

Readers' Showcase: Small Weavings

Sue Willis, Gwynedd and Abergele Guilds



A selection of small weavings

Photos: Sue Willis

I enjoy making small weavings because there are some very attractive short lengths of yarn which I feel drawn to use. I first began to weave these on to narrow warps wound on to bookmark-sized pieces of card.

Choosing a selection of yarns whose colour and appearance look good together and have real appeal, I use one of them to start to weave on to a freshly placed warp on my small hand-held frame. Over, under, over, under... for two or three rows, perhaps... and then it starts to happen. It makes me think of a beach. I want to bring in new colours. Uneven ground. Boulders. Shingle. Sand. The sea: blue, blue-green, emerald, purple. Cliffs in the distance. Then sky. An interesting sky. There will be light on the sea, and cloud reflections on the water. I will need to think about the light in the sky while weaving the sea.

The emerging weaving leads the way, triggers ideas, immerses me in places where I would love to be, takes me to imaginary surroundings, and as I weave part of me is there in the scene.

Perhaps, on another occasion, there are hillsides on each side, and I feel as if I am walking along a footpath in the mountains, discovering the view as it emerges. Pragmatically, the weaving must finish somewhere, and I consider how to do that, and how much sky there will be, if any. Challenged by this, I enjoy resolving everything and finding ways to be inventive.

I use handspun yarn because I love it, and I like the surprise when the colours emerge in the weaving. Responding to what is there and choosing what to do next brings an absorbing flow into it. If I would like a feature in the design, I think carefully where to place it, sometimes marking the warp where the feature is to



Bookmarks with landscape

be, or attaching a sketch on paper behind the warp, to guide me. The feature might be a headland, or an island, or a beach, for example.

I began weaving like this before being aware of tried and tested techniques. I found that gentle handling and responsiveness to how the yarn and the weaving behaves can lead to some lovely results with various warps and wefts. This led me to look at the work of other people and listen to them and take note of their advice. Guidance from others became useful and made sense after I had begun exploring in this way, perhaps because my results made me keen to learn more skills. I am very grateful to all those who have helped me find such enjoyment in this small-scale weaving.

About the author: Born in Wales and brought up in London, Sue returned many years later to live in North Wales with her husband and children. The sea, the mountains, the wild regions and the communities, brought her into contact with inspiring people and places. Here, she loved learning spinning and weaving, feeling drawn to connect those pursuits with her surroundings.



Penrhosfeilw and Straits



California mountain