

Guild Highlights

Compiled by Rosemary Mitchell-Schuitevoerder, Tynedale Guild



Tablecloth

Photos: Marie Jeanson

Stinsens Vävstuga

Stinsens Vävstuga (weaving house) is the name of an association for weavers and would-be weavers in the south of Sweden. In 1991 we rented an old house – *Stinsahuset* (1862) – from Älmhult (also home of IKEA) council, restoring its interior ourselves, historically correct!

From the beginning we have shared all work: warping, threading, etc., as well as cleaning, taking turns in baking, making coffee and other chores. As the rent is very high, we try to make money by selling surplus articles, accepting orders for rag rugs and other jobs, being grateful for any donations of materials (e.g. from IKEA).

Members meet for discussions and mutual help Monday and Thursday mornings, and on Tuesday evening when we have an Open House for non-members. We have our own keys and can come and weave at any time. Our youngest member – our only male – is 11 years old. He badgered his mother – also a member – because 'it's more fun than football'. Our oldest member is 93.

Our forte is our kind, happy and positive atmosphere – several older members keep their membership to visit, meet and drink coffee together! For many of us *Stinsens Vävstuga* has been an oasis for meeting others – keeping social distance – during the worst Covid-19 times. (Sweden never had a full lockdown).

Work is organised in five groups comprising six to seven members, ranging from those skilled in weaving to beginners. We perform all work ourselves; once the committee has decided what is to be woven (suggestions are made by everyone), it is given to one of the work groups and then it's up to them. The idea is learning by doing – as has been done in every farmhouse around here over the centuries.

At present the *Vävstuga* occupies the main and basement floors with a kitchen and many rooms. We use one to store cut rags (for rag rugs), woollen, linen and cotton yarns. We have 45 to 50 looms of varying sizes, to weave widths from 4-160cm (1.5-163in). Visiting weaving associations turn green with envy.

Our main output consists of runners, towels, bath-towels, dishcloths, rag-rugs, potholders, blankets and tablecloths.

There is a special way of weaving called 'Gubbaväv' (gubbe = mannikin) which has a repetitive pattern and can depict almost anything, but mostly people – maybe that's where the name comes from. We were contacted by the firm Blomquists,



12 or 13 members wove this, in the pattern *munkabälte* (monk's belt)

who sell yarn and loom parts, who wanted us to make patterns for every 'county' in Sweden, 25 at the time. One of our members researched all, later turning historical, cultural and natural facts into weaving patterns. Small counties had patterns of approx. 2ft long, larger counties with more 'history' have patterns that cover up to 4-5ft in length. Our patterns include the county symbols of animals and flowers, and historic buildings. Our own Småland version shows a line of women in our traditional costume, still used for special occasions, a glass (Småland is the county known to produce glassware), a furnace in which to melt glass, a row of matches (there was a match mill in Jönköping, the largest city in Småland), and Växjö Cathedral.

Feel free to visit us at [Facebook/stinsens vävstuga NY](https://www.facebook.com/stinsens_vavstuga) – or here in Älmhult!

Anne-Marie Ringblom
Secretary of *Stinsens Vävstuga*, Älmhult, Sweden



Anne-Marie and Stina holding up Stina's rag mat – her own design (detail inset)



Samples of finished products



Gubbaväv – depicting the county of Småland



Vävstuga's store



Strips for rag mats



Linen and cotton in the store



One of several rooms with looms