

REVIEW - Parchment Weekends and Holidays

Have you ever been on a parchment weekend/holiday, or like me have you wondered what they are like? How skilled do you need to be and are they value for money?

I recently had the opportunity to go on one of the weekends organised and run by Alison Yeates of Kingfisher Crafts together with Wendy Stone and Kim Thomas. The venue is a small family-run hotel in Bournemouth which has hosted parchment weekends for some years now and it shows, as the members of the group are treated like old friends –as indeed some of them are.

The weekend started at lunchtime on the Friday and continued through until Sunday lunchtime concluding with a 3 course dinner. Full board is provided with special diets catered for, plus tea/coffee breaks, and I would defy anyone to stay hungry! Following requests from previous weekends Alison has now started techniques workshops for the 2 days leading up to the weekend when the larger group complete a comprehensive project designed by the 3 tutors.

The hotel is right on the cliff, so there is time to pop across the road and look at the view, but for anyone who wants to see Bournemouth I would recommend staying for a bit longer! Workshops continue into the evening, and on Saturday night Alison's husband Steve came along to run one of his famed quizzes, which are not to be taken too seriously!

The project is designed specifically for the weekend, so there is a new one each year and the subject is not revealed until the group arrive at the hotel where two versions are on display. The aim is for each person to go away with a complete picture at the end of the weekend. There are also small designs (suitable as cards) which uses the theme of the main picture with the addition of a border just in case anyone finishes the main project with time to spare. A list of tools and equipment is sent out prior to the weekend and on the day a pack is given out with all the parchment (and plenty of spare), card, trimmings and a frame mount for the finished piece.

The project for this weekend was the four seasons and the work incorporated whitework, lacework and coloured work. One version

used images of birds, the other woodland animals. At first glance the project was enough to make me want to turn tail and run! I thought there was no way I would be able to complete such a project in two days that would look anything like the original!



But I did!

(Not this one though –
this is Alison's)

The days are arranged in a series of workshops and one aspect of the design is covered in each: different techniques demonstrated and as much support and supervision as we needed. There was enough variation built in to the design to allow for the different tools and grids that people have and the different levels of skill.

Talking to other members of the group there were folk who go on these weekends regularly, and some like me going for the first time. Others were quite experienced parchment crafters who agreed there was plenty to be challenged by, and there were even some ladies who had never attempted parchment craft before! They told me they were having a fantastic weekend and were thrilled with what they had achieved and did not feel in any way disadvantaged by not having any experience as there was lots of support from the tutors and other crafters.

I thoroughly enjoyed my weekend, ate too much; spent too much (Alison brings a mini shop of tools and equipment which is irresistible!), and laughed a lot – you can't laugh too much! For me the step-by-step guidance and continuous monitoring was helpful without being intrusive and I am immensely pleased with my picture. I did have to finish it at home –accurate grid work is not my strong point so I took my time. All in all I felt it was excellent value.

For further information see www.kingfishercrafts.co.uk

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