



Embroiderers' Guild

Travelling Books

An Embroiderers' Guild Activity for Branches and Individual Members

Branch Briefing



Idea

Within a branch small groups of branch members join together to produce a unique book for each member of the group. The books created by the group are called 'Travelling Books' simply because they *travel* around the group. Each member of the group makes a unique contribution to the book circulated by each member. The result is always very special – a book each participating member keeps at the end of the journey and often shares with others for pleasure and inspiration.

"The group I was in, I know, loved being in 'our' group and got to know each other a little better, finding out what each other's passions were (I mean in sewing terms, of course!) The pieces of sewing were only part of the story, the comments that went with them, quite another! Poems, jokes, paintings, sayings, 'how to's', memories, - all personal and special to that person - and special to me the recipient."

Taking part – becoming a "Traveller"

All branch members could be a member of a 'Travelling Books' group within their branch.

Personally, I am overjoyed with my book of delights and will treasure it forever.

Contribution to the branch programme

This activity could be the subject of a branch meeting to launch it and will be a point of interest in meetings for 12 months or beyond. Participating branches reported an initial enthusiasm from a number of members but then a groundswell of interest developed with many more people taking part in the second and subsequent journeys. The pilot branches also reported more members attending branch meetings. Many members got to know others in the branch, everyone mixed better.

Trisha James, Chairman of South Cheshire Branch, summed up the value of the 'Travelling Books' to the branch.... *It has been a wonderful experience. The meetings are far more lively and interactive with members finding the person to pass their book onto and looking forward to receiving the next book and seeing what work has been done in it.*

Materials required

An A5 sized, spiral bound, off-white paper, landscape book seems to work best for the people who have experienced the 'Travelling Books' idea. These are available from **Pink Pig Sketchbooks**. Branches can set up an account with Pink Pig (if they do not already have one). The account name should be as per this example - 'Embroiderers' Guild *Walton* Branch'. Branches can order by post, email or on-line. The books are from the ECO Pig range. Product code (in place of a description) – 83551. These books cost £1.68 and are available in a wide range of cover colours and designs. Orders of less than £45.00 attract a carriage charge of £4.20.

Pink Pig – www.pinkpigtrade.co.uk or Pink Pig Unit 1, Emley Business Park, Emley HD8 9QY 01924 840759

How it works

- **The Branch Committee decides to make this a branch activity.** It can be introduced to the branch programme at any time. Ideally, one person introduces the idea and acts as a point of information and help throughout the first cycle of travelling books within each group. Alex Messenger of Oxford Branch (agiknsal@tiscali.co.uk) and Trish James of South Cheshire Branch (patricia.james3@virgin.net) have agreed to answer any questions you may have.
- **Everyone interested in joining in signs up.** They are committing to stay for a "journey" and doing a piece of work each month. From all those signed up, they are randomly divided into equal groups of no more than 6 people. Each person is allocated a number from 1-6. Within the group, a person's "place" on the list does not change. Everyone is given a list of those people in their group. The organiser should also keep a master list of the groups and members.
- **Each person has a spiral-bound book.** A5 landscape has proved to work well. It gives participants enough room to be creative but is not too big. Everyone has a book of the same size.
- **Each person identifies their book.** This may be with a cover design, title page and includes their name and full postal address on the inside rear cover.
- **Each person starts their book.** These are their signature pieces, each accompanied by their source and/or inspiration. The source or inspiration is always shown on the left hand facing page. The accompanying embroidery is mounted on the right facing page.
- **The first step of the journey is to pass this book on to the next person on the list.** This person then has a month in which to make their contribution to the book.
- **Each month, everyone creates a piece of work for the book passed to them at the branch meeting.** The textile work can be of any sort - there are no "instructions" or theme, it is entirely up to the individual – it might be a left-over sample from something they've done before, tried at a workshop, something new they wanted to try out, or a happy accident.
- **The piece doesn't have to be perfect or wonderful** or even fit the whole page; it can be hand stitched, machine stitched, printed, stencilled, collaged, fabric or papers, or a combination of any of these. People can be as restrained or adventurous as they like. The textile piece should fit on one page of the book, and on the opposite page is something that is related to it in some way – a picture, photo, drawing, poem, doodle, collage, – whatever they like. Lots of people create the textile piece first and then go looking for something to go with it, but some start with the inspiration and then

create the textile – there are no rules to this. Note the two pieces go side-by-side in the book (but always be aware of what’s on the other side – particularly if people actually stitch into the page).

- It is not necessary to think of a different piece of work each month. The same piece can be recreated each month as it will be going into a different book"
- **Each month, the Travelling Book is passed to the next person on the list.**
 - Person 1 always passes to person 2, person 2 to 3 and so on, person 6 passes to person 1).
 - Books are passed on within the group at monthly meetings and whichever Travelling Book you have, it is always passed to the same person. If someone can't be at a meeting, they can either ask a friend to pass the book on or contact the person they need to give the book to and make some other arrangement.
 - Books should **not** be held on to or it ruins the flow throughout the group.
 - Each month everyone does the same thing again (this is the commitment bit!) – a piece of work for the book which they have just been given (or two pieces of work, one for the “home” book and one for the Travelling Book if they have both) and each month the Travelling Book is passed on.
- **When the Travelling Books have been passed around everyone in the group they will eventually come back to their original owners.** This completes the (first round of the) “journey”. Everyone in the group now has a book filled with pieces and ideas from everyone else in the group.
- **After the first journey, you can start again** with people signing up (people don't have to sign up to every journey). You then mix the names up again to create different groups of people and the Travelling Books start off on another “journey”.

Alex Messenger says... *We are now on our seventh journey and we still have over 30 people participating, including new members!*

- **Small, entirely voluntary, addition** - Members can keep a second book (called a **Home book**) if they wish, in which they also put a piece of the work they have done. That way, they have a record of all the pieces they have created for others. This is entirely up to each member and does not affect the journey of the Travelling Books.

Comments from members of South Cheshire Branch

I found it challenging and great fun working in a group. It was very interesting to see just how many wonderful and very skilled members we have in our Guild.

The atmosphere in the meeting room was always buzzing with excitement for what your next book would contain, and the joy at the end of the journey when your own book came home was very satisfying. I loved making a cover for mine and would so like to be included in another journey”

“We are a pretty big (in numbers) Guild and most of us know each other quite well, or just a little bit. When we meet once a month, it's a happy couple of hours with news exchanged, tea drunk and good talks where we usually learn something new. But since Travelling Books began, things have been different! As soon as we enter the hall, there's a different sort of noise and expectation and people searching for others, and

you can hear 'have you seen so-and-so?' 'Wait there, don't move - I've got your book' 'Oh, my goodness, will you just look at that!' 'Oh, how did she do that - I've got to learn how to do that!' This went on from March to July, and then finally in September we did our last handover."

"Not everyone signed up this year - I'm sure some members weren't sure what it was all about and thought they would wait to see the outcome from this batch. Well, now that everyone has seen the finished books that we displayed in September I should think there will be a very healthy list of people taking part in 2014".

"I found the travelling sketch books quite a challenge which I thoroughly enjoyed. It was different from the work that I usually do (patchwork and quilting of Linus quilts - and made me work in different techniques. I am thrilled with the beautiful pieces of work from others in my group and will treasure them."

"I think the big plus regarding this sort of project is that, with luck, you get picked for a group that includes people you've never had chance to speak to before.

"I found it a really good discipline working to a sharp timetable; it also helped me to meet other ladies that I had not spoken to before. It certainly created a buzz at the meetings and I'm sure gave some ladies a purpose to come to the meeting when they may otherwise not have bothered.

Certainly looking through the books it makes you realise just what a talented group of members we have. Everyone wants to talk to the people they know and might not have seen since the previous meeting, so it's good to be gently "pushed"

" Since it was, and still is, an EG-centred project, as well as a multi-experience expression - through the individual pages of each book - of the everyday in each participant's life (or so it seemed to me), I thought it important to consider each book, in both design and theme, in terms of my own current page(s) in relation to preceding ones.

Special thanks

To Alex Messenger and members of Oxford Branch who made such a success of the idea within their branch and to Trisha James and members of South Cheshire Branch who took it up, piloted it and confirmed for us all what a superb idea this is for branches and their members.