



ISSUE 65

Autumn 2011



## Dates coming up

### OCT 10 MEETING

Speaker: Wendy Lowes - From Cathedral Windows to Origami

### NOV 14 MEETING

Group Sewing

### DEC 10 MEETING

Christmas Party

## Reports of our meetings

### JUNE – TALK BY ANGELA MADDEN ON ' A HISTORY OF A QUILTER '

The evening began with some notices and a special welcome back to Penny Chattey after her recent surgery.

Angela then began her talk. She said she had sewed as a child. Her mother was a night nurse and got up at lunch time, leaving Angela to her own devices. She began her quilting after visiting a quilt shop in the USA., using the radiant star block and dress-making fabrics. Angela cut and sewed diamonds over a Saturday and Sunday and ended up with 'patchworkers' thighs'. We were shown a great variety of Angela's quilts, including her Celtic bias ones. She described in great detail her inspirations and working methods. Her Celtic bias quilts are all machined and she enjoys using striped bias and fabrics which change in colour. Angela likes to have some glitzy fabric in most of her quilts. She was a very entertaining and interesting speaker and we all enjoyed listening to her and seeing her treasure trove of quilts.

*Gloria Hampson*

## **JULY – SUMMER PARTY EVENING – 19 YEARS OLD!**

It was a perfect evening to hold our summer party but, sadly, only 17 members attended. However, that did mean lots more delicious cream and jam scones to go round, washed down with Michèle's refreshing fruit punch.

Dene opened the meeting with notices about our next sewing evening in September at which we hope there will be some lovely things to make for breast cancer patients. She also talked about the quiltathon which we want to run next year to raise funds for the renal unit at The Lister Hospital. During the evening, Dene tried to speak to everyone individually to see if they would be interested in participating.

There was a quilt block and anagram quiz to get the old grey matter working. Michèle and Gloria were the winners and graciously shared their prize of a lovely box of chocolates. And then we were presented with a wonderful 'Show and Tell'. Pam Sutcliffe has made two beautiful Japanese panels for her brother's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. The panels and three others were from her sister-in-law's fabric stash and Pam will make up the other panels for her three nephews.

Jan brought along the Log Cabin quilt and also the fabric which she will use as a small inner border and the backing. The quilt top looks really pretty and we thank Jan for all her hard work to finish the quilt.

Jacqui showed us a lovely quillow that she has made from a book called 'X Blocks'. She is also making a log cabin quilt from the fabric left over from the St Mary's quilt. Michèle then showed us her 'work in progress' which is a black and white 'shoe box shuffle' quilt with stars as the theme. Lots of us coveted a lovely grey leaf fabric which Michèle has used in the border of her quilt. She told us that she has had the fabric for ages so, unfortunately, we won't be able to rush out and buy some! Dorian had her latest miniature to show us based on The Pompidou Centre, which won a prize at the Mimram Quilters Exhibition this year. She will be exhibiting at The Minerva Arts Centre, Powys between July and September so if you are visiting Wales during that time, do pop in.

Drawing the 'Show and Tell' to a close, Dene showed two Mondrian wall hangings that she had helped the children of Woolgrove School to make during Art Week in June. Finally, the raffle was drawn with three lucky winners receiving a patchwork and quilting magazine, fabric and thread and some flower head pins.

All in all, a good evening.

*Maureen Flower*

## **AUGUST – TALK BY BRIDGET LONG ON ANTIQUE QUILTS**

It is fortunate that Bridget Long's experience of being given hexagons to sew as 'something to keep a young girl occupied' did not entirely put her off the craft – and that in the 70s the TV programme 'Discovering Patchwork' rekindled her interest and passion for quilts.

Bridget started her own collection in 1982 when, during a disastrous holiday she visited the Cockermouth Antique Centre and, much to her mother's chagrin, spent her birthday money on an antique quilt circa 1815. She was intrigued by the large scale patterns on the fabrics and noted that the original green leaves had faded to indigo blue, a result of the subsequently applied yellow dye having completely faded away. The quilt was not bound but the edges were butted together – another indicator that the quilt was British in origin as only Canadian and American quilts had bound edges.

In the early 90s Bridget was a member of the Quilters Guild team that toured the country with an 'Antiques Roadshow' for quilts – over a period of 3 years they visited 29 venues and examined over 4000 quilts! They reckoned that this represented approximately 15% of the quilts that are 'out there' and also gave them valuable information about how British quilts had been made. Thereafter in 1999 she became a member of the British Quilt Study Group.

Bridget dispelled the myth that patchwork had always been a way to 'make do' by telling us stories of people who had been sent to trial at the Old Bailey accused of stealing fabrics for patchwork. People from all levels of society were making quilts using fabrics such as silk, wool, linen and hemp. The introduction of ornately patterned cottons imported from India added a new dimension to those quilt makers who had been used only to working with plain fabrics – imagine how difficult it must have been to piece together such a variety of patterned fabrics coming from such a plain world. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century patchwork became very fashionable and quilting acknowledged as a 'profession'.

Bridget unfolded more quilts from her collection, including a UFO dating around 1840-1850, pieced over papers with a 'disastrous colour scheme using some very cheap and nasty fabrics' – but a wonderful compendium of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century cottons. A turkey-red basket block quilt was another striking piece as was a beautifully quilted Irish Chain quilt. I expect all of us there would select different quilts as our favourites. Bridget described the move towards 'whole-cloth' quilts in South Wales, NW and NE England and SE Scotland and explained that between the Wars and during the recession women were taught quilting skills to enable them to earn. The way in which quilts were to be made was dictated very precisely by the Rural Industry Bureau and such quilts were given as wedding presents during the 30s. Bridget had acquired a somewhat discoloured example of one of these quilts – the inheritor of the quilt had tried to wash it to remove the blue pencil pattern markings – but it is still a fine piece of work. Dorothy Ostler pointed out that the best quilts lasted because they were put away and kept for best. Bridget reminded us that the best way to look after our quilts was to fold them into thirds and alternate the 'outside' and 'inside' – I hope you all went home and refolded your stored quilts accordingly!

Bridget took us on an interesting journey through the quilting traditions of the British Isles - it was a fascinating evening and a real joy to handle these historic quilts. Patchwork has certainly come a long way since it was consigned to the 'junk chapters' at the back of needlework books in the 50s and 60s!

*Dene Wearden*

## **Reports of other meetings, exhibitions etc.**

### **MISSENDEN ABBEY CRAFT AND OPEN DAY**

On 11th June, Anne Francis, Ann Wakefield and myself drove over to Missenden Abbey, which is set in lovely grounds in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire. Within 2 rooms, we were able to look at work by some of the tutors/artists who teach a range of subjects at the Summer School. We particularly liked the work of Laura Boswell (lino cuts, woodblocks and enamel paintings), Mary Gamester (transfer painting for bags, book covers, etc.) and the artist/embroiderer Janet Edmonds. It was a warm and sunny morning so we enjoyed a drink (and flapjack!) sitting on a bench on the lawns outside. A group of students arrived with their tutor and we thought we were going to be entertained to a demonstration of Tai

Chi but they then all started brandishing swords! No, they did not have a sword fight. The demonstration included very slow and controlled movements including balancing on one leg - some students managed this better than others!!

We were about to leave when we bumped into Dorian Walton and she asked if we had seen the exhibition yet. What exhibition we asked? We then discovered that there were displays of feltmaking, machine embroidery, hand embroidery and patchwork and quilting in various workrooms. The machine embroidery exhibits were outstanding, particularly a seascape. We felt that our own Icknield Quilter members make items which were of a better standard than some of the patchwork exhibits. Likewise Jan Simpson's students at The Settlement sew pieces of a higher quality than many of the hand embroidery items on show. Nevertheless, it was a shame that these displays were not immediately obvious and were probably missed by many visitors and I mentioned this to the receptionist before leaving. Missenden Abbey is a wonderful venue so it is a shame that the cost of their courses is so high.

*Anita Johnson*

## **IQ AT LETCHWORTH ARTS FESTIVAL**

This year we were invited to take part in Letchworth's annual heritage celebration, which was held over the first weekend in July in the Broadway Gardens. The very warm, sunny weather brought out lots of families and there was a carnival atmosphere with a wide variety of attractions, including special exhibitions on the Garden City movement, Morris dancing, numerous food and drink stalls, and the usual traders selling jewellery, toiletries, etc. Local groups had even brought along sheep and chickens, and there were people dressed up in costume for the occasion; I chatted to a lady wearing a genuine Hertfordshire smock made of heavily embroidered traditional linen and she pointed out some of the symbolic patterns decorating the shoulders and back. It probably took as long to make as one of our hand-pieced quilts and was quite likely just as warm!

We had a small table in front of one of the marquees and, considering the lack of space, managed a good display of members' quilts and hangings. We had some open grass space to the side, so this was a good place to set up the banner, which looked really good with its Sandown rosettes pinned on, attracting quite a bit of attention. The plan was to demonstrate foundation piecing, so we'd got together the week before at Margery's house and spent a happy afternoon making up 40 or so kits for foundation-pieced cards, including a pattern (mostly trees and beach huts), fabric and instructions. These sold fairly well on the day, and the quilts and Japanese-folded patchwork bags led quite a few people to enquire about the group, so leaflets and information were given out on our sewing evenings, talks and workshops. Unfortunately, our stand was very close to the stage where the music's volume made it difficult at times to talk to anyone at all, even one another! All in all, it was an enjoyable and successful day; we spread the word about patchwork and quilting in general, and IQ in particular, raised a bit of money, and will hopefully have some extra visitors at future meetings.

*Dorian Walton*

## FOQ AT THE NEC

### *A personal view from Michèle*

I had the pleasure this year of serving on the tombola stall for a few hours on Thursday and Friday. It was a wonderful way to meet new faces, put faces to old names, bring in a load of money for the Quilters Guild coffers in York, and just incidentally get in for free! We had made over £4000 by the end of Friday so I hope for good things for the whole 4 days. The prizes were 'put 'em-ins' and we had thousands given to us. I must say that some of the prizes were really good, especially the gold bottle top winners, but there were also many that were pretty small for a prize and I was giving two or three inside each other to make the prize a bit better value. I don't think this happened all the time and some people thought that their winnings were rather measly.

As for the quilts, well a bit of a curate's egg as usual, good in parts. I particularly welcomed the many hand-quilted items – more so than usual I thought, but I equally appreciated some of the fabulous machine quilted ones. Our usual miniature quilt winner, Dorian, didn't bring a prize home this year, but her little flying geese quilt was lovely just the same. The winner of that section was a beautiful 'Wedgwood' type, with great stitching. I also particularly liked some of the traditional quilts, including the winning Baltimore, and some that had no prize at all, including a large black and white 'face' that was made from thousands of very small hexagons, like a pixellated picture.



The stalls were too many, too crowded and too tempting, but lovely! I bought some South African fabric which I am making up into a hero's quilt, but I am giving it to a group who are running a race night in September for the heroes and I thought I would give it to them either to raffle or to give to a family whose son might have lost a limb in Afghanistan. And I bought a new ruler – I know, I know, I have tens of rulers, but they are all useful and very clever. This was a LazyAngle one from Creative Grids. I shall peruse the book that came with it and let you know how I got on. Also another book which I have reviewed below.

*Michèle Clarke*

### *A personal view from Dene*

Did you go on the charabanc from the Settlement? Good old Roy and Veronica organised us all most efficiently so that we were dropped at the door soon after 10. If someone knows which coffee bar serves a really good cup of coffee please let me know!

It is quite a feat to try to see everything in a day – with thanks to Margery who sent out advanced details of the layout this meant I could attempt to plan my route but I still managed to miss some bits entirely though. I had a really pleasant wander through the competition exhibitions when the rest of the visitors were eating lunch – one thing I appreciated was those quilts with more quilting – it really does add an extra dimension, (note to self: try to add more quilting to my next project). It was lovely to see Dorian's entry for the miniatures competition – *wow! well done dorian* – I think everyone visiting was very impressed with your 'flying goslings' but the winning entry was fairly outstanding too.

What did you think of the 3-D chest of drawers just tumbling over with all sorts of sewing goodies? Quite amazing! And who could suppress a grin at the Meerkat quilt – those of you who attended will know what I mean! Quilters are so generous with their time aren't they? I spoke to several in an effort to sweet-talk people into coming to Baldock for workshops and talks – watch this space.

One of the best bits is watching people return to the coach laden with goodies – I wait with bated breath to see the outcome from some of these purchases – some wonderful 'show and tells' in the future hopefully.

*Dene*

## **BOOK REVIEW**

*Cut the Scraps*, by Joan Ford, published by Taunton Press (USA), 2011. Over £19 from Home Workshop. ISBN978-1-60085-333-3

IQ were given some money off tokens from Home Workshop so I had to buy a book surely?! I chose this book despite having at least six other Scrap Quilt books because it looked so different. The author (same name as my aunt funnily!) not only gives 20 beautiful projects to make, but first gives us information of how to declutter your scrap basket. It's a 7-step process – getting started (motivation); cutting (into three particular sizes – 2, 3.5 and 5 inch squares); sorting; selecting a theme; gadgets and tools to save time (well my new ruler might come in useful then!); piecing and sewing and finally finishing the project. It is a great read, and for someone slightly on the OCD scale like myself, well at least a cataloguing-type person anyway, it is a great method and one that I shall start soon; yes, really. I must say I am very pleased with this purchase!

*Michèle Clarke*

## **Committee News**

### **QUILTATHON**

Watch this space for exciting news about a Quiltathon the Committee is planning for May next year. We intend to make a quilt top in a weekend to raffle for the Renal Unit at Lister Hospital, where our own member Penny Chattey had a kidney transplant this year. We have formed a subcommittee who will be busy sorting design, fabrics, a rota for working on it, sponsorship, and the raffle itself. More news in December!

### **SAD ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Committee is sad to announce the death of one of our newest members, Pauline Lewis. I met Pauline when she came to my house to do a workshop on the sewing bag, as

she and Barbara had not managed to attend earlier. She had been in the hospice for the last month and died on 26 August. We send her family our sympathy.

## **THANK YOU**

Thank you to all who helped clear the furniture after Bridget's interesting talk at the August Meeting. Now that the 'musclad Andy' is no longer on duty at the Community Centre we need to be a bit more self reliant – I'd be so grateful if you could stack your chairs at the side of the hall after each meeting, and help carry any tables up to the hatch end if you are able – unfortunately several of us committee members have 'dodgy backs' so we need all the help we can get. Thanks in anticipation.

## **WENDY LOWES FABRIC ORIGAMI WORKSHOP – NOVEMBER 12TH**

Fancy something a bit different? Wendy will be coming to the IQ meeting in October to talk about her work, and we will have the chance to 'fold, twist and tuck our way to dazzling dimensional quilts' at her November workshop at Monica's Studio 39. We will be able to learn fabric folding methods that are quick, easy, trouble free and result in stunning texture-filled designs. The cost is £22 and the day runs from 10-4. Application forms are at the meetings in September and October or phone/e-mail Dene if you'd like to reserve a place. [denewearde@hotmai.co.uk](mailto:denewearde@hotmai.co.uk) / 01462 895459 – see you there!

*Dene*

## **Other News**

### **A PINNING BEE**

On 17<sup>th</sup> June, Brenda, Jinny, Liz and Gill from Steph P's P & Q classes and Michèle, Barbara, Andy and Gloria from IQ turned up with willing hands to help her at The Settlement in Letchworth for a pinning bee! Steph had asked people to join her there in order to pin together four quilts being made for and by St Mary's Infants School. How long does it take to pin a quilt? Well, less than 15 minutes each one. With at least 4 people per quilt, it was all over in an hour. And by the way, the quilts were lovely, all based on hand prints from the children, plus their school motto. All nicely printed and made up, and I'm sure will be beautifully quilted, they will be hung in the school. Well done Steph.

*Michèle Clarke*

PS I have since had a lovely picture from Steph as she has finished them and they are hanging up already:



## WAYS TO WASTE YOUR TIME

Click into the link below for a fabulous 6 minutes of patchwork fun. Must have taken someone hours of work on a computer: <http://www.nfb.ca/film/quilt/?ec=en20110209>

## A TRIBUTE AND AN EXCITING PICTURE FOR US

I found this in a paper on holiday in France. Just lovely to see our quilts in use! I have written to the paper to see if they would like to follow up the story behind the main one below – the one on the bed.

## Bomb took 3 limbs, but not photographer's can-do spirit



Picture ©Andrew Testa for The New York Times

Abbreviated from article by [C. J. CHIVERS](#) of International Herald Tribune

'To the annals of understatement and optimism add this: the account of [Giles Duley](#), an independent photographer, about the moment after he stepped on a hidden bomb while covering an American and Afghan infantry patrol. Mr Duley heard a click and felt a flash of heat as the explosion lifted him into the air. He landed on his side on the dirt, roughly five yards from where he had stood. He smelled the stink of the explosives mixed with that of his own burned flesh. "I remember looking up and seeing bits of me and my clothes in the tree, which I knew wasn't a good sign," he said. "I saw my left arm. It was just obviously shredded to pieces, and smoldering. I couldn't feel my legs, so straightaway and from what I could see in the tree, I figured they were gone."

Mr. Duley, 39, was wounded in February in Kandahar Province. Five months on, after leaving the hospital, he is roughly midway through a 12-week physiotherapy regimen at Headley Court, a military rehabilitation center near London. There, freshly fitted with two prosthetic legs and a left arm, he has been relearning to walk and confronting the details of pushing forward in life. Pulled along by what would seem an incurably upbeat mind, he is making plans to return to work as a photographer.

When he set out for Afghanistan, Mr. Duley, a former fashion and celebrity photographer who changed his focus to cover what he considered untold stories of human suffering and resilience, had been preparing to start a quarterly photography journal, to be called *Document*. His first planned trip? Back to Kandahar, to photograph the medical treatment of Afghan civilians. The technicians who fashion the prosthetic limbs at Headley Court are crafting a stubby prosthetic arm that will be fitted with a tripod head. To this, Mr. Duley said, he will attach a camera that he will raise to his eye, and then get back to work. He has framed his lot not as a tragedy — “I have never seen myself as seriously wounded,” he said — but as a life-altering hardship that contains opportunity, too. As a triple amputee, he said, he hopes to channel interest in his own struggles into bringing more attention to the suffering of other people. “For me to make sense of what happened to me, I have to make it advantageous to the work I do,” he said.’

## PATCHWORK IN FRANCE

I went to France this year and Googled a few terms to see if there was anything going on while I was there. This site came up which may be useful in the future if you are planning a trip: [www.planetpatchwork.com/passtvq/tvq23/france.htm](http://www.planetpatchwork.com/passtvq/tvq23/france.htm)

## Diary Dates – Theirs

**23–25 September: Chapter House Quilters exhibition.** St Peter and St Paul’s Church, Weedon NN7 4ED. 10.30–4.30. £2. Contact: 01327 349727, [patcashin@virginmedia.com](mailto:patcashin@virginmedia.com)

**23–25 September: St Ives.** Quilts Unlimited by Cromwell Quilters. Free Church St Ives. 10–5 (2–5 Sun). Entry £2.50. Contact: Helen 01480 813157.

**October 1: Region 7 Northants Area Day, Kislingbury.** Speaker: Philippa Naylor; traders; raffle; books. See *Bits and Pieces* next issue.

**1–2 October: Priory Quilters, Royston.** Exhibition and sales of quilts, Town Hall, Royston SG8 7DA, 10–4. Contact: Jean Jacobs 01763 243224 or [priory.quilters@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:priory.quilters@yahoo.co.uk)

**8–9 October: Kings’ Sutton Arts & Crafts Festival,** Memorial Hall, Kings’ Sutton OX17 3PG. 11–5. £1. Contact: 01295 811134.

**15–16 October: Fat Quarters Exhibition, Memorial Hall, Gt Missenden,** HP16 9AE. 10–4. Admission £3. Contact Gill Howes 01494 865478.

**15 October: Kettering Quilters Exhibition, Kettering,** Central Methodist Church, School Lane, Kettering, NN16 0DH. 9–4. Entry £2.

**4–6 November: Autumn Quilt Festival, Chilford:** Chilford Hall Vineyard, Linton, Cambridge, CB21 4LE. 10-4:30 (4:00 on Sunday). Entry on door. £7: (Senior Citizen £6).

## Jacqui's Jottings

Whilst on holiday in the Lake District, Bill and I visited Kendal and took time out to view the Quaker Tapestry. Even he was taken aback by the beauty of what is, now, a stunning embroidery of 77 panels.

It all began at a Quaker Sunday school. The intention was for the children to make a long scroll telling the story of early Quakers of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, but one 11-year-old boy asked if they could do something a little more exciting, like a mosaic or collage.

His teacher to whom he made this remark was Anne Wynn-Wilson, an experienced embroiderer who at the time was completing her embroidery thesis on the Bayeux Tapestry for her City & Guilds. Jonathan had unwittingly thrown the first pebble into the pond that morning in January 1981 and the ripples still continue to this day.

Anne devised an embroidery scheme that would incorporate some of the design elements of the Bayeux Tapestry and be unified in its design, fabric and materials, yet diverse enough in technique and subject matter. All of which has drawn together groups of people with different interests and abilities, many without any experience of embroidery. Designers came forward, embroidery groups were formed with training workshops arranged. Altogether more than 4000 men, women and children in 15 different countries have 'had a hand' in the creation of the Quaker Tapestry, which was finally finished in 1996.

For those of you who haven't been lucky enough to enjoy this work of art, or would love to see it again, the tapestry is going on tour and will be at Ely Cathedral in February 2012. Check their website [www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk](http://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk) or phone 01539 722975 for more details.

*Jacqui Wilson*

## Notes on Needles

This came via Margery from Meg Leach and she said we could use it with the source mentioned. You may find it useful. We had an article on needles before some time ago, but the more information the merrier I think:

'Correct needle selection is one of my big bug-bears when I'm teaching or advising customers. ...[they ] overlook the fact that the needle really is the business end of the whole stitch process. ... Domestic machine needles, for the purposes of this conversation, fall into two broad groups: ball points and sharps. Sharps are what we use in patchwork and quilting with woven fabrics, usually cotton. These pierce the fibres as the needle penetrates through the fabric. Sitting in the middle of these two groups is the 'Universal' needle. It's neither a true ballpoint nor a true sharp, it's not quite the right needle for any one particular task. If you have any Universals, save them for mending.

When selecting your needle, you need to choose a needle TYPE and a needle SIZE. Choose your needle TYPE according to what you're planning to do with it – piece, quilt, work with fragile threads, work with metallic thread, embroider, etc. Choose your needle SIZE to match the size of the thread you are going to put through that needle. The thread should lay nicely into the groove on the front of the needle shaft. This groove sheathes the

thread as it penetrates in and out of your work; if your needle size is too small or too large, you may experience skipped stitches or thread breakage.

Common TYPES of needles (sharps) used in patchwork and quilting:

1. **Jeans:** Often used for piecing, usually in a size 70 or 80, depending on size of thread being used. The jeans needle has a strong shaft and a very sharp point. No, it isn't only for sewing denim, it's only the large size (110 or bigger) Jeans needles that are used for denim, usually with quite thick thread. The size 70 is ideal for thin threads such as Aurifil 50, YLI Soft Touch, Superior Masterpiece, etc. Also recommended for use with monofilament threads for appliqué. Using a small needle such as a Jeans 70 with thin thread when piecing reduces the effect of thread bulk taken up in the patchwork seam allowances and therefore increases accuracy.
2. **Microtex:** Almost identical to a Jeans in the smaller sizes. A Microtex 70 is commonly used with thin piecing threads. Size up to a Microtex 80 if your piecing thread is a little thicker, so that the thread nestles into the groove. Microtex needles are perfect for 'microfibres' and densely woven poplins and silks. The design of the needle helps the holes to heal so that your silk doesn't look like it's been hole-punched after stitching a line. A Microtex is probably the best choice if you're stitching through experimental fibres such as thin plastic or Lamfix. One of the advantages of the Microtex needle is that it comes in a size 60 – very good for monofilaments, size 100 polyesters and other whisper thin threads. Useful for machine appliqué – choose the size to match the thickness of your appliqué thread.
3. **Quilting:** does what it says on the tin. These needles are designed to aid with the balance of tension when stitching through the layers of the quilt sandwich. Often, if your tension is awry and your stitches are not locking out of sight inside the wadding when you are machine quilting, switching to a Quilting needle can solve the problem. These are generally used in size 75 and size 90, which fit most commonly used machine quilting threads. Use the 75 with medium thickness threads; move up to the 90 for thicker quilting threads. If the 90 is still too small for your thread, you may need to try a Topstitch or Embroidery 100. I have not seen Quilting 100s on the market, but someone correct me please if you've seen them somewhere. If you are working heirloom style machine quilting with very thin threads, then you may need to move to a Microtex needle as the smallest Quilting needle may be too large. But the quilting needle is excellent for quilting with all but the very thickest and very thinnest of threads.
4. **Topstitch:** Topstitch needles have a nice big round eye and of course sharp points. They are (obviously) quite good for topstitch purposes, but can also be used for quilting with thicker threads, as one of the advantages of Topstitch needles is that they come in big sizes, i.e. Topstitch 100 – a useful needle for decorative surface embellishment when using thicker threads. In all honesty the topstitch needle is not one that I use very often, but it is so widely touted by this one manufacturer, that I mention it here because most people will come across advice at some stage to use one.
5. **Metallic:** quality brands of metallic needles are worth their price. They have very round eyes (rather than tear-drop shaped) and also have Teflon or other coating inside the eye. Both the shape of the eye and the coating help to reduce

friction on the metallic outer layer of the thread, which helps to reduce thread breakage. On the whole, metallic threads have a core (the best brands use a rayon core) which is sheathed by the metallic outer layer. When the outer metallic element of the thread is nicked or split, it ruches up above your needle, and you end up sewing with just the thread core and a big ball of metallic sheathing sliding up the thread until everything snaps. Using a metallic needle which is the correct size can reduce the frequency of this happening. The most common size of metallic needle is the 80, but 90s come in very useful too. Other sizes are available – match the needle size to your thread. Make sure the thread fits into the protective groove on the front of the needle shaft. If it doesn't slot into the groove, your needle is too small and the thread will experience a great deal of friction from the fabric fibres.

6. **Embroidery:** a really useful needle to keep on hand. The embroidery needle is designed for more fragile threads such as viscose and rayon varieties, but it's really useful for any thread that is turning out to be a bit pesky. The embroidery needle has a deeper groove along its shaft than other needles do and it also has an enlarged scarf (the notch at the back of the needle, causing the loop for stitch formation). The embroidery needle is my 'go to' needle, my 'when all else fails' needle. Also a good backup if you are out of metallic needles. The most common sizes of embroidery needle are 80 and 90.
7. **Titanium:** These are widely touted at the moment and are said to last longer than ordinary needles. Not if you hit a pin! My own personal preference is for standard, good quality needles, such as Schmetz, which are relatively inexpensive to replace if broken. Some people prefer the titaniums.
8. **Other needles:** There are of course other needles available. *Wing tips, leathers, twins, triples, lana*, etc. But the six above are the basic ones to keep in your toolbox for patchwork and quilting.

Always use a sharp needle; don't struggle on with a blunt needle. Using the right tool for the job really does make sewing more enjoyable. When you find a good combination of thread and needle, it's a good idea to write the needle type and size on the top of your thread spool.

A note for **Janome** users: The blue tip Janome needle is an Embroidery needle. The red tip Janome needle is a metallic needle. If you use only Janome branded needles for machine quilting, then generally speaking, the blue tip works quite well for machine quilting.

*Meg Leach*  
New Threads Quilt Shop  
[www.new-threads.com](http://www.new-threads.com)  
[meg.leach@jilis.co.uk](mailto:meg.leach@jilis.co.uk)  
07818-411788

## Recipe for You

### MEI'S GLUTEN-FREE BANANA LOAF

2 cups gluten-free flour; or 1 cup buckwheat  
and 1 cup rice flour  
1 tsp xanthan gum

3 tsp gluten-free baking powder  
½ tsp salt  
10 oz butter

*1 to 1¼ cups sugar*  
*4 large eggs, beaten*  
*3 bananas*

FOR TOPPING  
*4 tablespoons icing sugar*  
*1 tbsp lemon juice*

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Beat butter and sugar until smooth.
3. Mash bananas and add.
4. Sift flour, xanthan gum, baking powder and salt.
5. Add eggs, then fold in flour mixture.
6. Pour into a 20cm tin, and bake 1–1¼ hours until a fork comes out clean.
7. Mix icing sugar and lemon juice, and drizzle over cooled cake.

*Andy Walmsley*

***If you are fed up with seeing my name at the bottom of articles, then please write something for us!!!***

*Michèle Clarke*