

My Quilting Obsession by Maryeke of Batik and Beads

Maryeke from Batik and Beads spoke to members at our June meeting and told us of her interest in fabrics and sewing which began from when she was a teenager in the 60s and was introduced by a colleague to a fabric shop. Maryeke eventually made her own wedding dress and bridesmaids' dresses with fabric from John Lewis and went on to purchase cotton fabric from Laura Ashley to make curtains and liked the fabric so much she decided to make a patchwork throw made up of 4" squares – and of course it was not so easy to cut material so accurately then as none of the modern templates were available. Maryeke used her grandmother's Singer sewing machine and, not fully understanding how to quilt, having layered the throw, she only quilted the four corners - to keep the wadding in place when it was washed.

Maryeke then decided to undertake a City and Guilds Patchwork and Quilting Course but, due to ill health, was unable to complete the course and had to wait a further two years before she could start it again. At this point in her talk Maryeke showed us the quilts she had made along her career path. First there was a beautiful quilt with a pineapple design in the centre, a crazy patch and Drunkards Path around the edge. Some of the quilting was in gold thread in remembrance of her dog, Harvey, who had died while she was making the quilt. Her next big project was to get special permission to photograph tiles at Stokesey Castle so that she could transfer them onto her quilt. Flying Geese were painted as were several other small areas.

After four years, Maryeke and her husband sold their house, bought a motor home and travelled the country for 6 months. This was when Maryeke made her first Batik Quilt – she had of course taken her sewing machine with her! And the quilt, multi-coloured hexagonals (with the remainder of the material used for the backing), was photographed and appeared in Popular Patchwork. Maryeke's next project was a Log Cabin design quilted in yellow thread. Another of her projects was Raindrops Keep Falling – because it had rained from April to October that year. Maryeke generally uses 'Warm and Natural Wadding' in all her quilts.

Another quilt, Courthouse Steps made from the fabrics she started her company with, was displayed at the Minerva Art Centre, an organisation which Maryeke has been involved with for several years.

Maryeke then began creating wall hangings and, once finished. Maryeke decided the design looked too bland and needed highlighting so she attached (only at the top) a black Log Cabin surround which gave the design the highlight it needed. Maryeke went on to make several more wall hangings but with different 'colourways' and with added flowers, leaves, beads. She then got more into embroidery and embellishments.

Her next project was a Drunkards Path but with a difference. Three blocks were as normal but she tipped the fourth block and it made a circle – you can usually see this quilt behind her stand.

Maryeke doesn't usually sell her quilts – she feels she has put too much of herself into them to part with them and when you see them you can understand why. Five years ago Batik and Beads was born, starting with 8 bolts of fabric and some beads and she has now built up a very successful business. Maryeke has also got publishing and her second book, 'In

The Wild', is now out with her third book in the process of being published, while she is working on her fourth book 'Threads and Things' showing what you can do with accessories.