos by Rebecca Marr

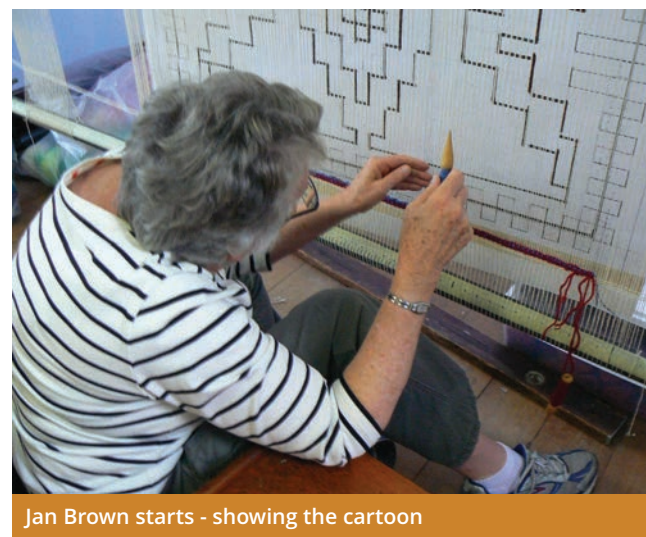
Aurora Australis

In 1983 I joined the Hand Weavers and Spinners Guild of Southern Australia (later becoming it's President). I also enrolled at the North Adelaide School of Art, graduating in 1987 with a Diploma in Fine Art, majoring in Fibre Construction. In 1989 I joined the Onka Studio in Clarendon, a small town in the Adelaide Hills area, where I specialised in weaving floor rugs and garments. After that I undertook commissioned work for hotels, community centres and private homes. In 2003 I became one of the founding members of 'T Arts', a textile & art collective with thirty members in Adelaide.

In 2013 the Hand Spinners and Weavers Guild of South Australia celebrated its 50th birthday by organising year-long projects and exhibitions.

Halfway through 2013 I became aware that we had in storage some Persian rug wool, kindly donated to us by a Middle Eastern woman, which needed to be used. A suggestion was made for a community project involving our members. As I was a rug and tapestry weaver, and had been involved with several large community weaving projects, I thought this was a brilliant idea and offered to lead it.

Checking to see what yarns were available, and in what colours and quantity, I discovered that we did not have sufficient yarns for the project. So the call went out to all members for donations of rug yarn to contribute to this prestigious project. Within weeks we had enough to weave three rugs! Despite the good response there was still only a limited colour palette of reds, sea greens, brilliant blues, rusts, purples and oranges; all varied in intensity of colour but good enough to work with as a designer. To some extent this dictated the colour scheme and resulted in one colour of various intensities being blended on each bobbin.



Jan Brown starts - showing the cartoon

The weaving style I used incorporated both Kilim and Bosnian rug weaving techniques.

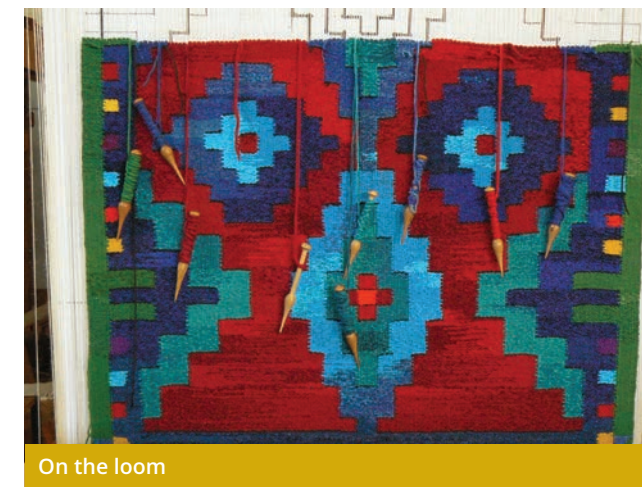


Detail showing interlocking

The word Kilim relates to the Arabic word for curtain and their early uses were as decorative hanging textiles. Traditionally Kilims have also been used for blankets, bed covers, horse blankets, saddlebags and for wrapping goods.

Because of the large geometrical shapes present in the design, large open slits would have been produced in the rug making it very unsuitable for a floor rug. Therefore, I decided to interlock every slit by bringing the yarn on every second pass to continually wrap the weft threads on either side of the slit. This resulted in a kilim rug that had no slits and was therefore more versatile.

My idea developed through using many small coloured drawings on graph paper. Finally I chose three to take to the members for their decision. I designed these three rugs using geometrical shapes in different colours but kept them traditional in design, basic and bold. Finally one design was chosen that related to a small section of a loom-weaving pattern. I felt that it was quite appropriate as most of the members were loom weavers although not all participants were skilled tapestry or rug weavers.



On the loom



Beatrix Matthews standing on boxes

With four serious weavers and others who came when time allowed, and weaving two days a week, we started weaving this fifteen month long project. The warp yarn was set at 6epi and I used a tightly spun woollen rug warp and a double woollen weft thread. The finished rug measures 1.10m x 1.90m.

Since completion of our kilim floor rug in early 2015, it was displayed at this year's Needle Craft Fair where it attracted a lot of interest and much admiration. Within my own work the natural world is my inspiration, the landscapes of the bush, desert and mountain ranges, the delicate and the harsh, the wonder and the beauty of Australia.

Elly Webb, Designer weaver

All photographs by Elly Webb

<https://sites.google.com/site/handspinweaves/>



Elly Webb

"In May I met Elly and her friends at the Weavers, Spinners and Dyers Group in Adelaide. I saw round their amazing premises full of activity and creativity, plus looked into their shop (a real one selling to the public!) I showed them images of my work, talked about dyeing with fungi, and left information about the British Tapestry Group. I also met with some tapestry weavers and then Elly told me about the designing and weaving of the kilim. I thought you might be interested so asked Elly if she would consider writing about the kilim."

Trisha Gow

503 and Counting . . .



Archie Brennan and Susan Maffei Photo by Pam Petrie



Pam's Cabin

In April of the year I was privileged to be able to attend a retreat with Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei at the beautiful Oregon seaside town of Cannon Beach. Archie and Susan had driven from their home in upstate New York, stopping along the way for a month long residency and exhibition in Oklahoma at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, before arriving at the cabin of Pam Patrie. Pam is an Oregon based tapestry artist who has been friends with Archie and Susan for many years and has hosted workshops with Archie and Susan on previous trips to the West Coast. For this trip, Pam, Archie and Susan held two separate 4 day retreat sessions, 10 weavers each, at Pam's cozy cabin which sits atop a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Weavers worked on their own projects during the retreat but also had the opportunity of being able to consult with Archie and Susan one on one as well as participate in spontaneous technique and design sessions throughout the day.



Archie demonstrates

In the evening, after a full day of weaving, Archie and Susan shared their weaving careers with the group of captivated students.

On one evening, Archie's presentation was a retrospective of his work, a career spanning 60 plus years, in which he discussed his early tapestries and how his work has changed throughout the years. He discussed his move from weaving from the back of a tapestry to working from the front and the reason he has no longer weaves from a detailed cartoon, instead beginning with an idea of what he wants to weave and then letting the design develop as he progresses up the tapestry. Archie explained that working from the front of the tapestry, and predominantly from the bottom up without a cartoon, enables the artist/weaver to experience a creative "journey" on the loom, a concept he and Susan both share.



Susan always on hand



Archie talks students listen

Archie's wonderful sense of humor is often present in many of his tapestries, too, as is the depiction of cloth, lace or other 'fabric' textiles. An example of this is his tapestry depicting a man's shirt, tie and jacket, clothing he himself owns, which he often wears when exhibiting and talking about the tapestry. Chuckling, he explained he wanted to see how many people noticed that he was dressed in the same clothes as were shown in the tapestry. Archie also remarked that as of the retreat he had completed 503 tapestries and, by the time this issue of Tapestry Weaver comes out, I am sure that number has grown by several more.

On another night, Susan's presentation highlighted her thirty year career and her interest in Pre-Columbian textiles. She explained how her work is influenced by many prehistory textile items such as huipils, a traditional garment found in Mexico and Central America; quipus, an ancient Andean system used to record information by placing various knots in string; and the patterns left by textiles found in ancient salt pans.

Susan also finds inspiration for her tapestries closer to home. When she and Archie lived in Manhattan, many of her tapestries depicted events she saw in every day life, such as the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the St. Francis Blessing of the Animals celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

After four days of weaving and camaraderie it was time for the weavers to return to their solitary pursuits but the inspiration provided by Archie and Susan will last a very long time.

Cande Walsworth Photos by Cande Walsworth

Websites of Archie, Susan and Pam:

www.brennan-maffei.com

www.susanmartinmaffei.com

www.pampatriestudios.com

Duologue

Duologue is an exhibition of work by Beryl Hammill and Shirley Ross, both founder members of British Tapestry Group, at Bradford Industrial Museum from December 13th 2015 until April 10th 2016.

Both artists find inspiration in the natural environment, and in Shirley's work the man-made environment also. Their work is influenced by their different experiences during training; Beryl studied tapestry weaving at Leeds College of Art, whilst Shirley studied industrial fabric design and construction for the fashion and furnishing trade at the Royal College of Art, turning to fine art weaving much later in her career. This has greatly influenced their methods of working, the techniques used and their approach to designing a tapestry.



Black Gold

This exhibition explores the similarities and differences in their work and becomes a visual conversation. It includes preparatory work, paintings, drawings, sketchbooks and experimental work.

Bradford Industrial Museum, is an old woollen mill which has been converted into a woollen industry museum. It has a large gallery space and a floor of original functioning looms and equipment. They have a big educational remit, so the exhibition is aimed at informing visitors of the processes involved in the production of woven tapestry.

Looking at BTG now, it is hard to remember its humble beginnings when five Yorkshire based weavers met to discuss the idea of forming a national tapestry group. I thought it was a much needed project. Contemporary tapestry as a generally recognised form of fine art really did not exist in this country and for individual artists it was difficult to get exhibition space of any real suitability or importance.

Although British Tapestry Group has not developed in the way I imagined it would, its success both nationally and internationally have proved its value and I am proud to be one of its founder members.

Shirley Ross

Shirley is also the founder of 'Art for Life', a charity which raises money for cancer research, under the auspices of Cancer Research UK, by arranging fine art exhibitions. Its first event in 2014 was in Huddersfield, a second is planned in Leeds in 2016.



Enigma Woven tapestry on steel frame

Once that exhibition closes, Shirley's work will hang in the University College of London Hospital's Macmillan Cancer Centre, along with other donated works, creating an environment full of colour and warmth, reassurance and food for thought.

Beryl Hammill and Shirley Ross

All photos by Shirley Ross

Janet Clark

The Beginning of The British Tapestry Group



left to right: Ros Bryant, Shirley Ross, Beryl Hammill & Janet Clark



The work begins

I remember back to the beginning of The British Tapestry Group (BTG) in 2005 – we held our meetings in the studio at Nicola Wheeler's house in Heptonstall, West Yorkshire. During the first meeting, Ros Bryant suggested forming the BTG. She invited me, Shirley Ross, Beryl Hammill and Nicola Wheeler to form the new organisation. We all felt it was a very good idea, so we did.



The gallery showing Janet Clark's weaving

Our first exhibition was called 'Tapestry Today' and was held in Hebden Bridge in the basement at Machpelah Works from 1st to 15th July 2006. We set about, cleaning, painting, putting partitions up, getting hold of weavings from invited weavers and worrying whether it would work. We charged an exhibitor entry fee to help cover the costs and we broke even! Mainly because we sold a weaving by Meira Stockl just before the exhibition closed. Excellent!

The British Tapestry Group has grown and benefitted hugely from new management, people with new ideas and lots of enthusiasm. We have a Website, Facebook, Tapestry Weaver and active Regional Groups – a major achievement from what started out as a group of five weavers, nervously starting to bring weavers together. The BTG has now brought Tapestry Hand Weaving into the public domain, and is now encouraging many new weavers to take up this ancient art form.



Weaving by Nicolla Wheeler (left) and Ros Bryant (right)

The Knit & Stitch Show in Alexandra Palace and Harrogate has become a major showcase for bringing Tapestry Hand Weaving to the public notice. Its tremendous throughput ensures the maximum number of people see and talk about Tapestry Weaving. We also have a chance to explain what TAPESTRY means! and now have regular visitors to our stand. We also demonstrate how to weave and encourage them to participate with the hope of them taking it up. Our exhibition stand last year was a chance to show Tapestry as the art form it is.

Tapestry Artists taking part in the very first exhibition were:

Maggie Ayling, Joan Baxter, Jane Brunning, Ros Bryant, Janet Clark, Joyce Coulton, Clare Coyle, Carol Dunbar, Alastair Duncan, Jilly Edwards, Gabriella Falk, Pauline Gibson, Beryl Hammill, Ros Hitchens, Maureen Hodge, Fiona Hutchison, Anne Jackson, Kimberley Jackson, Fiona Mathison, Jennie Moncur, Susan Mowatt, Shirley Ross, Christine Sawyer, Schiyo Sharma, Ingrid Sixsmith, Viga Slater, Meira Stockl, Tricia Warman, Emma Jo Webster, Nicola Wheeler, Jane Freear-Wyld.

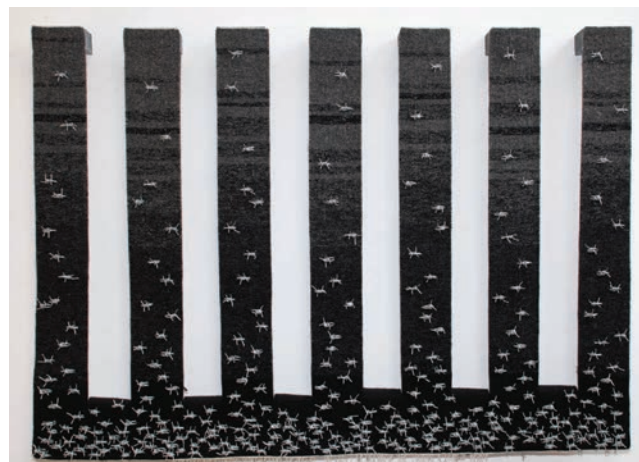
All photos by Shirley Ross

Where to from here?

When asked in August to write this article I understood that there is an interest in the diversity of tapestries that can be seen on my website which shows selected work covering many years. It has been a timely opportunity to think about where I want to go next with my work.

I first started weaving at college and found I was strongly attracted by the rhythm of the loom and the tactile nature of the medium. When it came to trying tapestry weaving I became so excited - anything was possible with such specific control over the woven structure. I experimented with all sorts of techniques and materials but it was some years before I fully came to terms with the control and patience required to produce a high quality piece of tapestry weaving. More importantly, in developing a deeper understanding of the medium, I came to appreciate its subtleties as well. In doing so I became more aware of my interest in subtle change and variation in everything from the novels I enjoy to the sounds of the environment, from the pattern within a tapestry to phrases in music by composers such as Philip Glass, Steve Reich or J. S. Bach.

When I received a Theo Moorman Charitable Trust Award in 2000 to investigate the use of barbed wire and steel in my weaving, I first worked in response to the conflict and peace process in Northern Ireland where I grew up during the troubles.



Conflicting Arguments Photo by David Wibberley

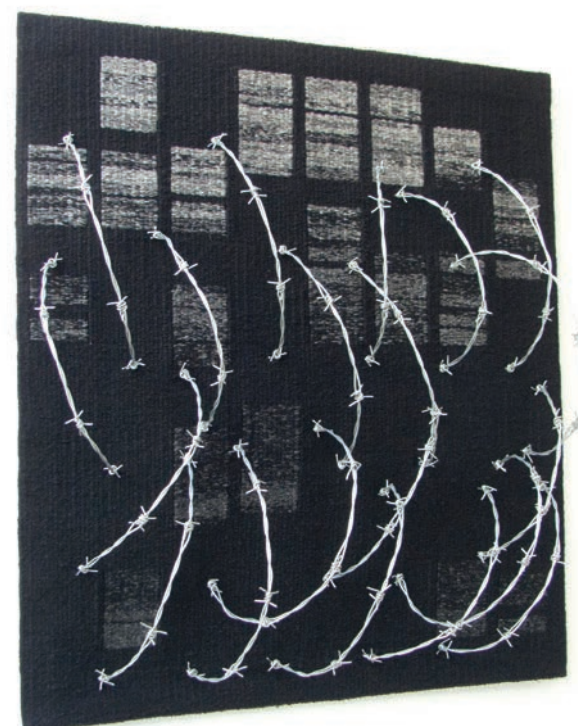
Over time I found myself combining this theme with one I had previously used - regeneration. Looking at the work I have produced over a period of time and the themes I have explored, including earlier ones such as mountain landscape and perception of space, I can identify my more instinctual interests in texture, pattern, rhythm and balance.

My use of barbed wire seems to have generated both positive and negative reactions. People have been fascinated by the conflicting materials and genuinely liked (apparently) some of the tapestries and prints I have produced. However, when people have associated the barbed wire with the violence it



Conflicting Arguments Detail Photo by David Wibberley

is intended to symbolise, their response has been quite the opposite. The reaction to one of the tapestries exhibited in Northern Ireland was, perhaps understandably, decidedly negative.



Now and Then Photo David Wibberley

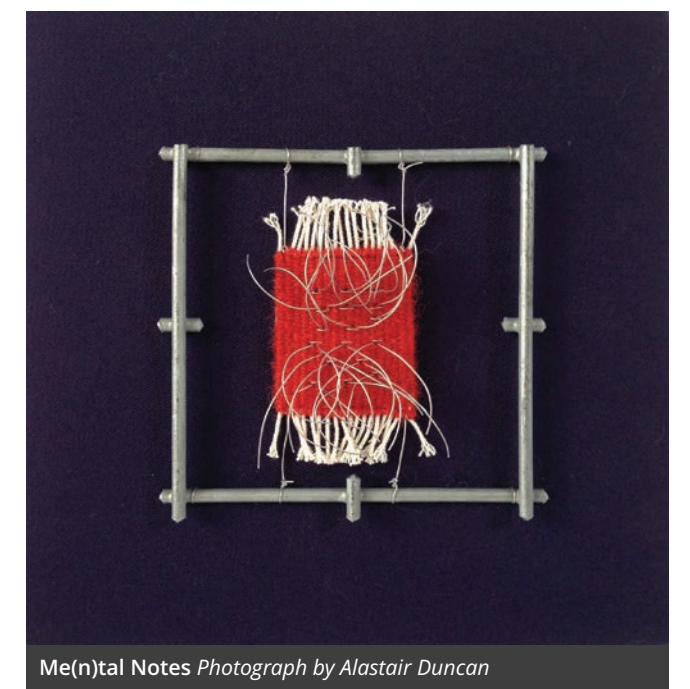


The tapestries have not been widely exhibited and this is partly due to the attitude to health and safety by some gallery staff. It was only thanks to Mike Wallace (thanks again Mike) that one of my pieces was hung in the British Tapestry Group's exhibition in Halifax. Since then I have not been as determined as I perhaps should to get other pieces exhibited.

I have worked in a number of areas as an artist/tapestry weaver - for exhibition, commission work and educational projects. In particular, my work as an artist in education has been influential in broadening my field of interest and skills to that of digital and interactive media. The work I have done with schools in design and weave, print and interactive digital projects revealed my interest in sound. I have since used field re-cording within my StillWalks® business and one of the influences and strongest links for me between this audio-visual work and my tapestry weaving is texture and pattern or rhythm. I now find that I would like to bring these two fields closer together.

Watching Anne Jackson's wonderful talk at the Tapestry Symposium at West Dean at the end of July reminded me of ideas I have had brewing since completing the Caldicot Library commission in which I used long rows of text. A combination of wire, wool, sound and text could be exciting - perhaps I should include proximity warnings as a means of addressing any health and safety issues!

For some time now I have been trying out ideas on a small scale in tapestry, calling these "Me(n)tal Notes". Over the years my interpretation of the term "drawing" has broadened and I now consider these "Me(n)tal Notes" and my photography, sound recording, and digital manipulation as forms of drawing. It is this way of working, combined with my perception and perspective of the world, that will influence the next tapestry I weave, whatever the materials, techniques and technology I may use in the process.



Me(n)tal Notes Photograph by Alastair Duncan

Working on a small scale has its advantages but I miss the rhythm and gradual growth of larger, more complex pieces. The challenge for me now will be to translate my mental notes into tapestries that use some of the materials and techniques I have been experimenting with in a way that is both practical and satisfying to me as an artist and tapestry weaver.

Alastair Duncan
www.alastair-duncan.com
www.stillwalks.com
 email: alastair@acmd.co.uk



The Golden Fibre

An Exhibition of Woven Tapestries Including Jute

Verdant Works, Dundee - July 25th 2015 to October 18th 2015

In the 19th century heyday of jute production, Dundee's Verdant Works was a hive of activity: women and children working long hours to produce the yarn that made Dundee famous as the city of Jam, Jute and Journalism. The Verdant Works is now an award winning museum which brings those times to life. The British Tapestry Group's Scottish Region Members' exhibition adds value to a visit by displaying what can now be achieved using a once commonplace fibre, jute.



Footprints
Woven by Louise Oppenheimer



An Homage to Kuma's V&A
Woven by Alan Gilchrist



Mair Ma Lad
Woven by Jan Watson

An unseasonal downpour dampened my enthusiasm, but the sun came out when I entered this little gem of an exhibition. The small upstairs room with its central display case teemed with happy exhibitors, their friends, and their family - even the press turned up to join the fun.

The criteria - a piece containing at least 10% jute, woven on a wall mounted board 20cm x 20cm with an element of 3D - were taxing, but the 35 exhibits on display met these with ease while advertising the versatility that Dundee has inspired.

I met Libby Hughes' Dennis (the Menace of course) on the prow, laughed at Judith Aylett's whalebone corsets in Cast Off the Stays and was silenced by the meditative beauty of the face of Kuma, the architect of the new V&A museum, in An Homage to Kuma's V&A by Alan Gilchrist.

Gill Owen's Textile Memories of Dundee was a journey through her associations with Dundee, both personal

and as a weaver. The beautifully produced accompanying magazine fills out this story and offers many more insights into the thought processes and working experiences of all the weavers.

It was with great sadness that we learnt that Judith Toleman had passed away. Many of us enjoyed her beautifully rolled and stacked jute bales which stood well beside Beth Hallmark's little jute window, itself offering a glimpse of the work of the weavers.

Of course no Dundee exhibition is complete without jam - or rather marmalade as in Jute Appeal by Daphne Kirk or the sweltering heat of Mair Ma Lad by Jan Watson. Journalism also has its place in Trisha Gow's Tellin' Jute and of course by Dennis.

Susan Hunt

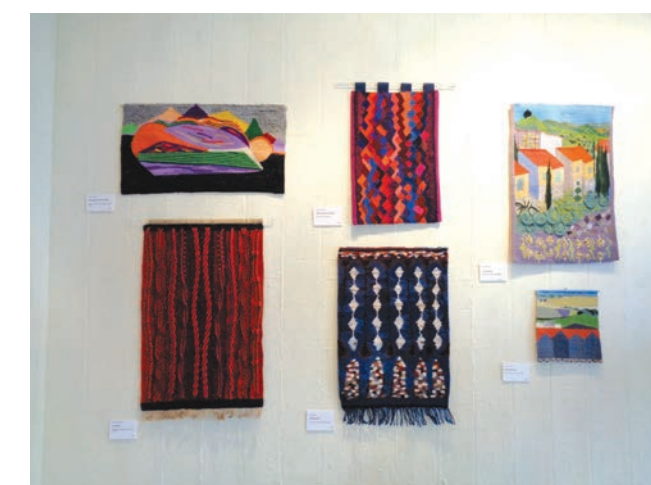
To view all exhibition images go to BTG Facebook Page
All photos taken by Louise Martin.



The exhibition - the first by the London group - was by common consent a great success. The aim was simply to show what tapestry is and what it can do. It looked good, worked well in the space and attracted some 120 visitors (30 at the private view), many from outside London.

It is very difficult to find suitable and affordable gallery space in London for groups such as ours. Hepsibah proved ideal. Though small, its boarded walls and high ceiling lent themselves to relatively dense hanging and the groupings of works proved effective. Carolyn Perry and I worked well as the hanging team. With the active assistance of the gallery owner, Jayne Hepsibah, there was a good atmosphere and a sense of this being an Event for the whole local Brackenbury "village" - an arty enclave happily situated within reach of a number of underground stations.

The organisation was achieved smoothly through a combination of form filling and discussion. There was less anxiety over whether work was going to be suitable



or finished than it had seemed nearly two years ago when the project was first mooted. It helped that members were able to say at an early stage (six months before) how many pieces they wanted to show: everyone participating was guaranteed one piece and those that wanted to put in two were able to do so. Twenty pieces were hung in total and a sale was made on the Private Viewing night, but we also sold quite a few cards and small pieces.

Our many thanks go to everyone who took part and supported us. Looking over the event, we are all very happy with the way it went and already planning to do it again next year. Hold the front page for Hepsibah 2!

Exhibiting artists were: *Paula Armstrong, Jackie Bennett, Christine Eborall, Stephanie Edwards, Penny Howes, Joan Kendall, Tim Oelman, Suzanne Osborn, Carolyn Perry, Aruna Reddy, Jacqui Sinclair-Clarke, Matty Smith and David Stokes.*

Tim Oelman Photos by Tim Oelman

The Witchcraft Series

In my current project, THE WITCHCRAFT SERIES, I find I am using a great deal of text. Previously, text has often served as a sort of frame, both visually and to express something I want to convey. But I am finding that it is beginning to spread across the surface of the tapestry, as part of the story I am attempting to tell.

This project is largely concerned with the history of witch-persecution in Europe, but also with the way that the idea of the "witch" persists in our superstitions and fears. The works in the entire series can be found on my website www.annejackson.co.uk



1. Ursula Kempe, St. Osyth, Essex, 1582
Cotton, linen, synthetic yarns; 174 x 176 cm

For my tapestry, "Ursula Kempe, St. Osyth, Essex, 1582" (1), I was given a photocopy of the original pamphlet published at the time of this "witch's" hanging. I was able to photograph and blow up the original blackface text, invented by Gutenberg for his original printing press not very long before. The faintness of the lettering (2) was created by the effects of time on the original paper, and of poor photocopying, and I tried to keep that sense. I really like the feeling it gives of something fading away into history.

Recently I made two small pieces for a site-specific exhibition by the 62 Group at the Fishing Heritage Centre in Grimsby entitled "Ebb & Flow". Some of the many superstitions held by trawler men going to sea were told to me, and I incorporated four of them into this piece. When I made the cartoon (3), I used an image of the registration number painted on the bow of the trawler, "Ross Tiger", to pin the reference firmly to the Grimsby trawler fleet. The main



2. Ursula Kempe Detail
Cotton, linen, synthetic yarns; 174 x 176 cm

superstitions are in a blackface font from the internet (4), and in capital letters to give a sense of urgency. The monetary figure is in my own handwriting, and was the starting salary of a trawler deckhand in 2014. I used the blackface font because the superstition about smashing eggshells dates back to one of the earliest books written about witchcraft, in 1584. It said that eggshells should always be smashed, because "witches could sail in an eggshell" in order to raise storms at sea.

The final image (5) is the cartoon for my current tapestry, as yet untitled. It will have original text from an early book along two sides plus a reference to a magic weather-spell called "selling the wind", and some frightening-looking statistics about climate change in an alarming bright red modern font.

My intention is that the texts I use should lead the viewer further into the tapestry, giving a slightly different perspective from purely visual imagery.

Anne Jackson Photos by Anne Jackson



3. Cartoon: For Luck at Sea; Ross Tiger GY398



4. For Luck at Sea; Ross Tiger GY398;
Cotton, linen, synthetic yarns; 60 x 38 cm



5. Cartoon, untitled

Anne Jackson works from her studio in Mid Devon. Recent exhibitions include the 5th Textile Triennial in Riga, Latvia, "The Power of Ten" at the Museum in the Park, Stroud, Glos. and ARTAPESTRY3, touring Europe. She was shortlisted for the 2015 Cordis Trust Prize for Tapestry in Edinburgh.

www.annejackson.co.uk
Email: annejackson.smirnoff@btinternet.com



Design

Finding My Way

Design. The word every tapestry artist faces - with dread or with joy - or probably some of both and with nuances in between. For me designing for tapestry is indeed very much a matter of “finding my way”. I dread the possibility of never finding images I want to work from; the joy comes when inspiring images are discovered.

I am drawn to changing seasons in all their forms, colors seen in the landscape and the details within the woods of the Appalachian Mountains in which I live. To me these reflect the pulse of life beating always in the world in spite of our human conceits and frailties. My hope is to express reverence for that pulse of ever-changing life.

Archie Brennan, noted tapestry artist, often talks about tapestry making as being “a journey up the warp.” By considering the weaving of tapestry as a journey I feel free to diverge from a plan along the way if the tapestry seems to call for it. In fact, even if my design is fairly complete as I start, I find myself improvising to the point that the finished tapestry turns into something other than an exact copy of my pre-planned image.

My process for designing for tapestry always varies. Sometimes I develop a cartoon directly from photographs I've taken by printing out the photo to use as the cartoon. I also use photos I've made as reference for drawings or paintings. However, most often I draw or paint on location or with the objects before me to reference.

I am not a purist with artistic media since I prefer a mixed media approach. Frequently the methods and media I choose are dependent upon where I'm working - if I'm in a setting where I have space to work large (and messily) I'll do that. I frequently use large, un-stretched and primed canvas stapled up to a wall. The canvas is sturdy enough to hold up to my way of working which is to use various media and make many changes as I go along. On other occasions, I work smaller and with more precision, perhaps using watercolor pencils and paints on paper.

When I'm seeking new design ideas for tapestry I've found it quite valuable to spend a bit of time removed from my day-to-day life, immersing myself in the process of thinking about and responding to images. For instance, I've taken thousands of photographs as well as making numerous drawings and paintings while at friends' mountain property over the past decades. Many tapestries have resulted from my being in those beautiful surroundings.

Artist residency experiences have also been very valuable to me, especially the times I've had at Hambidge Center and Lillian E. Smith Center.ⁱ During which time there are long hours of private time and studio space in which to work with concentration. In early September of 2015, I was at Lillian E. Smith Center for a residency. On a walk the very first day I found what was to be my focus while I was there: leaves showing the first colors of the fall season. Every day more leaves drifted onto the path just waiting to be picked up and used as my next models.

In the studio, I would begin by making rapid line drawings of the leaves using a thick charcoal stick on a large piece of primed canvas. I would then almost obliterate the first version by painting over with white paint and matte medium. I redrew and then painted over until I was happy with the result. Working in this add/



Hickory and red leaf pinned



Hickory and red leaf-stage 3



Hickory and red leaf

subtract manner resulted in echoes of the earlier drawings and those became part of the finished version. Once I was satisfied with the composition I would begin to paint with color and refine the image. My painting process is very similar to the way I draw in that I don't mind adding and removing until I “find” what I'm seeking.

As a result of the ten days at this residency I now have seven fairly large paintings and many photographs for developing into tapestry cartoons. How many of the designs that grew during this spurt of activity will turn into tapestries? I'm not sure, but many will. As I write this in late September, a

tapestry based on one of the leaf paintings is now in the making on the loom and a cartoon is ready for a second, both designed during those intense and focused ten days.ⁱⁱ

I'm fortunate to have discovered that occasional time away from daily routine, in a beautiful and inspiring location, helps me with the challenging task of designing my next new tapestry. This private time to focus helps guide my direction as I find my way on the “journey up the warp.”

Tommye McClure Scanlin

Photos courtesy of Tommye McClure Scanlin



Hickory on loom with cartoon



Oak leaf cluster-final

ⁱ Two retreat centers at which I've spent time are located in north Georgia, USA: Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts, Rabun Gap, Georgia, www.hambidge.org and the Lillian E. Smith Center, Clayton, Georgia, www.piedmont.edu/lillian-smith-center.

ⁱⁱ I posted daily to my blog, Work in Progress, about my designing process while at this residency, September 1-10, 2015. www.tapestry13.blogspot.com

Tommye McClure Scanlin is Professor Emerita, Visual Arts, the University of North Georgia, Dahlonega, Georgia, USA. She has been weaving tapestry since 1988.

Heallreaf

A small format tapestry exhibition and how it came about



I have just finished three years' full time study at West Dean College. In the final year I was desperately looking around for funding and was fortunate enough to be granted a Qest Scholarship. Anyone who has applied for funding of any description will understand the forms you have to fill in and the sort of things you are expected to say. I was going to single-handedly change the face of tapestry weaving in the UK. Well, if you are going to dream, dream big my Dad always used to say.

After a scholarship is awarded Qest follow your career and require an annual report explaining what you have been up to and justifying the large amounts of money they were kind enough to give you. So I now had to do all those things I said I would when I filled in the application form. Hence 'Heallreaf'.

Firstly, why 'Heallreaf'? The name is an Old English word meaning a tapestry hung in a hall. I checked with Steve Pollington, the country's foremost exponent of the Old English language and he confirmed it was a real word and had been used in a will in the 1400's. It is certainly a name people have remembered and I am pleased to see that if you Google 'Heallreaf' now you get three pages of links about the exhibition before the old English references arrive on the screen.

Why small format? It's an old question and I like big tapestries because that is what the medium was created for. But we live in the 21st Century and most houses don't have big enough walls to take a tapestry, many weavers do not have the facility to weave huge pieces, and if you are sending a large piece of work across the world to an exhibition the postage costs can be astronomical (and don't even mention customs and excise!). There was also the problem of space. The chosen exhibition space was the students' studio at West Dean College; lovely space, quite big but the ceilings are far too low for large format work. So the small format decision came about fairly organically but I did increase the size to 50cm square or the equivalent area. I thought that would give weavers a bit more wiggle room than the standard 30cm square adopted by other small format exhibitions.



You might ask 'did the tapestry world need someone else setting up an exhibition?'. After all the British Tapestry Group (BTG) and its local groups do sterling work in this respect. I think the answer is 'yes'; tapestry weavers need as much exposure as we can give them. I wanted to produce an international, high-quality exhibition at a prestigious venue. I was also instrumental in West Dean running a symposium on the first day of the show so the two events worked well together, and hopefully will do so again in the future.

I was keen to have an exhibition which, although exhibited at West Dean, did not bring any 'West Dean baggage' with it. Hence it was conceived, organised, marketed, juried and curated with no input from the college or professional studio. I asked Anne Jackson to curate it for several reasons; firstly because she is an artist I much admire, and secondly because she has no links with West Dean. Also, as I wanted the exhibition to be open to all, it wasn't arranged it under the auspices of the BTG. I didn't care who the weaver was, where they came from or what training or affiliation they had; if their work was accepted by the juror it was included in the exhibition. This worked well as I had a total of 41 artists submit work from all over the world.

This show was very much 'my baby'; it had to succeed or fail on my shoulders, which was a lot to take on with the show opening only three weeks after I got the piece of paper saying I was a Master of Fine Art.



But as I am rubbish at delegating and, as I came to realise, probably a control freak this was the way I decided to do it.

Many people have asked if I am going to do it again. The answer is yes, but not until 2017 and I would very much like to start at West Dean with a symposium again and then move on to one or more other galleries around the UK. I am already approaching some and the call for work will go out mid-2016.

Images of all the work can be found on the website www.heallreaf.com

Margaret Jones

All photographs by Peter Jones.



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BTG aims to produce three issues a year. We also sell Tapestry Weaver through the website shop, BTG exhibitions and other events around the UK.

A complimentary copy is sent to advertisers (who are not BTG members) advertising in the current issue. Please see the website for advertising rates.

The Purpose/Vision of the BTG

The British Tapestry Group exists to promote woven tapestry as a contemporary art form in the UK, by raising public awareness through professional exhibitions, networking, regional initiatives, training and development.

Issue 18

If you want to send an email with a comment about an article - one line or two or more, then email: tweditor@thebritishtapestrygroup.co.uk
If you have visited a gallery and want to write a review, have some information on forthcoming exhibitions or want to write an article or profile - just contact the Tapestry Weaver team and we will get back to you. We consider all articles.

DEADLINE

1st February 2016 for Issue 18

Text: Please supply text in Word document or other plain text format. **Images:** these need to be at as high resolution as possible. The minimum resolution is 300dpi - minimum size 210mm x 149mm in JPG format.

IMPORTANT: Please send images as separate files (jpeg or tiff). (NOT EMBEDDED IN WORD DOCUMENTS OR ANYTHING ELSE except as a guide for placement). We cannot use small images embedded in Word documents.

Copyright: please ensure that you obtain copyright clearance for any material you provide for use in the magazine.

New and Returning Members

Margaret Anderson, Gill Boyle, Lorraine Darwen, Line Dufour, Patricia Eddie, Marilyn Eustice, Beth Hallmark, Colleen Heenan, Debbie Herd, Moira Hull, Maj-Brit Mansson-Brown, Nancy Nordquist, Jean Queree, Jeni Ross, Marion Sandwith, Richard Sant, Chimene Taylor.

TWITTER

Hello All, (and all those who do not tweet). It would be great to see more images of member's weavings on Twitter. The British Tapestry Group's (BTG) Twitter account gets an increase in re-tweets when images are changed. Let us show the diversity and inspirational work of the BTG's members. The Tapestry Weaver would be credited.

Please send Jpegs to: tuliprussell@gmail.com
(I can resize images). Many thanks, *Katie Russell*

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Penny Howes on the stand

Knitting & Stitching Show 2015

Alexandra Palace

The initial impression I had on my arrival at the stand was how well it represented the British Tapestry Group. The weavings, woven by various regions of the BTG and some individual members, were a wonderful illustration of the variety of styles and finishes achievable by our members. They certainly made passers by stop, look closely and then ask their many questions, all of which we were pleased to answer. Amazing how much can be displayed on one small stand! People were only too happy to try their hand at weaving and many weaving frames were sold. On the Wednesday the first visitor was a lady who bought one of the frames last year and wanted to tell us how much she enjoyed her new hobby. Makes it all worthwhile. Congratulations to all concerned.

Hilary O'Connell Photo by Hilary O'Connell

the BRITISH
TAPESTRY group