



QUILT

Quilts Past and Present

An Interview with Lynne Edwards, MBE

Lynne Edwards MBE is an internationally known and respected quilter, author and teacher who was awarded an MBE in 2008 for services to arts and crafts. Lynne's books include 'Cathedral Window Quilts' and 'Stash Buster Quilts'.

How and why did you start quilting?

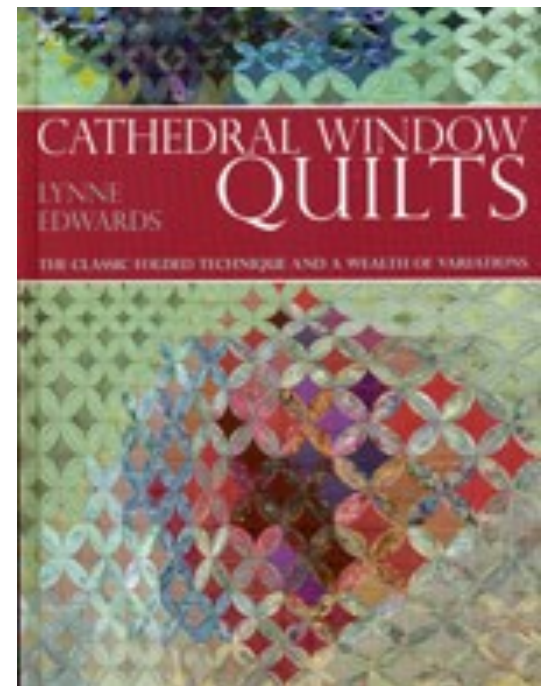
I made my first quilt in 1968 - it was hexagons, huge in size and so badly made! I did it all by machine, folding the fabric around card hexagon shapes and joining them with a machine zigzag stitch. I backed the top with a sheet and left it just like that - like a huge flappy pillowcase....No one was doing patchwork then, so I didn't know any different.

What is it about quilting and patchwork that you love?

It's the fabrics and their relationship with each other that I love best. When I was a child my mother would buy me a box of coloured pencils that were painted on the outside in the same colour as the pencil leads. I would arrange them side by side on the table just to enjoy how the colours looked when they were lined up next to each other. All my quilts start with a pile of fabric that I am considering using together in a quilt.

Where do you find your inspiration for a new project?

Because I do so much teaching and need to offer new techniques and ideas to my students, many of my projects start with this in mind. I see a pattern, which might be a floor tile, a piece of wrapping paper, an illustration or just a concept that has popped into my head. Then I fiddle around trying to s



From top:

Lynne Edwards receiving her MBE from HRH Prince of Wales in 2008.

Cathedral Window Quilts - one of five books Lynne has written on patchwork and quilting.



Interview with Lynne Edwards MBE continued.

Then I fiddle around trying to solve the problems of how to make this design work in fabric and once I have got that cracked, then I will make a sample or often a whole quilt to inspire the students to try it. When they get their hands on it, all sorts of amazing interpretations appear from them, which makes the whole process very exciting and very creative.

How did it feel to be awarded your MBE?

I couldn't believe it when I got the letter from the Palace - I actually thought it might have been a parking fine when I saw the envelope with the royal crest on it! Once I had recovered from the shock, I was very proud and hugely pleased that quilting had got some recognition at last. A great moment for the craft, I feel. And Prince Charles actually collects old Welsh quilts, so he was pleased to talk about that too, which made the occasion even better.

Why do you think quilting is such a social craft?

Way back in pioneer days, making a quilt always required a few others to help you handle the large piece and to get the quilt layered etc. This became a social occasion, and everyone saw what you were doing and shared in your plans and progress. Quilters always share what they are doing and are happy to help with others' projects. We are not out for personal glory, although it is lovely to have others admire our work - the important thing is the pleasure of making, and this is made richer by working with others and sharing our enthusiasm.

Which other quilt or textile artists do you admire?

I enjoy seeing the work of all ranges of textiles, from the most contemporary quiltmakers like Philippa Naylor to exquisite workmanship in traditional designs like those by Jacquie Harvey (both UK quiltmakers). I seem to like everything the Japanese do in textiles - their handling of fabric and superb skills leave me filled with admiration.

How do you start thinking about a new quilt book?

One book seems to lead to another naturally - usually because a technique or a group of quilts start to take over my ideas and I find myself gathering them together to make a collection almost before realising it. The challenge is communicating step-by-step instructions for the readers and trying to make everything really understandable and hopefully painless to make the projects.

**If you were a school-based textiles teacher what would be your first lesson with a new class?**

I think it would be to present a huge variety of lovely pieces of fabric and textures that they could feel and enjoy, and then go on to show lots of exciting pieces including clothes and as many different techniques and disciplines in textures that I could gather - some to touch, others in picture form. Just to try to get them excited with cloth would be a good start.

What are you working on now?

Right now I am hand-stitching an Art Deco design with blanket stitch in really retro colours - lime green, sand and black and white. Also I am hand quilting a 'Patchwork Set in Stone' design which is one of a series based on floor tile designs where the pieces are separated and stitched onto a background fabric which shows as narrow strips between each tile - like the cement grouting seen in real floor tiles. Finally a jolly quilt for my students based on pieced curvy birds in three sizes using lots of different fabric for the birds and also for the backgrounds. The summer break is a great chance to get a few ideas going without too much interruption.

How can we encourage more young people to try quilting?

We can encourage by making it all fun and larky - not too much criticism and let the emphasis on accuracy and craftsmanship develop naturally. Displaying our work and celebrating our pleasure in it both around the house and in exhibitions would show more of the craft to a wider audience. The key message is that fabric gives pleasure.....how many of us as small children had pieces of blanket that we carried around pressed to our ear while sucking a forbidden thumb? Its all textiles, after all...