

CETG ARCHIVE

Meeting Report

10th July 2017

Speaker: Angela Daymond

Talk: Dyeing from a Natural World

[Angela Daymond](#) gave an enthusiastic talk about dyeing fabric using natural materials. Described by the Australian dyer, India Flint, as "botanical alchemy" the methods Angela uses create ever-variable results rather than aiming at a consistency found with other exponents of the art. She began by introducing us to the traditional dye plants which have been used for thousands of years; madder root (red/pink), weld (yellow) and woad (blue). Such dyes were used in the Bayeux Tapestry and continue to be used to this day in Harris Tweed. The traditional dyer's art was well paid, but life expectancy was short (death in one's thirties) due to the noxious chemicals produced, including ammonia from urine used to set the colours. Woad is particularly pungent; Queen Elizabeth 1 issued an edict that no woad dyeing should take place within 5 miles of any royal palace.

Angela moved onto the dye plants which we might find in our lives today, including many flowers; daffodil (pale yellow), oilseed rape and marigold (yellow), tulip (most colours produce a light greenish hue), delphiniums (bright blue), amaryllis (red tones), elderberry (black) and onion skin (brown). Red cabbage will dye blue, unless vinegar is added, when it turns pink. She finds garden grown plants give the strongest colours (supermarket treatment seems to affect the dyeing), with silk, cotton and old household linens taking the dye best. For many of these she uses a steaming process, wrapping the dried petals in cling film with objects like pebbles or twigs to create texture, keeping the roll damp and warm either in the sunshine or on the hob. No fixatives are needed for these "home grown" materials, whereas the traditional dye plants need a mordant such as alum to set the colour.

There were many examples of her dyed fabric on show, much of which she transforms into small quilts, often embellished with [kantha stitching](#). Angela had dyeing and kantha kits, books and DVDs for sale which proved very popular. She was very encouraging of anyone who might like to have a go at this more relaxed and spontaneous form of natural dyeing, and urged anyone who did so as a result of her talk to send pictures of the finished fabric to her.



The completed bunting pieces were returned so that they can be stitched together for use at Amersham Heritage Day on 10th September. You can read more about the Bunting Project [here](#). Four volunteers have offered to sit at our stall, including two Committee Members. Anyone wishing to lend items to be displayed on the day should bring them to the August meeting or contact Terry.

The June "Have a go" session on Dorset buttons was a great success and several examples made on the day were available on display. After a summer break, the next "Have a Go" session will take place on Saturday 2nd September; topic to be announced at the August meeting.

A new book was donated to the library by Gita: *Dress in Detail from around the World*, a beautiful volume on the Victoria and Albert Museum's magnificent costume collection. Sign-up sheets were provided for three alternative dates for a design-based outing to [Tring Natural History Museum](#). The most popular date will be selected, with members providing their own transport or offering lifts.

The long-standing Hand Stitch Group continues to thrive, but as there is no room for new stitchers to join due to meetings taking place in members' houses, it was suggested we might form a second Hand Stitch Group on a different day of the week. A list was circulated for interested members to sign up to indicate which days and times might suit them best. If sufficient

people show an interest, the new group would operate independently from the existing one.

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