

Black Sheep Handspinners Guild Newsletter

April 2008

President: [Celia Radke](#), 749-2711

Vice President: [Sharon Gombas](#), 533-7390 and [Amanda Perl](#), 277-8684

Treasurer: [Ellie May](#), 272-8224

Librarian: [Jim Johnson](#), 564-7178

Newsletter Editor: [Anne Furman](#), 387-4141

<http://www.blacksheephandspinnersguild.org>

The Black Sheep meet from 11am-3pm on the second Saturday of the month at the Varna Community Center Route 366 in Varna, New York. Exceptions are the months of December, July, and August when we meet in member's homes.

**April 12 from 11 AM to 3 PM
Varna Community Center
Route 266 in Varna, New York**

Wheel/Spindle Round Robin

Curious about other wheels? Want to try out that neat spindle you saw at the last meeting? In April, we will be playing Round Robin with our spinning equipment. Anyone wanting to participate please bring your wheel with an empty bobbin that has a leader OR an empty spindle with a leader. Also bring along some fiber you want to try out or that you are comfortable with so you can judge the spinning equipment you are playing with. We will have some spinning music in the background. When it stops you will stop too, and move to the next place.

Roc Day Which Way?

By Susan Sarabasha and Carol LaBorie

Saturday's meeting started off with a fast exchange of Garage Sale offerings among members. An item barely hit the table before its new keeper snatched it off. Several newcomers attended, so we went around the circle introducing ourselves to start off the meeting. Our group was large, despite the poor weather, letting us know that Roc Day is important to many members.

Show and Tell was delightful as usual. Our members are so talented and their choices so diversified. Bill showed his latest placemat weavings, Sharon her Nuno scarves, Jane asked about the identity of some mystery fiber she got at a past Garage Sale, Wayne distributed his synopsis of *Rules of Thumb for Determining How Much Twist*

to Put in Your Yarn, Sue Q showed her finished hand spun sweater and Susan passed around her almost completed hand spun Dogi Vest. There were so many things shown and told that this is all we could remember (*senior moment here*).



Sharon Gombas and her Nuno scarves.

Kathy Halton and Jacob Gombas with a drop spindle.



Found after Roc Day – a ball of yarn. Is it yours?



Jim conducted the Roc Day part of the meeting. It was an open, accepting atmosphere where everyone was encouraged to voice their opinions, likes, dislikes and preferences on the Day. At least 3 of the newcomers came because of their positive

experience in January. One voiced that she heard about Roc Day through a public service announcement on a Syracuse TV station. She said, "The word Varna caught my ears, and I was surprised to hear they were talking about our little Varna." She was amazed that such an event was happening right here.

Several people started by stating their preference to stay in Varna because they prefer to keep the day friendly and social. Others voiced their wish for us to do some outreach and teaching on Roc Day, which is very limited at the Varna location. Many said how very crowded the space was, and noisy. Mention was made of the vendors' accolades on our organization and one vendor's comment, "It's about time you charge for vendor space; I'm more than happy to pay for my table." They also appreciated the advertising, which brought in more people. We had visitors from Rochester, Utica, PA and points east.

It was interesting to listen to members talk through their feelings about Roc Day. As they spoke, several gradually transitioned from keeping Roc Day small and social to the choice of a larger venue because they wanted more socializing space. The group felt that the number and variety of vendors were optimum, and they were supportive of having teaching and outreach opportunities. We even debated whether a different month might be better and perhaps having both a party for us and a Roc Day, but decided against these options. A few people were very excited about the prospect of having 2 easy-access classrooms right off the main spinning area at the Congregational Church. Ample paved and plowed parking was another huge factor in favor of the new venue.

Anne asked several times for dissenters, as we seemed to be coming to a consensus. One person said she liked all the noise and crowding but could go with the majority as she was sure there would be noise enough at the Congregational Church in Cayuga Heights. Doubters were encouraged to please speak up, as consensus does not work unless we all agree to go with the flow. We considered taking a vote but people felt consensus was more powerful and encompassing.

Once we realized we had come to a decision, Jane and Anne brainstormed an idea for a mystery fiber

contest that morphed into an educational opportunity as well. That was such fun to listen to and watch, plus it upped our immediate excitement level about Roc Day. Several people asked to have a listing of members who will be willing to give spindling &/or spinning lessons at various times throughout the day. How cool! We are already on a roll for a wonderful day next year.

The committee from last year all said they are willing to do this again as none of them felt burdened and in reality had a good time preparing for the event.

At this time we have chairs for:

Roc Day Committee – Jim Johnson

Kid's Corner – Ruth Allen

Kitchen – Vickie Marsted

Mystery Fiber Contest – Anne Furman and Jane North

Posters, brochure and ads – Susan Sarabasha

Raffle – Ellie May

Vendors – Carol LaBorie

Volunteer Coordinator and Signage – Audrey Lowes

Last year both Ruth and Carol assumed responsibility for Publicity. We are now looking for someone to carry out the publicity for Roc Day 2009. There is a folder with the tasks all spelled out and we are adding a timeline. This involves two phases. The first is a mailing to area guilds and yarn shops in October, and the second is arranging for free publicity (handled totally via e-mail) in local newspapers, on radio and on TV stations three weeks before Roc Day. Please contact Jim (hilltoppaddles@earthlink.net) or Carol (tusweca_winan@yahoo.com) if you are interested.

We also heard several other neat ideas during the discussion, so are inviting anyone who has interest and enthusiasm to please work with us on the committee, helping to share the jobs and continuing to make this event meaningful and fun for all.

Shortly after our business meeting, Carol noticed the heavy rain continuing, but now the power lines and trees were accumulating icicles. Susan said not to worry because the roads and cars were just wet. An hour later, trees and wires were toppling due to the ice. Susan and Jim arrived home to find one of their ancient maples had decided to shed several large limbs, taking out power for 80 homes on their hillside

Making and Using a Neolithic Spindle by Wayne Harbert.



While trying to track down information on a Chinese spinning wheel I recently acquired, I read about Chinese spinning in Joseph Needham, ed., -Science and Civilization in China, volume 5 part 9: Textile Technology: Spinning and Reeling-, and learned that in China, disk shaped hand-spindle whorls from neolithic times (5000BC to 3000BC) are found in great abundance. These were usually made of pottery, but in many cases a flat, round stone was used (and, less often, bone or clamshell). This sounded interesting and I decided to try it, so I gathered some flat more or less circular stones (about 2 to 3 inches across, and about 1/4 inch thick) from a local creek bed, made a hole in them with a 3/8" masonry bit, and whittled spindles for them out of willow branches. They work very well. Stone whorls are heavy for their size, and seem to keep spinning longer than wooden whorls. The book, by the way, is very informative reading for anyone with a general interest in the history of hand-spinning, and provides especially detailed information about the history of silk culture.

Even *Bad Wool* Can Be a Good Thing: a story with a happy ending from Charlotte Sharkey

A few months back I bought two 3-pound bags of Columbia wool. VERY RAW!!! I think the rancher dipped his sheep in yellow mud and rolled them in wood shavings. He didn't even skirt it. I got the entire clipping. After skirting and washing it about 4 times, then hand carding about a pound of the 1st bag, I gave up and tossed the 2nd bag out on the back porch.

Flash forward to a couple of weeks ago. My husband had just left for work. It was about 7AM and about 30 degrees out. I stepped outside onto the back porch to fill the bird feeders. This porch is on the 2nd floor and has NO means of getting off of it, except the door, which inconveniently shut and locked behind me.

Now, I live out in the woods and no one would hear me yelling for help. I tried to force the door, no luck. I tried tearing the bathroom screen off of the window to break the window pane, but double-paned glass just doesn't give up that easy. There I stood in my robe, jammies and slippers knowing that 8 hours out in 30 degree weather wasn't going to work. Not to mention the boredom.

I looked over the porch rail again. It was about an 8 - 9 foot drop. It wasn't like I had a choice. So I gave myself a pep talk, tossed that bag of *bad wool* to the ground for a landing pad and and climbed over the railing.

Sitting on the outside of the porch clinging to the bottom rail I told myself, "Once you shift your weight off this porch, there is no going back. You're committed." Then I pushed off. Hanging by my fingertips from the icy railing, I told myself, "You're committed. Just let go. LET GO!" So I let go, landed in the snow, on top of the bag of *bad wool*, bounced up, crawled through a downstairs room window and took a hot shower.

I don't know if I'll ever finish that bag of *bad wool*- but I think I'll keep it around.

Rules of Thumb for Determining How Much Twist to Put in Your Yarn Wayne Harbert

Books on spinning tend to be either very vague on how much twist to put into the yarn you are spinning or annoyingly technical. Most fail in the former direction. They warn you against overtwist and undertwist, but point out only the obvious ways of recognizing the two extremes. If your yarn kinks up badly when you let it go, it is overtwisted. If it falls apart, it is undertwisted. Not very useful for all the degrees in between. Equally unusable, however, are inordinately technical discussions such as Peter Teal's, who (in a generally useful and interesting book) suggests the following formula for determining Twists Per Inch (TPI) for a medium twist yarn:

$$\frac{\text{Diameter of yarn as a whole number [i.e. the denominator of the fraction]}}{\pi(\text{cotangent of the longitudinal angle [of the twist]})} = \text{TPI}$$

(Note that the top part of this fraction is simply the Wraps Per Inch of the yarn--the number of times it has to be wrapped (tightly packed) around a stick to make a single layer an inch wide.) As for the bottom part, in an appendix Teal thoughtfully supplies a table of selected cotangents of angles multiplied by π . He also provides us with the following approximations, which are based directly on the twist angles and don't require cotangents: yarns with a 5° angle of twist are very soft, 20° = medium, 30° = hard, and 45° = very hard. But all of this still requires a means of measuring angles formed by the twists in our yarn. I'm not sure how I would go about that.

More useful is the discussion in Alden Amos, *The Alden Amos Big Book of Handspinning*. All the information needed is to be found there, though it is a bit hard to extract. He gives tables (p. 383) of "twist factors" that can be used in determining the amount of twist required for different fibers for different desired degrees of firmness. The problem here is that these factors are to be multiplied by the square root of the "grist" of the yarn, as measured in units of Yards Per Pound (YPP). Short of spinning some known fraction of a pound of fiber, measuring it, and doing the math, directly determining YPP requires special scales that many of us don't have. And you still need to find the square root. However, Amos also gives us a formula for determining YPP approximately by conversion from something we can more readily measure—Wraps Per Inch (WPI). YPP is approximately the square of the corresponding WPI (that is, $\text{WPI}^2 = \text{YPP}$) (leaving out the effects of minor variables such as fiber content, moisture and so on), and since Amos' twist factors are supposed to be multiplied by the square root of the YPP, one might as well leave out the middle step and multiply these factors directly by the WPI. This leads to the following table, adapted from Amos. The left-hand column shows Amos' twist factors rounded off. To determine how many TPI to put in your yarn for a specified degree of firmness, locate the fiber and the desired firmness on the chart, trace across to the left hand column to find the factor, and multiply that factor times the WPI of your yarn. The result will be the

recommended TPI. (For selected values, I have found that results arrived at in this way correspond approximately to those derivable from Teal's formulas—not surprising, since Amos' twist factors seem to be roughly equivalent to the inverses of Teal's values for the factor ($\pi(\cotangent \text{ of the longitudinal angle})$).)

To determine the number of twists per inch (TPI) to put into a yarn for a desired degree of firmness: (Based on Amos, Alden, *The Alden Amos Big Book of Handspinning*).

Multiply wraps per inch (WPI) by	Woolen	Worsted	Cotton	Silk	Line Flax
.06	very soft	very soft			
.07		soft			
.08					medium
.09	soft		very soft	very soft	
.10		medium			
.11			soft	soft	firm
.12	medium		medium	medium	
.13		firm			hard
.14			firm	firm	
.15					
.16					
.17	firm				
.18		hard		hard	
.19	hard		hard		
.20					
.21	very hard	very hard			
.22			very hard	very hard	

So, for example, to spin woolen yarn of 25 WPI to medium, $25 \times 0.12 = 3$ TPI.

Amos states that yarns spun very soft or soft are liable to drift. He also recommends that yarns that you plan on plying with down-twist (that is, with the twist in the opposite direction of the twist in the individual strands) be spun firm.

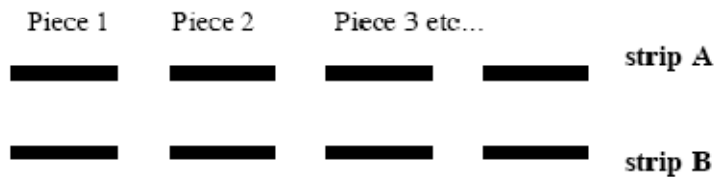
This still requires, of course, that you figure out the ratio of the drive wheel on your spinning wheel to the bobbin whorl or spindle whorl, so that you will know how many twists are induced by a single turn of the drive wheel/ pump of the treadle. You can then control the twist by figuring out how many inches you should draft for every turn of the wheel. So, for example, if your wheel has a ratio of 7:1, and you want a yarn with 7TPI, you should draft one inch for each rotation of the drive wheel. If you want 3.5TPI, you should draft 2 inches for each rotation. If the ratio is 10: 1 and you want 7TPI, then you draft 1.4 ($=10/7$) inches for each rotation.

For single-handed drafting on my small spindle wheel, the calculation is simpler. The ratio of the wheel is 30: 1. If I draft 30 inches of yarn at a time, then the TPI is simply equal to the number of times I turn the wheel for each draft.

Spinning Tip:

Maintaining color sequence from a painted roving to a plied yarn.

Have you ever spun a singles yarn from a hand painted roving and wished you could keep the color sequence but also create a plied yarn and not have it look like a barber poll yarn? A technique I found that worked for me was to take the roving and split it down the middle into two equal parts. I then called one strip A and one strip B. If the roving was very long I would split the roving and make two long train tracks. I then broke the roving into 2 foot intervals. I then took two hair clips and clipped the roving in sequence order piece 1, 2, 3, etc. for strip A and then did the same for strip B. I spun Strip A on one bobbin, Strip B on a second bobbin, and when I plied the two together there was minimal barber polling and the colors of the dyed roving were maintained throughout the yarn!



written and contributed by Alanna Wilcox, GVHG 4/08

Upcoming

Guild meeting

April 12, 2008
Program on locker hooking

Shibori and vegetable dyeing workshop

April. 17, 18, and 19
All Thing Art, 45 South Main Street
Canadaigua, NY Cost: \$75 plus \$65 materials
Email: sjburmett@frontiernet.net

Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival

May 3rd and 4th, 2008
Howard County Fairgrounds
www.sheepandwool.org

Massachusetts Sheep and Woolcraft Fair

Cummington Fairgrounds, MA
May 24 and 25, 2008
<http://www.masheepwool.org>

Ontario Handspinning Seminar

Beyond Wool.....there are other fibers
June 6-8, 2008
Georgian College, Barrie, Ontario
<http://www.ontariohandspinningseminar.ca/>

Troy Fair

July 21-26
Troy, PA
<http://www.troyfair.com>

New York State Fair

August 21 to September 1, 2008
Syracuse, NY
<http://www.nysfair.org/fair>

Fiber Fallout

Johsonburg, NJ
September 26th to 28th, 2008
<http://www.northcountryspinners.org/retreat.htm>



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