

[www.somersetguildwsd.org.uk](http://www.somersetguildwsd.org.uk)

**March 2020**



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Jacky Calderbank

All email to: [secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk](mailto:secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk)

✉ Copy deadline for issue is Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Please email at [secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk](mailto:secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk)

Photo on front cover: Dorset buttons made by Ros Atkins.

## ***Message from the Chair***

**Hello to Everyone,**

It has been a very busy start to 2020 for me and this is my first newsletter message. I have been busy with the many pieces of paperwork we have, and trying to understand who does what as far as Guild meetings go.

There is also the work they cover outside of the meetings too. I am very lucky to have a good supporting Committee with mostly experienced members, so thanks to them in advance for their patience. Thanks also to the new Committee members who, like me are just learning the ropes.

Well, a new decade and a new start and spring hopefully near - a great time for beginnings and I feel very keen and excited. I am a very long term spinner and enjoy natural fleece, including the preparation. Fleece as it is taken from the sheep may sometimes be a bit uninspiring but as each stage progresses, it becomes increasingly beautiful. After washing, carding, combing, dyeing, knitting, crocheting and weaving, it becomes totally different and something very useful. I am hoping this will happen to me as I find my feet as Guild chair; it will be a steep learning curve.

If anyone has any questions or points they would like considered, please feel free to talk to me or any of the Committee members.

Chris.

## ***Theme for Guild Competitions 2020***

As we sat together in the Committee meeting, with the wind howling around us and rain pouring from the skies, this theme seemed an obvious choice - **British Weather**.

This can be interpreted in many ways, with the current greys and greens, looking towards a hot summer of sizzling colours or winter whites.

The Guild competitions for this year are as usual:

September - Dyeing

October - Spinning

November - Weaving

Further details will be discussed at the March meeting.

## ***Tea and Coffee Rota 2020***

If you cannot fulfil your turn, please make arrangements for someone else to be there. Please let Caroline Maltby know of any changes.

	<b>10.15 – 12.00</b>	<b>12.00- 1.45</b>
<b>March 21st</b>	1. Sue Prosser 2. Lyn Blower	1. Kate Whyte 2. Emma Kingston
<b>April 18th</b>	1. Pam Mitchell 2. Kirsty Clifford	1. Debby Hills 2. Diane Colthorpe
<b>May 16th</b>	1. Janet Scovell 2. Janet Maher	1. Rosemary Warren 2. Jan Hopwood
<b>June 20<sup>th</sup> Fleece Fair</b>	1. Jane Jones 2. Monica Groundsell 3.	1. Alison Haggas 2. Linda Mckenna 3.
<b>July 18th</b>	1. Lorna Ferguson 2. Vanessa Woodford	1. Jaquie Teal 2. Lesley Took
<b>Sept 19th</b>	1. Liz Pickman 2. Hilary Waters	1. Thalia Skeath 2. Hilary Bonney
<b>Oct 17th</b>	1. Christine Edmunds 2. Hilary Tudgee	1. Lis Lawrence 2. Norma Saunders
<b>Nov 21st</b>	1. Brenda Hamblin 2. Brenda Lawrence	1. Chris Rice 2. Lesley Hill

### ***Somerset tutors in Fibre crafts***

If you are interested in offering tuition in any of the fibre crafts, please send a short biography stating the type of tuition on offer, the location or willingness to travel and any other relevant information to the Secretaries ([secretary@somersetguildwds.org.uk](mailto:secretary@somersetguildwds.org.uk)) who are compiling a list to be sent to people who request this information.

Please note that we will not be putting personal information on the Guild Website, just a note that it is available from the Secretary. Please bear in mind that this information will be sent to enquirers, so please would you confirm that you are happy for your personal information (Name, location, email, biography etc) to be forwarded to those who request it by email from the Secretaries. We would suggest that you do not include phone numbers and addresses until after some email contact has been made with the enquirer.

It would be appreciated if a donation of 10% of fees is made to the Guild (to a maximum of £10 a year)."

### ***Committee Members following AGM January 2020***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position / Responsibility</b>
Chris Rice	Chairperson
Caroline MurrayGourlay	Honorary Treasurer
Jan Norman	Joint Honorary Secretary
Julia Jones	Joint Honorary Secretary
Jacky Calderbank	Newsletter Editor
Sue Coates	
Sophie Fovargue	Raffle Prize Organiser
Debby Hills	Demonstrations Organiser
Pat Ilsley	
Willow Iredale	Refreshments / Raffle
Karen Langford	Programme Organiser / Publicity
Caroline Maltby	Tea/Coffee Rota, Printing, Updating Postal Members
Mandy Stead	Fleece Fair Organiser
Stephanie Williams	Guild Facebook Page
Kathy Wright	Guild Website / Programme

## ***National Exhibition 2020***

The National Exhibition run by the Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers will be held between 5<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September at Leigh Mills, near Salford. The title of the exhibition is “Coal, Cotton, Canals”, which celebrates the significance of all three in the historical wealth of the area. As usual, there are two sections to the exhibition: a juried section and an open section. The Guild pays both entry and hanging fees for entries.

For people creating items for entry, you are not tied to the title of the exhibition. However, there are strict timescales for entries:

### **Juried entries:**

- A completed entry form, photograph and ‘feelie’ piece are required for each item.
- Actual entries and feelie pieces will need to be at the April Guild meeting so that photographs can be arranged
- The Guild Secretaries have to fill in an overall form that goes with initial entries and has to be in by 8 June. Only the photos, feelie pieces and entry forms go in at this stage
- The Guild will be informed by 29 June which entries have been accepted

### **Open Section:**

- Title “Still Waters”, these entries are made in a six inch ring (an embroidery ring will work)
- Any craft can be used in the textile made in the ring
- Each ring requires a larger loop at the top and smaller one at the bottom of the ring for hanging purposes
- The Guild Secretaries will need to know the number of rings being submitted at the beginning of July so they can give the information to the Exhibition Committee by 6 July
- Both the selected entries and the rings will need to be brought to the July Guild meeting so they can be sent off to the exhibition by the Secretaries.

The full information pack was sent out in November by the Secretaries and can be found on our Guild website.

## ***Thank You***

I was touched by the thoughtfulness of the gift I received when I stood down as Chair. For those who do not know, I received John Arbon vouchers – one of my favourite places to shop! I will have a lovely time at the Mill Open Weekend in June. Thank you all for the present and your support over the years. I am enjoying my retirement immensely.

**Janet Maher**

# **Natural Dyeing: Jane Deane**

16<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Jane has been using natural dyes for many years and likes experimenting to achieve different results. She noted that putting colour into things has been very important to people since fabrics and yarns were first made. Often new dyes were discovered indirectly – Perkins found the first synthetic dye, mauvine (purple), when looking for a cure for malaria.

Most natural dyes are from plants with a couple of notable exceptions from the insect kingdom with cochineal and lac. The cochineal insect lays eggs on the Prickly Pear cactus. The insects are harvested from the cactus, dried and ground up to make the pigment for a carmine coloured dye. The Lac beetle produces lac from the sap of trees in the form of sticklac to protect their babies. After the babies are hatched, the sticklac is scraped off the tree and the flakes sold for use. The flakes come in a number of colours depending on the tree sap, red being one. Shellac for coating furniture also comes from sticklac. Few beetles are harmed in the collection of the lac (safe for vegetarians to use).

Most dye plants are safe to use if the user is careful. Some plant material is not safe such as rhubarb leaves. The root and stalks are safe (we eat the stalks) and the dye comes from the root. Care is needed in handling the leaves.

With most plant dyes, mordants are required to make the dye “bite”. The most popular and safest mordant is aluminium: in the form of alum for protein fibre and aluminium acetate for cellulose. Other popular mordants are iron (dulls colours), copper (pushes colours to green) and titanium oxide (brightens). Tin and chrome have been long regarded as too toxic to use. Tin is being rehabilitated though, due to its use in getting a good scarlet colour in dyeing. Tannins can also be used as mordants from galls and bark.

Jane described natural dyeing as essentially an easy process. The dye plant can be put in directly with the fibre or an extract made and used. A great number of extracts are now available commercially which makes the process as easy as using synthetic dyes (Debbie Tomkies sells extracts).

Indigo is the only natural source of blue. It is a complex process as the dye will not be released without the help of a chemical such as Synthrapol. Jane went on to describe the process for making an organic indigo vat:

- She uses overripe bananas put into hot water to release the fruit sugars
- Calcium hydroxide (builders lime) is added and stirred
- The very high pH is not good for wool so she puts in animal skin glue or gelatin to buffer the wool

In the UK, indigo can be grown as an annual or woad can be used. Woad leaves can be re-used if cooked up with alum and will give pinks, tans and browns. If indigo dyed fibre is mixed with cochineal, purple is produced, whilst with weld, the colour is green.

Although synthetic dyeing is often seen as easier, there have been issues with the commercial production of synthetic dyes as the process was thought to be carcinogenic and polluting. Synthetic dyes are mostly imported from China now as western countries have to pay to clear pollution. Jane recommends trying solar dyeing in jars as a start point to see what colours can be produced. Then there is the whole question of fastness to explore. As she says experimenting is all part of the fun and satisfaction. **Janet Maher**

# ***Dorset Buttons: Rosalind Atkins***

*18th January 2020*



Ros began her talk by explaining a little of her background: she was from a family of tailors/dressmakers. She studied for a science degree and worked in research but all the time kept up craft activities in her spare time. Then about 30yrs ago, when her first child was born she decided to concentrate more on her creative activities. In particular: smocking and dorset buttons. Dorset button making has the advantage of being portable, lots of scope for creativity, has a wide variety of uses and finally, are inexpensive to make.

## **History**

In 1622 Abraham Case, an ex army man, started a button making business in Shaftesbury. This started as a small cottage industry with people making the buttons in their homes. As the industry took off, buttons became very important to the local economy. 1200 women & children were employed in the 1840s, especially in the North & East of the county.

The business lasted about 200 years (1600s – 1850s). The first buttons were made from fabric, horn & thread. Later ones were worked with a ring of wire.

## **Types of button**

High top buttons: these were a conical shape and were a hard decorative button. They were moulded from linen fabric and put in a wooden form. They were then worked on top by needle weaving from the bottom to the top. The buttons were used on men's waistcoats (Charles I was thought to have worn 2 when he was executed.)

Dorset knob buttons: Late 17<sup>th</sup> Century. These were domed-shaped and hard moulded buttons. The Dorset Knob also gave its name to a locally produced biscuit. These buttons were on clothes worn by Queen Victoria.

Birds Eye Buttons: these were small and softer buttons for children's clothes. They were made using a ring of twisted fabric which was closely covered in blanket stitches. No horn was used inside. Ros made some birds eye buttons to go on her daughter's wedding dress.

Singleton Buttons: Mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. These were made from fabric which was stretched over a wire ring and top stitched close to the rim. Singleton was the family name for a family that specialised in this type of button. 'Carolus?' was a version of this button that was finished with a blanket stitch edging.

Cross Wheel or Cartwheel Buttons: these were from 1700 onward. They were worked with linen thread over a fine wire ring and were the most popular form of Dorset button.



#### **How the Blandford cartwheel/cross wheel is made 1.**

1. Casting – cover the ring with blanket stitches.
2. Slicking – moving knots to the middle.
3. Laying spokes
4. Fix centre
5. Rounding – work backstitch on each spoke.

Traditional designs include basketweave (where you start in the middle with 2 spokes) Honeycomb and Yarrell (Yarnell).

#### **How the business developed.**

As the business took off, production became better organised. Materials were prepared in depots, notably Bere Regis & Shaftesbury. Wire from Birmingham was made into rings by children who were employed as winders (who made the rings), dippers (who soldered the rings shut) and stringers (who strung them together to send out to button makers).

Buttons were collected and taken to depots to be washed, graded and mounted onto card. Pink card was used for buttons of the best quality – some were exported around the world from Liverpool. Yellow card was used for the London market. Local depots were used to sell seconds.

#### **Decline of the Dorset button industry**

Button making machines were developed. The 1851 Great Exhibition had a machine developed by John Ashton. In 1860 the industry collapsed, leaving families destitute and some forced to emigrate to Canada or Australia.

#### **Contemporary Designs**

Ros showed photos of new designs: Chain Edge, Daisy, Complex Flower, Swansen Spiral. Today's designs vary in their use of colour, the addition of beads and combination e.g. Grindle or Sea Urchin buttons.

#### **Commissions**

Ros has been asked to make the buttons for the male costumes on the BBC's production Poldark. She has also made a pink button box, cross wheels for wedding gifts, buttons for Dorchester's Town Crier, wedding tokens and has had some of her work shown recently in Landscape Magazine.

Ros finished her talk by taking questions and also said that Dorset buttons are on the Heritage Craft Association's list of endangered heritage crafts. Ros illustrated her talk with examples of clothing she had made/finished with her Dorset buttons. We were also able to look more closely at her work as she had brought various items for sale.

#### **Jacky Calderbank**

## **Exmoor Horn Sheep: Lindy Head**

15<sup>th</sup> February 2020



Somerset Guild had the pleasure of hosting a talk on Exmoor Horn Sheep. Many guild members turned out on what was one of the windiest and wettest days of the year! It was certainly worth the effort.

Both Lindy Head & and David Butt are sheep farmers on Exmoor. Lindy gave us some interesting facts about sheep; for example they are far more intelligent than we give them credit for; they have the capacity to remember up to 50 different faces; they will search and identify their own dietary needs by pushing through hedges and fences in order to satisfy their nutritional requirements.

Exmoor Horn are on the rare breeds list but not an endangered species. Both sexes have horns, the rams being longer in length. The breed is believed to be over 2000 years old. Being both hardy and versatile they can withstand the harsh climate of Exmoor. 95% of the total breed exists in Somerset and Dorset.

The fleece weighs around 3kg, with a 4 inch staple length. This produces a springy lofty yarn. Approximately 30,000 tons of wool is produced each year. Lindy, with the aid of pictures talked us through the whole process from shearing, scouring the removal of lanolin, carding and dyeing to their own chosen colours. These beautiful shades complement the Exmoor landscape.

Both Lindy and David were wearing hand knitted sweaters which have been designed for them by a local designer. They looked stunning. The yarn is used for socks, pullovers jackets and blankets.

The yarn was available to purchase on the day, the pattern for the jumper will soon be available on the website [www.exmoorhorn.co.uk](http://www.exmoorhorn.co.uk) .

**Karen Langford**

## ***Forthcoming Fibre Events***

***RHS Rosemoor : Wool & Yarn Fest Sat 28<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020 10am – 4pm*** Please check on the website:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor/viewevent?EFID=1400&ESRC=CMS> for further information on entry prices, bookable workshops & talks etc.

***Wonderwool Wales: 25& 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020 Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells.*** Please check website for more information  
<https://www.wonderwoolwales.co.uk/>

***The Fleece Fair & Open Day : 20<sup>th</sup> June Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall***

***Guilds Gathering/Assoc of Guilds of Spinners Weavers & Dyers. Colour: The Full Spectrum 19-21 June 2020 University of Worcester.*** Registration closes 31.3.2020 An email was sent out to members of the Somerset Guild on 8/1/2020

***Taunton Flower Show 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020 Vivary Park, Taunton***  
For further information please check out the website:  
<https://tauntonfs.co.uk/competitiveoverview> This will give you more information on the different textile classes you may wish to enter. Applications need to be in by 3<sup>rd</sup> August.

## ***Loom: free to a good home***

The Guild secretaries have received information about a loom wanting to go to a good home. At present it is in pieces ready to be collected from Sidmouth, Devon. There is a diagram of how it fits together. For more information, please contact Jan or Julia by emailing [secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk](mailto:secretary@somersetguildwsd.org.uk)



## ***For Sale***

### ***Ashford Elizabeth spinning wheel £350 ono***



This wheel is in excellent condition. It comes with 4 bobbins, a Lazy Kate and a pair of hand carders.

Please obtain more details from  
Norma Sanders,  
Ewenique@eclipse.co.uk

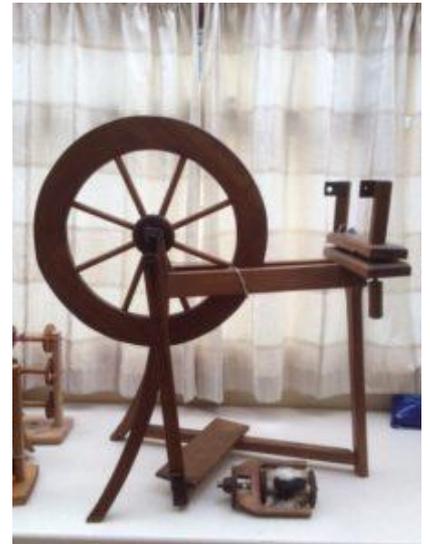
### ***Wheel parts for renovation – open to offers***

Ashford design spinning wheel for parts  
Or renovation. It includes a flyer,  
but no bobbins.

If interested please contact Janet Maher.

Email:janet.s.maher@btinternet.com

Mobile: 07703829068



### ***Brightwell Oak spinning wheel – £200.00***



Lovely spinning wheel with Double Drive, right hand orifice and has a beautiful patina. It is in full working order and as new condition. If interested please email: Jhitchcott@mail.com



Ashford Curved Carders  
Used & not too clean  
£15  
Fay Wilks 01458 253311



Ashford Jumbo Flyer with 4  
Bobbins  
£40 for all, can sell separately  
Fay Wilks 01458 253311

## ***Programme 2020***

Meetings begin at 10.30am at  
Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall  
Talks begin at 1.45pm

### **18<sup>th</sup> January**

Dorset Buttons  
Ros Atkins  
AGM 11.00am  
*Pop up shop*

### **15<sup>th</sup> February**

Exmoor Horn Sheep  
Lindy head

*Committee Meeting*

### **21st March**

Braids  
Shirley Berlin

### **18<sup>th</sup> April**

Dawes Twine Works West Coker  
Ross Aitken

### **16<sup>th</sup> May**

History of Knitting  
Joyce Meader

*Committee Meeting*

### **20<sup>th</sup> June**

Fleece Fair  
*Craft demonstrations*

### **18<sup>th</sup> July**

History of Carpets  
Heather Tetley

### **15<sup>th</sup> August**

*Dye workshop only*  
Barbara Spicer

### **19<sup>th</sup> September**

Talk on aspect of spinning  
Amanda Hannaford

*Dyeing Competition  
Committee Meeting*

### **20<sup>th</sup> September**

Spinning workshop  
Amanda Hannaford

### **17<sup>th</sup> October**

Members' Skills Day  
*Spinning Competition*

### **21st November**

Weaving new fabrics from old  
Riitta Sinkkonen-Davies  
*Weaving Competition  
Committee Meeting*

### **19<sup>th</sup> December**

Social Event  
Shared lunch and Secret Santa