



## “How Long does it take . . . .” by Anna McDowell

The one question I'm constantly asked is “how long did that take you to make?” I wonder how many of us know the time it takes to complete a project. I expect the answer is not many. After all, it's not just the time we take to physically make whatever it is we are working on, but the time spent during the planning stage, which can take far longer than the actual making process.

I may see a piece of fabric or a special yarn or it could be a single bead that inspires me. This is the first stage of creating a new piece of work. It never occurs to me to record the time I've spent on this first stage. The next stage is to look for further textiles, yarns, ribbons, lace, embellishments

or whatever I decide may work to compliment the chosen piece. For some projects, this stage has taken me many months to complete. Everything I think will work and creates texture, colour and interest is placed into a

high sided tray. How do you record thinking



*Above: My box of yarns ready for work to start. Right: the finished piece.*

time? I may be in the shower or feeding the dogs; out on a walk or doing the food shop and I get an idea that will enhance my design. None of this time thinking is recorded.

Finally, it's the design stage. From my tray of textiles and embellishments, I work out

the patterns I'm going to use and the colour schemes and the textures I want to achieve. I examine all the yarns and textiles to work out their properties to determine how they can be used in the design. Not all the items in my high sided tray make it to this final stage. This process can take time. But, as you may have guessed, I've never recorded the time taken to complete this task.



Now I'm ready to start to work on my Dorset Button. But how much time I've taken from the initial concept to completing the work escapes me.

However, my usual standard answer is “around eight months”!

Do you have the same problem as I do?

Wishing you all a very creative 2024.

Anna

## A visit to the Chanel Exhibition for inspiration by Anna McDowell

As a member of the Victoria & Albert Museum I was able to walk straight in to this wonderful exhibition. My visit was made even more enjoyable as I was accompanied by my young niece who has decided to follow a career in fashion. It was a joy to see someone so young taking an interest in

clothes as she enthusiastically announced “were over a hundred years old”.

After leaving the Chanel experience we revived ourselves with a coffee and hot chocolate before diving into the Diva exhibition which was also well worth a visit.

Visit my [Instagram page](#) for a images of our visit.

### Inside this issue:

Jo Nash Textiles	2
Wincanton History Day	2
Ancient Crafts Turned into Art	2
Sefrou Button	3
'Yarn Yarn' another workshop	3
Workshops and Events	4

Henry's Buttons

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## Jo Nash Textiles - Spinner and Dyer by Anna McDowell



I'm so pleased that Jo Nash Textiles has finally started to plan a series of workshops. All her workshops will be held at her home in Cheselbourne, but plans are afoot for them to be held elsewhere in 2024. The advantage of being home based, is that she will be limited to just three participants. I have known Jo for several years and have used her hand dyed yarn

for a number of projects. I love the natural colours she manages to produce from her plant dyes. Many of the plants are grown in her garden. One project which has been particularly successful is a necklace made up of several Dorset Buttons worked on large fine rings that used Jo's lace weight yarns and seed beads.

Jo won the best hand spun article at the prestigious Dorset Arts and Crafts Association Summer showcase. She created a blade shorn, hand spun, naturally dyed,

hand woven gilet from her homebred flock of Portland sheep and dyes grown in her garden. You cannot get any more local than that. You can find out more about Jo from her website, just click here.

Perhaps I may meet you at one of her workshops!



## Wincanton History Day needs help by Anna McDowell

I expect many of you already know how keen I am to spread the word about Dorset Buttons. I give talks, run workshops and give up my time to demonstrate the heritage craft of Dorset Buttons. I try and participate in as many events demonstrating this craft as I can.

Last year I received an email from Ian Thomas, joint chair of the Wincanton History Society.

They were staging their first History Day and planned to offer many events in the town for all ages. Including inviting artisan craftspeople to display their products and show off their traditional skills to people attending the day's events. Unfortunately, I was unable to join them as March is a busy month. I find myself, again, not able to help this year so was

hoping that one of my readers may be willing to give up their time to help spread the word about Dorset Buttons on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March at the Wincanton History Day.

To find out more about this event please [email me](#) and I will forward your email to Ian. You can read an article from a local newspaper about last year's plans by [clicking on this link](#).

## Ancient Crafts Turned into Art by Elizabeth Schmidt



You have asked for people to send pictures of their work so I have taken up the opportunity. I am a member of a textile group that meets in a town called Toowoomba in Queensland, Australia. We decided to

have an exhibition of 3D works with a focus on ancient crafts turned in to art. People often dismiss textile works as craft when they are actually works of

art.

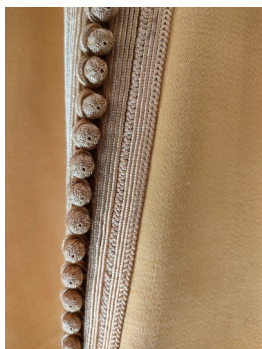
I have made a lot of Dorset Buttons and I had to think a different way of working. My piece is made from mattress springs and I called it 'The Springs'. I have surrounded it with small buttons with various patterns. I hope you like what I have done.

The work has now sold so I need to make some more as we are taking the exhibition to



another gallery next year.

## Sefrou Button by Lindsay Williams



For a number of years I have been very lucky to travel to different countries on a Textile Safari with a group of female friends who enjoy travelling the length and breadth of a country to meet people, learn their history, share meals and music together and in particular engage with local women and artists. On my last trip we explored the fascinating African-yet-Arab-yet European country of Morocco through the lens of its textiles and handcraft traditions. This was a fabulous tour travelling to places that tourists do not usually go and meticulously organised by our great host Susan of retreat | recreate which alongside Khalid, an excellent local guide, ensured a trip of a lifetime. We visited the small town of Sefrou, just outside Fez, which is home to an inspiring group of women. They have banded together to form a co-operative and earn an independent income making the silk and cotton buttons, at home, traditionally sewn in their dozens onto djellabas. Sound familiar to you? Yes, it did to me too, like the



ladies, learning how to make their tiny, needle woven buttons, seeing where they bought their threads in the medina and sharing a wonderful tagine for lunch. As we said our goodbyes it was delightful to be able to thank them for their time (and patience!) and to give each of them a handmade Dorset Button attached to a

colourful postcard and, through an interpreter, discuss our mutual love of sewing and handcrafts. So thank you Anna for your encouragement and support for and particularly making your instructions so freely available on your website for all to learn how to make a Dorset Button wherever they are in the world!

beginnings of the Dorset Button industry near Shaftesbury in the 1700's. I had made some preparations ahead of our visit to Sefrou. Our stitching group made some Dorset Buttons (beginners were delighted with Anna's online instructions) which we attached to some of Anna's postcards to take as thank you gifts. We enjoyed an exciting workshop with the Sefrou

colourful postcard and, through an interpreter, discuss our mutual love of sewing and handcrafts. So thank you Anna for your encouragement and support for and particularly making your instructions so freely available on your website for all to learn how to make a Dorset Button wherever they are in the world!

## 'Yarn Yarn' another workshop? By Anna McDowell

Last year I bought five boxes of yarn from one of my favourite yarn suppliers called Yarn Yarn. Yarn Yarn is an inspirational and ethical online yarn shop based in the UK, selling eco-friendly and recycled yarns handmade by women's co-operatives and small communities in rural India. I am now planning a workshop where each participant will receive one of



these boxes to work a 30cm Dorset Button. I have opened one of these boxes to photograph the contents but the other four remain a mystery.

In previous workshops participants have had great fun starting the day with 'swap time'. An opportunity to exchange colours and yarn types before the fun begins with the actual construction of your buttons.

This all day workshop will take place in my studio in Donhead St Mary near Shaftesbury in Dorset. If you are interested in booking a place and would like further details, please email me.

I support Yarn Yarn whenever I can as I like the synergy of the once thriving cottage industry of Dorset Buttons which employed many women, now supporting a current women's co-operative in rural India.

# Workshops and Events 2024

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Dorset Buttons for beginners and those who want to refresh their skills**

On-line workshop

*Time: 4.00pm till 6.30pm*

*Details: For full details on this workshop and how to book please click [here](#)*



**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024**

**Snowdrop inspired Dorset Buttons**

Dorset Button On-line workshop

*Time: 4.00pm till 6.30pm*

*Details: For full details on this workshop and how to book please click [here](#)*

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Dorset Button and Dream Catchers Demonstration  
Shaftesbury Library**

11:00 – 12:00

Booking essential.

*Details: For full details on this workshop and how to book please click [here](#)*



**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Tudor Rose Dorset Button inspired by Elizabeth Gilbert**

On-line workshop

*Time: 4.00pm till 6.30pm*

*Details: For full details on this workshop and how to book please click [here](#)*

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Spring Flower Dorset Button inspired by the Primrose**

On-line workshop

*Time: 4.00pm till 6.30pm*

*Details: For full details on this workshop and how to book please click [here](#)*

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Dorset Button Tree design**

On-line workshop

*Time: 4.00pm till 6.30pm*

*Details: For full details on this workshop and how to book please click [here](#)*

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Dorset Button and Beads**

On-line Workshop

*Time: 4.00pm till 6.30pm*

*Details: For full details on this workshop and how to book please click [here](#)*

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Playing with yarns and texture**

Dorset Button Studio workshop

After the success of this workshop held last year I have decided to repeat it. Participants use ethically sourced yarn supplied by Yarn Yarn whose mission is to provide handmade ethical yarns and craft supplies to creative communities worldwide. All their yarns are produced in

remote villages in northern India.

Each participant will receive their own box of different yarns specially prepared by Yarn Yarn.

*Venue: Donhead St Mary, Shaftesbury, Dorset (full details will be sent when booked)*

*Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm*

*Details: For full details please click [here](#)*

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> – Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**Vectis Quilters - Isle of Wight**

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> – Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**Defashion Dorset**

Defashion Dorset, is an opportunity to celebrate local fibre growers and makers and a local clothing culture. We buy locally grown food to support farmers so why don't we consider buying locally grown clothing? According to Climate Words "To 'Defashion' is to combat the fashion industry's role in the climate crisis and transition to regenerative and fair clothing systems."

*Venue: Hawkers Farm, Hawkers Lane, Stour Provost, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 5LZ*

*Time: TBC*

*Details: To find out more click [here](#)*

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](mailto:dorsetbuttons@henrysbUTTONS.co.uk)