

BEE JOYFUL!

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The Great British Embroidering Bee?

Have you enjoyed The Great British Sewing Bee? I know it's not embroidery, but I have loved seeing the contestants get to grips with the challenges each week - especially the ones involving make-overs.

Many of our members are also skilled dressmakers so I expect they have kept a keen eye on the finalists' progress. I was much amused to see that only a few of

them had used an overlocker before - I bet the BBC had someone on hand to thread it!

Wouldn't it be lovely to see a programme about embroidery design and skills? True, that kind of work takes longer, but even so.

Imagine challenges involving blackwork, traditional Eastern European stitches, crewel work - and Claudia Winkleman saying

"And this week the challenge is using Mountmellick work on a T shirt - you have six hours!"

It would be good to bring the whole idea of embellishment to the public eye. After all, anyone can make an A line skirt, but it takes an embroiderer to embellish it and make it into something special - why do they think couture fabric is embroidered by hand?!!

'Growth' Exhibition

Our 'Growth' exhibition at the Victoria Gallery and Museum on Brownlow Hill will be open from 13th May - 5th July.

There will be a Meet the Artists afternoon at 2pm on Friday 16th May, so do come along and ask how things were made or about the inspiration for different pieces.

There are plenty of other things

to see in the Museum when you visit, including a beautiful Van Dyck painting on loan from Vicenza.

The cafe is on the ground floor. The postcode of the Victoria Gallery is L69 3DR and it is open Tues - Sat, 10am - 5pm and closed on Bank holidays.

The number 14 and 79 buses stop right outside the Gallery door and

can be taken from the side of the Adelphi Hotel, from there they proceed up Brownlow Hill.

I remember this historic redbrick building from when I was a student in 1984. My friend used the Biology labs there and we had to go in at midnight to check on her experiments. I used to knit and keep her company while she dissected specimens...

NEC v HARROGATE

Recently I went to Birmingham with a friend to visit the Sewing for Pleasure/Fashion Embroidery and Stitch exhibition(which included Hobby Craft).

The halls were a mass of coloured fabrics, so much more than we've seen over the last few years. Many familiar stalls and faces were there,including the Button Lady, Oliver Twists and Siesta frames. The latter has so many items that we spent up!!

A delightful surprise was the stand showing Palestinian costumes and embroideries; I wish I'd seen this before we made our postcards for the Olympics. The pieces on display were from a collection gathered by one man who runs an Art shop in Jerusalem. He knows the provenance of each piece, which had not been seen in the West before. We walked round them and were allowed to take photographs.

Local Embroidery Branches displayed their work inspired by the Staffordshire Hoard, a real mixed selection like the original one. After an early lunch—none of the eating places were full—we enjoyed one of the fashion displays; very retro! We recognised dresses we'd worn the first time round.

I hear you say, all this can be seen in Harrogate. Yes BUT the ceilings are so much higher making the spaces cleaner and fresher, there is more space for visitors giving easier access to stands and demonstrations. The journey time is approximately the same, the time of year means there is little fear of being snowed in.

Guess which I prefer!?

Vicky Williams

Sarah writes: Interesting question - it's certainly true that the NEC is

much more spacious, the ceilings are higher and it feels much less claustrophobic. I give it 10 out of 10 for that. Also, toilets and eating places are easier to find...BUT, does this show have the sheer variety that we find at Harrogate?

I love the fact that there are stallholders who don't seem to show anywhere else and have all sorts of curious things for sale. I remember the very first time I went to the Knitting and Stitching show at Harrogate and it felt like some sort of stitcher's paradise!

Having said that, Vicky reports that the NEC show had far more stitching things this year, perhaps reflecting a growing trend for crafts in general.

What do you think? Would you like us to run a trip to the Spring NEC show next year?

Colour Competition

Yes, it's that time again!

Embroidery entries may be traditional or modern, in any form of stitch. They may be pictures, garments, accessories, hangings etc.

The winner's prize will be a year's ownership of our beautiful Edna Billison coloured glass trophy and a £20 voucher for the winner's own use.

Entries will be judged at our talk by 'Snorri the Viking' - Viking Warriors and Weavers on Saturday May 17th at All Hallows.

I have heard that sometimes Snorri brings a spinning wheel with him, so we'll have to wait and see - just as long as he doesn't bring his sword!!

What's white and goes up?

A confused snowflake!

SNIPPETS

Please collect clean, circular plastic, screw-on milk bottle tops for our Christmas party activity and give them to **Vicky Williams**.

Karen Scott has the Kay's Practical Embroiderer kit and instructions and will make them available to anyone who wishes.

If you have any spare things that would make attractive Tombola prizes, please hand them in to **Marie**

Stacey. As you can imagine, it takes a lot of prizes to run a successful Tombola!

We were delighted to hear that **Hanna Roberts**, our bursary student will be at the September Tea

Party with an exhibition from her final degree show.

What luck for us all! **June Howard** wants to sell a lot of her embroidery books and will be bringing them to the May talk. June is kindly donating the proceeds to Branch funds. I'm sure there will be some lovely books there.

Chairwoman's Chat

Forty years ago, the Guild decided to pass on the skills of stitchery to younger generations, so Merseyside decided to kick things off in style. What better way to celebrate than by holding a party?

The day started with a real treat for the young embroiderers. The group turned up at the usual venue, and at the usual time. They had brought their sewing kits, but there was no sewing. Instead they spent the morning involved in a series of inventive drawing and design exercises that culminated in finding out about the story of the willow pattern. If they had had pins, we would have heard them drop! Even Hilary, who had joined them, was deep in concentration.

Then came the best bit as the tutor, Juliet, showed them how to apply special paint to a miniature plate and make their own willow pattern design. The skills of our budding artists really came to the fore. Each plate was displayed on its own stand for everybody to admire. A little

clear varnish will preserve the pattern for posterity.

While this was going on, the table was being laid for the party itself. Sandwiches, cakes, biscuits, sausage rolls, crisps, rainbow jellies and, of course, a big birthday cake appeared as if by magic.

At half past twelve the extra guests of honour arrived. Past YE leaders and many tutors who turn up time and again to hold workshops had been invited to join the party. They all marvelled at the work on display and at the book that Hilary had made of the projects that had been completed over the past few years.

Val showed the current piece of work, which is sponsored by NADFAS for display in the Museum of Liverpool on the Albert Dock. I won't spoil the surprise by telling you all about it. Suffice it to say that it was colourful, fun and with excellent stitching, just like YE.

There were many reminiscences over the food and the cake was cut to

a round of applause. Two of the older members of the YE group presented flowers to Val and Hilary, to thank them for their help. But Val hadn't finished with us yet. Parties need party games. She handed round pencils and paper and we were all embroiled in a brain-testing quiz. I don't think that I have ever heard so much laughter as we racked our brains and suggested silly answers. There were prizes for each age group and Gill Roberts won a tie-break for the adults.

Nobody went home empty-handed, though. Party gifts and cake disappeared with the departing guests as well as a lot of happy memories. My thanks to Val Heron and Hilary McCormack for organising such a good day and to our guests of honour for keeping the YE group going like a continuous

thread for so many years. Who knows, might one of our current youngsters be organising a party

themselves in forty years time?

A Lakeland Surprise

While recently on holiday in Patterdale I decided to visit St Patrick's church. I had done a bit of searching on the internet and learnt that the church had some embroidery by a local lady, Ann Macbeth. I admit to not having heard of this lady but she was quite extraordinary.

She was born in Bolton in 1875 in an era when women were starting to come into their own in a male dominated society. Her family gave her the freedom to realise her potential and their family motto was "Never say can't until you have tried".

Ann certainly tried with embroidery, ceramics, drawing, painting and engraving being just the beginning. After school she went to Glasgow School of Art and became one of the "Glasgow Girls".

In 1904 she got a job teaching embroidery and shocked the staff and pupils by allowing own designs and use of coloured threads!

She then settled to live in Patterdale after family holidays in the area.

The works on the Church are "The Good Shepherd" and the "Nativity" as well as a Peace panel. Ann used the landscape of the Patterdale valley for inspiration filling the work with local flowers and sheep in wool and silk threads.

Ann died in 1948 but the locals of Patterdale are still proud of this versatile lady who walked about the village in flowing cape, bright colours and flamboyant jewellery.

What a pity we could not have Ann for a speaker. I am sure she would have been inspirational. There is a small pamphlet in our library stock if you would like to read more, and certainly recommended if going to Patterdale on holiday.

While on holiday I was able to see another embroidery and watercolours by Ann as my friend and I were entertained by a very interesting local Hartsop villager. But that is another story! **Helen P.**

Japanese Day

Katie Chaplin will be with us again, running a morning workshop on Japanese needlefelting. This will involve making 2D and 3D shapes with and without moulds. Each member will receive two needles and a piece of sponge and we will be taking the inspiration for our pictures from kimono fabrics.

In the afternoon, Katie will give a talk on Japanese culture and in particular, textile crafts. She will bring along vintage fabrics and tell us about the special lessons she has received whilst in Japan.

Our Japanese Day will take place at All Hallows on Saturday June 21st and cost £10 for members and £15 for non-members. Phone **Hilary** and book your place now at this bargain event!



Embroiderers' Guild

Merseyside Embroiderers' Guild

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We are a group of people who are interested in sewing, embroidery and textiles. We enjoy what we do and we love to see other people's work.

We aim to have a variety of meetings to try to cater for all members' needs and tastes.

We meet at All Hallows Church Hall, Greenhill Rd, Mossley Hill on the third Saturday of every month. Talks start at 2pm and finish by 4pm. Workshops start at 10am and finish at 4pm.

If you'd like to join, phone Vicky on 0151 475 3114.

If you'd like to know more about our 2013 programme, phone Marie on 0151 625 8349.

Welcoming stitchers of all levels

www.megonline.co.uk

When Did You First Learn to Sew?

Kim Parkman learned in Infant school when she was five. She had to sew big cross stitches onto gingham fabric, which went well until she sewed the fabric to her skirt by accident!

Vicky Williams learned in Junior school by embroidering cloth mats from Binka cloth (remember that fabric with big regular holes in it?) with large needles and fraying the edges.

Well Vicky, I was still using that Binka fabric with my class of 7 year olds in 2000 in my last teaching job.

How I recall those jolly afternoons when I helped half the class embroider bookmarks while the other half went off to their recorder lesson and then swapped round.

The needles seemed to unthread themselves wilfully and there was a constant queue of children at my desk wanting them rethreaded. That's not to mention what they

managed to actually do with that Binka cloth - instead of completing simple cross stitch or heaven forbid, whipped cross stitch, they knotted it and tied up the cloth and made an unholy mess.

When a child appears at your desk with some kind of a wrung-out rag that used to be a potential bookmark, you're not supposed to look agonised and sigh heavily at the ten minutes that it will take you to untangle it...but I'm ashamed to say I often felt driven to it!

Karen Scott started sewing when her mother helped her to make clothes for her Tressy doll, (remember her, the one whose hair really grew?). At school, Karen made a blouse and annoyed her teacher by refusing to tack any of it! Later on in life, Karen practised her embellishment skills by embroidering biker jackets, including a charming Death's Head design for a Hells Angel...

Val Heron also made dolls' clothes and remembers that her mother had a treadle sewing machine. Val was so little that she had to stand up to use it! Val's mother also taught her lazy daisy stitch, stem stitch and french knots.

Hilary McCormack was six years old when she hurt her hand badly by falling over when collecting ants in a jam jar. As a novel form of physiotherapy, her mother gave her a basket of flowers cross stitch design to help her use her hand and a great talent was born!

Retirement prompted **Helen Patrick** to follow her interest in textiles and join the Guild. She says that a combination of friendly members and informative workshops have helped her to learn and make progress.

Marie Stacey disliked sewing until she met a wonderful embroidery teacher at school. This woman's kindness and expertise kindled a love for the craft that has never died.