



I'm sorry I'm late with this edition of my eNewsletter by Anna McDowell

Where has the year gone? Time seems to be slipping by so quickly. Only two months to go before a new year starts and all that it will bring us. This year started so well with new plans coming to fruition and ideas being explored. Then everything had to be put on hold. At the end of August, I was taken into hospital with a possible stroke. Luckily, it was not a stroke but, after many tests, the doctors found I had three aneurysms in my head. So, life has been put on hold for a while. I will find out what will happen next, if anything, in a couple of weeks.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to run my on-line workshops this season, but I have been able to offer one-to-one workshops in my studio. Also, it seems nothing will get

in the way of my crafting, as I have put together a new felt poppy kit with a beaded Dorset Button which is now available to order online from



my Etsy shop, Dorset Buttons.

In the April 2024 edition of this eNewsletter I mentioned I was thinking of putting together a Dorset Button activity box using a 30cm ring. I have been able to take this forward and hope to list it on

my Etsy shop in January. I find working on a 30cm ring offers so many possibilities of combining textures: each box will hold their own unique mix of yarns and some will have textiles, ribbons, lace and beads. Not forgetting the all-important instructions on how to work these buttons.

Since August I have been overwhelmed by the support I have received from the Dorset Button community with all I am trying to do.

Especially during this very frustrating time when I have been given a list of what I can do and what I can't. I would like to take this opportunity

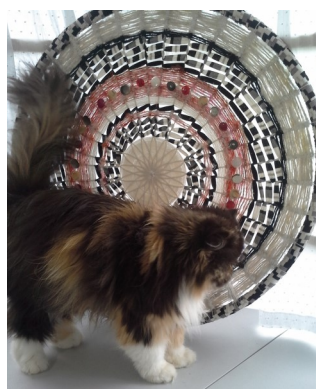
to thank you as it means so much to know that you are out there, sending your support and encouragement.



Help from others by Anna McDowell

I expect many of you, like myself, can't sit down and relax in the evening without doing something with your hands. It is so relaxing creating whilst relaxing.

Sometimes I even have help. A few years ago I made this large 60cm Dorset Button with the help of my cat. She insisted on being the final photo.



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Henry's Buttons

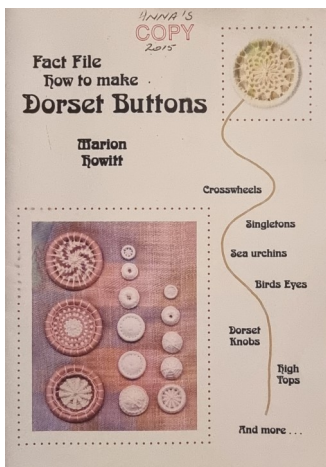
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Marion Howitt by Anna McDowell



It was with great sadness that I received an email at the end of September from Marions's sons, Neil and Nick, to say that their beloved mother had passed away peacefully. Marion Howitt was one of the original Dorset Buttoners from the 1980s who, over the decades, did so much to help keep this heritage craft alive. Her booklet on how to make Dorset Buttons was sent to all parts of the

world. I will always be grateful for the support she gave me at the start of my Dorset Button journey which she continued to give throughout her life.

In their email Neil and Nick say that "Following her 90th Birthday

on 12th September she had a bad stroke about 36 hours later, and after being rushed to first Cheltenham Hospital and then a specialist unit at Bristol we were told that the damage caused had been too great and there would be no recovery. During last week she valiantly held on and we had some fleeting moments where she was with us, so we had the chance to say our goodbyes. She passes to the next world, therefore, knowing she was loved and cared for by both family and fantastic friends."

Marion has left the Dorset Button community a great legacy as her Fact File book was packed with ideas that she had learned from other buttoners and her own designs. Two that bring to mind was a button that I had acquired that was worked using the Birds

Eye design but with more embroidery. I had a large commission for various Dorset Buttons so asked Marion if she could help by working 40 of these decorated buttons. In her usual way she did and added the instructions to her Dorset Button Fact File book. When she stopped publishing her booklet, she agreed to allow me to publish her instructions in my booklet *The Dorset Button Industry*, a modern-day instruction manual.

Another of Marion's designs was the spiral design that she called a Swanston, after the name of the house she used to live in in Swanage, Dorset.

Marion you were a dear friend and a constant support. I will miss you.

Dorset Buttons on Facebook by Anna McDowell



Making Dorset Buttons

Public group · 11.8K members



If you follow Facebook, have you joined the group called Making Dorset Buttons? Rachel Hartland kindly emailed to suggest I should check this group out. Which I did.

This group was formed a year ago and now has 11,000 members. The aim of the group is, as the name implies, to show off your own creations. Any kind of advertising is taken down immediately. Which is refreshing as it purely concentrates on individuals' handmade Dorset Buttons. I was astounded to see

how many of you have created beautiful buttons using contemporary yarns and threads.

The group averages seven new posts a day and with 145 posts over the last month. That's a wealth of inspirational ideas. I hope you will join.

The sale of a collection of original Dorset Buttons by Anna McDowell



Antique Dorset buttons framed
£60 £70 · Sold

Rachel Hartland sent me a link to Facebook Marketplace where someone was selling a mounted collection of historic Dorset Buttons from Thelma Johns' collection at the Button Shop at Lytchett Matravers, Dorset. The price was £60.

I was intrigued to see this collection as most of the

Dorset Buttons in this framed collection are mounted on black/blue or yellow card. Buttons mounted on black/blue card indicate they are just below top quality with yellow one down or third quality. I have yet to find buttons mounted on pink card which indicate top quality buttons.

After seeing this collection, I was spurred on to see if any other auction houses had Dorset Buttons

for sale. I came across one lot from a 2021 sale by Kerry Taylor Auctions, Bermondsey, London. This collection of Dorset buttons was dated late 18th-early 19th century and comprised a collection of 36 'high top' buttons, on blue haberdashery card of conical shape worked in fine linen thread, together with a card applied with 72 'Singleton' buttons. The guide price was £150 - £200.

I would be interested to know of your finds of original Dorset Buttons.

Teaching the Art of Dorset Buttony by Anna McDowell

As many of you may realise, I enjoy teaching the art of Dorset Buttony, especially the passing on of knowledge that I have picked up over the years. I have been extremely lucky to have had the support of four of arguably the best buttoners. I first came across Dorset Buttons when I visited the Gold Hill Museum in Shaftesbury, Dorset about thirty years ago. But it wasn't until I became a trustee of the museum that I learnt more



about this heritage craft. Especially the people who were involved keeping this craft alive. I learnt how to make these buttons from a kit put together by Marion Howitt. Marion

was the author of a very popular booklet called "Fact File, How to Make Dorset Buttons" I expect some of you still have your copies as it was a comprehensive booklet filled with clear

instructions.

After making my first button I was privileged to get to know Joan Nicholls. Joan lived in Shaftesbury and, in the 1980s, had joined one of Elizabeth Gilbert's Dorset Button Workshops to learn the craft. Joan was a good teacher as she passed on many of the tricks of the trade that I now pass on to my students.

Elizabeth Gilbert brought the Dorset Button industry to the nations attention when she featured in one of Jark Hargraves episodes on the countryside in the 1970s. If you are a member of Vimeo lick here to see the [more](#) (I managed to join for free).

Then finally there is Thelma

Johns, who runs the Button Shop in Lytchett Minster in south Dorset. Thelma has the best collection of Dorset Button outside of a museum. She also wrote a book

about the history called "Dorset Buttons Hand Stitched in Dorset for 300 Years".

It is thanks to these four women and extensive research of original buttons in museum collections that enables me to pass on the technique of how to make a simple button. From there this craft can be taken in any direction. So when I receive an email from one of my

students thanking me for being such a talented and patient teacher with two of her recently worked buttons. I know I am on the right track. Thank you, Mary Beth Logue, for your kind message.



A Blackwork Embroidery Challenge



Earlier in the year I noticed an Instagram image that Jen Best of Beaker Buttons had posted. It was a photo of a coif she had worked that also featured a Dorset Button. This was part of a project run by blackworkembroidery.org. Participants could sign up to make a coif based on an original panel worked

sometime between 1600 and 1630 in the Victoria & Albert Museum collection. This coif is worked on lined fabric and intended to be made up into a close-fitting cap. The panel was at some point partially stitched with 'speckling stitch' in black thread and then unpicked, as opposed to the thread decay we see on most other Blackwork objects. To find out more about this project click

on this link <https://blackworkembroidery.org/unstitched-coif-t-844-1974/>

Around eighty blackwork embroiderers participated in this project and all the coifs are now stored at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and, with luck, will be displayed at some point.

Please see Jen's description of her work process at the back of this Newsletter.

Workshops and Events 2024

It is such a shame that I have been unable to arrange a series of Dorset Button on-line workshops this Autumn. So I thought I'd give you an


idea of the choice of workshops I offer. I would be interested to find out which ones interest you. Or are there others you would like me to

add to my list?

These workshops are not confined to on-line as I also run workshops in my studio.




dorset button Online Workshop
Dorset Button
Tudor Rose
with
Anna McDowell



Materials required for this workshop:

- A ring, I prefer to use metal rings and worked my example on a 25mm hollow brass ring.
- Thread, I've used a linen thread for working my button for the images in this worksheet
- A Size 18 tapestry needle
- Scissors

dorset button Online Workshop
Dorset Button
Spirals and basket Weave
with
Anna McDowell



Materials required for this workshop:

Participants are asked to prepare two 30mm or larger rings by casting (blanket stitching) around both rings using firm stitches to ensure the base does not move when Laying.

dorset button Online Workshop
Dorset Snowdrop Buttons
with
Anna McDowell



Materials are included in the cost of the workshop:

This workshop is designed to cover two Dorset Buttons designs - The Crosswheel, which is can be worked in one or two colours, and the Singleton button which is worked with fabric printed with a snowdrop.

All you will need are scissors

dorset button Online Workshop
Dorset Button
Flower design
with
Anna McDowell



Materials required for this workshop:

Hollow Brass Ring. Participants are asked to prepare a 32mm or larger ring by casting (blanket stitching) around the ring using firm stitches to ensure the base does not move when Laying.

Perle #8 thread: 5yds x green, 1yd x dark yellow and 3yds light yellow thread.

2 x size 18 tapestry needles
Scissors


dorset button Online Workshop
Dorset 'Cartwheel'
Button
with
Anna McDowell



Materials required for this workshop:

- A ring - I advise that the ring should be around 25mm wide and the thread a size #8 or #5 cotton Perle or a 4ply knitting yarn. To give you a rough guide, you will need approximately 3 metres of #8 or #20 thread (all one length) for the 16mm and 19mm ring and more for the 25mm ring.
- A tapestry or other blunt needle, I like a size 18 tapestry needle for the thicker thread (#5 Perle and 4ply yarn) and size 22 for a finer thread.
- A pair of scissors

dorset button Online Workshop
Bouquet and Tree Buttons
with
Anna McDowell



Homework before start of this workshop
Please prepare all the rings by casting (blanket stitching) around them. Use the pink thread for the bouquet button and blue for both the tree buttons.

dorset button Online Workshop
Birdseye and Singletons
with
Anna McDowell



Materials required for this workshop:

For the Birdseye button:

- Yarn (crochet thread #8 or knitting wool up to a 4ply)*
- Soft lightweight cotton fabric such as lawn*
- Template (see the bottom of this worksheet)
- Tapestry needle*
- Knitting needle - 4mm if using yarn as above


For the Singleton button:

- 1 x 25mm hollow brass ring*
- Soft lightweight cotton fabric such as lawn*
- A round template twice the width of the ring - see below
- A small amount of wadding*
- Thread (crochet size #20 - #40)*

You will also need a sharp ended large eyed needle, sewing thread and pair of scissors.

*Items marked with * will be included in the kit


dorset button Online Workshop
The joy of Dorset Buttons and Beads
with
Anna McDowell



Materials required for this workshop:

- Rings - Participants are asked to prepare two 30mm or larger rings by casting (blanket stitching) around both rings using firm stitches to ensure the base does not move when Laying.
- Around 40 beads of your choice to experiment. The size of the beads will depend on the size of your ring but I suggest Seed beads size 11 or 3mm beads for a 35mm ring. You will also need a needle to sting your beads onto the thread.
- Beading mat if you have one
- Thread - I suggest a perle size 20 or 8
- Tapestry needle
- Scissors

dorset button Online Workshop
The joy of Dorset Buttons and Crystal Beads
with
Anna McDowell



Materials required for this workshop:

- 1 x 40mm
- 6yds white thread to work the button
- 2yds of metallic thread
- Size 18 tapestry needle
- Size 22 tapestry needle (finer than the 18 and to use with the metallic thread)
- 3mm crystal glass beads in four different colours. Five of each colour
- Small bobbin for thread
- Wide eyed beading needle
- Small beading mat
- Scissors (not included in the workshop kits)

dorset button Workshop
Christmas Tree
with four Dorset Buttons
with
Anna McDowell



Homework: before start of this workshop
Please prepare all the four rings by casting (blanket stitching) around each one.

I'm aiming to offer a new series of on-line workshops starting in January 2025. Keep an eye on my website for details. If you would like to join me in my studio for a face to face workshop just click [here](#) to send an email

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

[Henry's Buttons](#)



Share your news, views and projects

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

My Coif

by Jen Best

I saw this project advertised on my local stitch group Facebook page. The idea intrigued me and I love a make along so I applied to join in. I haven't really done any blackwork embroidery, but I've been experimenting with hand stitching for several years. This project was going to really stretch me. I mostly stitch freeform. I'm not very good colouring inside the lines.

I began by tracing the pattern onto my fabric using a heat removable pen, which was a revelation! It's like magic the way the lines disappear when ironed! Then I back stitched around all the lines, working around 2 lots of 75cm thread during each session. It took a very long time, and I got quite excited when I got down to the last patch to be stitched. Normally I would work in double running stitch (something I learnt was a proper stitch during this project, and not just something I made up), but I got better results with back stitch on my coif. I used most of two full skeins of DMC stranded cotton in dark blue.



While I was working the idea of not being able to colour within the lines grew in my head, and I decided that instead of filling each motif with colour, I would use seed stitch to fill in the negative spaces. I use rainbows in my work quite a bit, as they remind me of my Mum who died in 2020, so it felt good to add a rainbow to my coif in memory of her. I worked out the order of colours I wanted and photographed them for reference. I divided my coif into sections and

worked each section as a solid colour, with a few stitches speckled across into the next section. I used 4 strands of 75cm of each colour for each section, and each section took 2 sessions to complete. I'm really happy with the result. I worked a rolled hem to finish, which I definitely need more practice on as my piece is now a little wonky! I've signed my piece with my name along one edge, in my favourite blue, and I've included a tiny Dorset button. My main area of expertise is Dorset button making, and my Gran taught me to make them when I was little, so the addition of a Dorset button is a good signature, and puts my Gran in my piece. My Gran and Mum are an integral part of my creativity.

Beaker Button that sense of shared skill has stayed with me. I've enjoyed sharing progress, ideas, and textile related experiences with the other members of the group, although I'm more of a lurker than a joiner.

I miss stitching my coif. It's been a part of my daily life for many months. I have plenty of other projects to do, but my coif was worked on peace and quiet. Husband usually upstairs. Son the same. Telly off. Just the snick of the needle through the fabric, and the slide of the thread for company. Utter mindless bliss!

Jen Best

Beaker Buttons



<https://blackworkembroidery.org/>