



Snowdrops and Dorset Buttons by Anna McDowell

Over the last year I set myself the task of seeing how many ways I could use Dorset Buttons and the traditional way of working Dorset Buttons in my projects. In the last issue I talked about my giant Dorset Button worked in a number of yarns and fabric on a 24 inch hula hoop.

Earlier this year I entered a piece of work into my local 'Snowdrops in Art' exhibition as part of the Shaftesbury Snowdrop Festival in February. My 94 year old mother had died a few months earlier and I wanted to celebrate her life with something personal to her.

My mother came from Cambo in Fife, Scotland, and there have been snowdrops at Cambo Estate for over 100 years. It was



Lady Magdalen Erskine, my

grandmother and an avid gardener, who really encouraged their spread.

Lady Erskine and her eight children, the second youngest was my mother, spent hours each year digging, dividing and replanting the snowdrops in the 70 acres of woodland. Today Combo is famous for its Snowdrop festival and Snowdrop by mail-order.

To celebrate her life, I designed this collage using photographs printed on fabric with snowdrops worked in silk and used tiny Dorset Buttons worked in green silk for the top of each flower, more commonly known as the flowers ovary. The wire rings I use for living history groups, film work and TV commissions as they have a more authentic look when compared with the more popular hollow brass rings. I hope my mother liked my efforts.

Spreading the word by Anna McDowell

When I started to produce this eNewsletter, I wanted to start something that helps to spread the word about Dorset Buttons. I have been overwhelmed with the response I've received. I started this eNewsletter in January 2010 with around 50 subscribers, all in the UK, and thought this was a good number. Over the years, numbers have increased to 390 subscribers from across the world.

After emailing each issue, I

receive a number of emails of thanks and some with buttony stories and images of your projects. It's your stories that make this eNewsletter and I am always interested to receive information on how you became involved and a bit about your projects featuring Dorset Buttons. So please continue to send me your emails with your images and a few words about your projects.

Let's make 2017 an interesting year for all your Dorset Button news and views.

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Buttony in New Zealand by Jeanette Trotman

My family and I moved to Dunedin, New Zealand in 1978. I was a mathematics teacher working in High Schools and the University of Otago here in Dunedin.

As time passed, thinking about what to do once retirement was upon me, and having always been a practical person, knitting and sewing for the family, I decided to study embroidery. There are no practical embroidery courses in New Zealand Colleges. However, after much -enjoyed hard work, I earned a City and Guilds level 3 Diploma in embroidery/creative techniques.

On first coming across Dorset buttons during my studies I was

hooked. My buttons range from small ones, 1.5cm diameter, to large ones 53.5cm diameter, (on a hula hoop) with many sized in between. They are made for both exhibition and for fun.



Also there is great enjoyment teaching buttoney. I have taught at Guild and embroidery weekends around New Zealand. In a weekend it is possible to cover techniques for the Dorset Crosswheel, both centred and deliberately off

centred creating an interesting fan shape, the Dorset Basketweave, and my versions of a Dorset Flower button. One type can be seen in the photograph. Local libraries and clubs have asked me to give talks about the history of buttons, which always ends with photographs of modern Dorset buttons.

When invited to enter a piece of work in an exhibition held in Arrowtown, Central Otago, my piece just had to contain buttons. The idea crystallised from some research into the colours of sunflowers. It was entitled Sunflowers.

Your newsletter is always read with enjoyment. It is great to see that many people around the world are making their own version of a Dorset button and that Olivia Pass's rediscovery of this craft is alive

Buttony from the Blue Mountains of New South Wales by Pam Pearson

I was thrilled to see an article on Barbara Schey of Australia, my home. I live in the beautiful Blue Mountains of NSW and have been part of the Embroiderers Guild of NSW for quite a while.

About two years ago I attended a workshop with Barbara Schey and through her teaching have been 'playing' with button

making ever since. I have made buttons into brooches, as closure for pouches and bags and sometimes just to see if I can! The photos show a brooch made from a variety of thread and fabric, which I have put into a frame for display, and the other is an embroidery with Dorset buttons as the flowers. This was made from the rings which used to be on bra straps and the thread is variegated tatting thread size 80.

Barbara was an extremely

generous person with her knowledge as well as her acknowledgment of people who have helped her to learn more.

Our group has just done another 3 day workshop with Barbara, where she introduced new members to button making and also taught box making and some more advanced button making skills. I am excited to seeing what emerges next in my button journey.



Dorset Buttons a new craft by Sandra Wallis



I attended the national stitch day at Forty Hall Enfield on Saturday 6 August 2016 which I was taught how to do Dorset buttons by Enfield Embroidery

Guild. I had never done this craft before but managed to make three buttons. As I enter craft sections in the local horticultural society I thought I would enter these buttons just really so other people could

see a different craft. I never expected to come third out of six entries. I have attached photo.

How old are my buttons? By Anna McDowell

Historical accuracy for living history groups is paramount when telling the story of a bygone age. The amount of research that goes into preparing for that moment when the re-enactors face the public can take months. I've received a number of emails asking how to date Dorset Buttons and which were the first to be produced.

When dating Dorset buttons I have to rely on what is in front of me. How the buttons are carded is a good indication, but it is impossible to date a single button on its own. How the button is constructed will indicate how old the design is although not the age of the actual button. We



Original Dorset 'Cartwheel' Button mounted on original black card donating this button was graded as second best. The button is approximately 6mm. Gold Hill Museum, Shaftesbury.

know that wire rings were introduced in the 1730s so any button worked on a wire ring is of the later design. Although rings made from bone or horn could have predated the wire rings. I have seen bone rings but not thread buttons worked on such rings.

So when contacted for my thoughts on how to date Dorset Buttons my response is the same to all enquiries. It's very difficult to date a Dorset Button exactly unless threads etc are professional dated. All I can say is that there are four different types of Dorset Buttons with many variations within each type. The industry was said to have been started by Abraham Case in the 1620s and the first buttons were made with sheep's horn, fabric and thread (High Tops and Dorset Knobs), another buttons used just fabric and thread (Birdseyes and Mites).

Wire rings were introduced in the 1730s and two further types of buttons were added to the range: those were made with wire, fabric and thread (Singletons) and the Dorset thread button which used wire and thread (Dorset Cartwheel and Blandford Crosswheel).

The earliest example of buttons I have seen worked on wire rings on an item of clothing is in the collection at the Fashion Museum, Bath. This is a women's gown dated 1730-39 which has Dorset Cartwheel buttons on each sleeve. I have also seen Dorset Knob buttons used as decoration on a child's dress dated 1861-70 in the collection held at the Museum of London. Dorset Singleton Buttons, also worked on a wire ring, were similarly used on many items of clothing.

A West Dorset buttoner by Anna McDowell

Marcia Machin lives in West Dorset and has been making Dorset buttons for about 8 years. I first met Marcia around five years ago when she phoned me to discuss starting a Monday buttony and coffee gathering in Bridport. Over the years Marcia has continued to develop her buttons skills and experimented with new ideas. I particularly like her use of large

buttons to make these statement necklaces.

A member of her Coffee and buttony group supported my 'Singleton Challenge' project to help raise funds for the Dorset Local History archives. Marcia's designs are lovingly produced with the history of Dorset Buttony in mind.

You can see more of her work



at the Bridport Art's Centre for a craft fairs.

Dorset Wool by Anna McDowell

A few years ago I met Jo Nash at a country show and brought some of her hand spun and hand dyed yarns to work into my Dorset Buttons. Jo is passionate about wool, especially her hand dyed wool. Her passion for sheep evolved from rearing orphan lambs to learning to spin almost 40 years ago as she

grew up on a farm.

Her daily dog walks in the Dorset countryside provide an inspiration for the natural colour palette that she uses to dye wool. In her Totally Dorset Range everything is traceable back to the sheep the wool came from and, due to the nature of vegetable dyes and the properties of different fleeces, it is impossible to recreate exactly the same article or colour. So

you will never meet anyone wearing exactly the same item of clothing as you. The Partially Dorset items are partly made in Dorset. This is normally the last stage in the process. The items are made from 'imported' British wool which is then dyed and sold or made into accessories. I met Jo again earlier this year at the Dorset Country Show where she was displaying her work to show off her yarns.



Events for 2017

Tuesday 10th January 2017 Dorset Button Workshop for beginners with Anna McDowell

Learn a traditional Dorset craft in the lovely woodland setting which inspired the writer Thomas Hardy. This workshop will be run by Anna McDowell (from Henrys Buttons) who



will share her creative flare with attendees to create their own traditional Dorset Button, with a modern twist of colour and different threads.

Venue: Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre, Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 8QJ

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm
Entry and Details: Tel: 07900 137882 or
hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Tuesday 17th January 2017 Pop up School of Crafts Introduction to Dorset buttons workshop

Dorset Buttons was a cottage industry unique to the county and was started in the early 1600s in Shaftesbury. For over 200 years the Dorset Button industry helped to support local families. Learn how to create a Cartwheel button, one of the four types of Dorset Buttons. If time allows you can use your design skills to turn your button into a brooch using oddments of ribbon, lace and fabric.

Venue: Godmanstone Village Hall, Stalbridge nr Sturminster Newton

Time: 10.00am -12.30pm
Entry and Details: Facebook page for [Popup School of Crafts](#)

Monday 6th February 2017 Dorset Button Workshop - Advanced with Anna McDowell

Extend your skills of Dorset Buttons with new designs such as the spiral and daisy. This workshop will be run by Anna McDowell (from Henrys Buttons) who will share her creative flare with attendees to create their own traditional Dorset Button, with a modern twist of colour and different threads.

Skill level: Advanced.
Knowledge on how to make a Dorset 'cartwheel' Button essential.

Venue: Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre, Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 8QJ

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm
Entry and Details: Tel: 07900 137882 or
hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Thursday 16th February (during half term) 2017 Pop up School of Crafts Adult and child workshop with Anna McDowell

Celebrate this heritage craft with your child or grandchild making a Dorset button friendship band in the traditional way using colourful thread with Anna McDowell of Henry's Buttons. Light refreshments included. Age 7+

Venue: Godmanstone Village Hall
Time: 10.00am - 12.30pm
Entry and Details: Facebook page for [Popup School of Crafts](#)

Tuesday 7th March 2017 Dorset Button Workshop for beginners with Anna McDowell

Details same as Tuesday 10th January.

Venue: Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre, Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 8QJ

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm
Entry and details: Tel: 07900 137882 or
hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Tuesday 4th April 2017 Dorset Button Workshop - Advanced with Anna McDowell

See Monday 6th February doe details.

Venue: Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre, Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 8QJ

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm
Entry and Details: Tel: 07900 137882 or
hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd April 2017 Brockenhurst Needlework Fiesta

A popular event for all textile enthusiasts in this wonderful setting of the New Forest. Many well-known traders covering all aspects of sewing, beading, hand and machine embroidery, knitting, patchwork and Dorset Buttons.

Venue: Brockenhurst Village Hall, SO42 7RY

Time: Saturday from 10.00am – 5.00pm, Sunday 10.00am – 3.30pm

Entry and Details: £3.00 at the door contact
www.brockenhurstfiestsd.co.uk

Share your news, views and projects

For full details of all events please visit the Events Page on my website

[Henry's Buttons](#)

I'm always interested to hear your news, views and especially any projects you may be involved in featuring Dorset Buttons. From the emails I have received in the past, I know there are many talented buttoners amongst you. If you would be willing to share your Dorset Button news with other like-minded people, I would welcome contributions to this eNewsletter. Please email your information preferably with an image to Anna McDowell at dorsetbuttons@henrysbuttons.co.uk