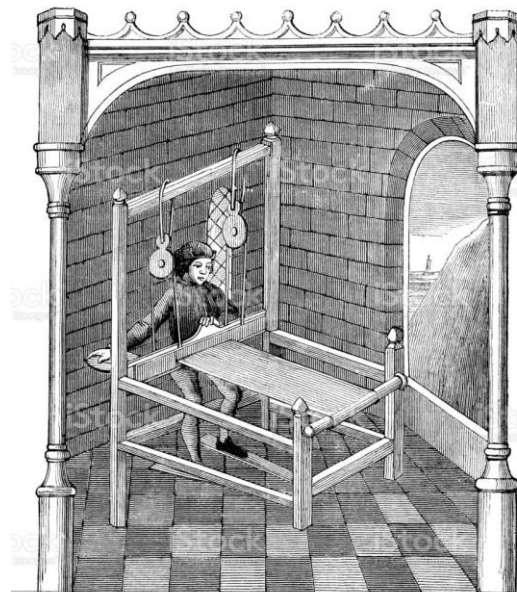


Shaftesbury Abbey Education Days

Weaving and Dyeing Cloth

Activity Objectives:

- To look at the nuns clothing and understand that they spun, wove and dyed their own cloth to make these clothes.
- To use a card loom to understand how cloth is woven using the warp and the weft.
- To dye some cloth using traditional vegetable dyes used in medieval times.



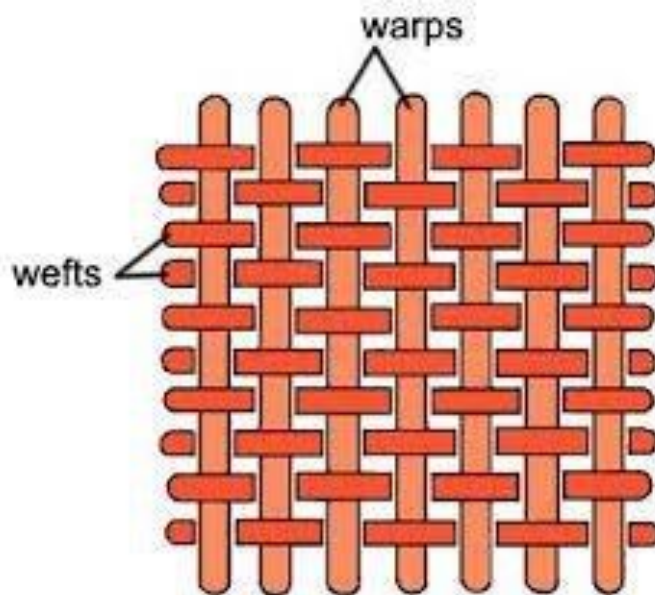
Background Notes

Nuns at the abbey wore a habit. This piece of clothing was very plain and reflected their simpler way of life. The habit was made up of a long tunic and veil which was designed to hide all but their face. It was tied around the waist with a leather or cloth belt. The nuns would spin the wool, use the wool to weave the cloth to make their own habit. Vegetables and plants that were grown at the abbey were also used to dye cloth.

Activity:

1. Look at the clothing worn by the nuns. Discuss:
 - What do they notice? (only face on show, dull colours, simple design, no patterns)
 - Why do they think it is a simple design/plain etc?
 - Where do they think the nuns got the habit from (made themselves - from spinning and weaving)

2. Look at the table loom -this is similar to the type used by the nuns. Look at how there are two lines of threads - the warp (vertical) and the weft (horizontal - weaving up and over the warp) This is to make the fabric stronger. Look at the different samples of cloth on display - can they see the 2 threads woven together?
3. Using a notched card loom, wrap wool up and down the card resting the wool in the notches. (Use sellotape on the back of the card to secure the beginning and end of the thread). This is the warp.
4. Using a different coloured wool, weave across the warp by going over and under the warp thread. This is the weft. The second weft line goes over and under the warp but is alternate to the previous line.



5. Dyeing Cloth

Natural dyes were made from vegetables and plants grown at the abbey or locally.

- Choose one the dyes made up to dye a square piece of cloth. Write name on the cloth before dyeing it! Hang on the line to dry.