



Far From the Madding Crowd by Anna McDowell

I have just returned from a wonderful afternoon Dorset Button spotting in the new film Far from the Madding Crowd, starring Carey Mulligan as Bathsheba Everdean, Matthias Schoenaerts as Gabriel Oak, Michael Sheen as William Boldwood and Tom Sturridge as Sergeant Francis Troy.

Last year I was approached by Lizzy Healy, costume supervisor for the film who asked if I could make a hundred and fifty Dorset Buttons. I was later to discover that all my buttons were to be featured on

dresses worn by Carey Mulligan and designed by Janet Patterson. This was an exciting commission as the brief included buttons in a number of different colour



combinations over six different designs. Many of the buttons I worked on used hollow brass rings but Lizzy also wanted the smaller handmade rings.

I was invited by Lizzy Healy to join her and Janet, the designer, at their unit in

Sherborne, Dorset, to view all the items of clothing that featured my buttons and to watch the screening of the filming in the centre of the town. An opportunity I was all too happy to accept and I had a very interesting day watching

the making of this film and meeting Lizzy and Janet.

During the film, I could restrain myself from turning to my husband, Patrick, to tell him that "... those are my buttons" mostly at a dramatic time during the film – when Gabriel

proposes to Bathsheba, a red dress Bathsheba wore when she leaves her aunt to travel to the farm she inherited, in the fields when she first notices Sergeant Troy, to name a few instances. I hope I didn't disturb the rest of the audience too much.

Dorset Buttons eNewsletter celebrates its 5th Anniversary by Anna McDowell

How time flies, it doesn't seem like five years since I published the first Dorset Button eNewsletter. The first edition was only two pages and acted as a 'taster' to see if anyone would be interested in hearing news about Dorset Buttons and other Dorset buttoners.

Over the years, the number of people who have

requested a copy of this eNewsletter has grown to 200 and the feedback I have received has all been positive. Thank you, to all of you who have sent in your stories and photographs and please keep them coming, as I rely on you to help with the exchange of news and ideas with others.

Thank for your support

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Rugby girls get inspired by Dorset Buttons by Anna McDowell

The Singleton Challenge some participated in last year has certainly inspired others to look at these lovely buttons.

In February I received an email from a teacher who said

“....I first came across them

(Dorset Buttons)

last year when a lady did a talk and class at the Daventry Embroiderers

Guild about Dorset featherstitch and she happened to mention the buttons too. I teach Art Textiles at a girl's school in Rugby and last week I got them making Dorset buttons (and some of

the posies that were developed in the Stitch magazine) and they

loved it and managed to produce a really good range. There was actually an outbreak of silence as

focus is obviously all about reaching targets and getting qualifications I want to also give

the girls the ability to appreciate the joy of practical handwork and being creative and I especially like the idea of passing almost lost heritage on.”

She later went on to say “I was looking at the examples of the Singletons that were made to raise funds and think that there is tremendous potential for the younger girls to do a project. Sadly I live a bit too far away to do the classes with you and was wondering if you would kindly at some point show an image of the reverse of one of them so we can make them properly.” I of course pointed

her to my worksheet for these buttons on my website and here are some of the images she sent to me of the students work.



they were so engrossed in their work. Although nowadays the

Australian Button Collector—Victorian Button Collectors Club



In November last year Robyn Caddy, the Vice President of The Victorian Button Collectors Club in Melbourne, Australia, and also the editor of the Journals produced four times

per year. Robyn asked if they could publish the picture from my website of Susan Lendon's contemporary Singleton button which she submitted to the Singleton Challenge Project. The image was wanted to go with an article on Dorset Buttons in their February 2015 Journal.

Of course I agreed and was sent a copy of the journal. What a surprise to discover that Susan had written a three page article about Dorset Buttons.

Thank you Susan for spreading the word and help to keep this heritage craft alive.

Dorset Button Workshop inspires Jane Owens by Anna McDowell

In February I ran a Dorset Button Workshop as part of the Shaftesbury Snowdrop Festival, A few days later I received this lovely message from one of the participants.

“...I had the pleasure of being

on your Snowdrop Dorset Button course last Saturday. I was thoroughly inspired and thought you might like to see

the results of that inspiration! Many thanks from Jane Owens.” Here are some her creations.



Little known Dorset Button saved for prosperity by Anna McDowell

Like many heritage crafts, details on how the original Dorset Buttons were made was never written down and if it wasn't for the Dowager Lady Lees from Lytchett Minster in the very early 1900s, the skills this heritage craft would have been lost forever.

Lady Lees was responsible for reviving the art of these hand-made buttons after seeing these

youth, made 'cart-wheels'.

Anxious to discover more, Lady Lees travelled around the county finding other patterns.

This time last year I wrote about a little known Dorset Button I acquired from Thelma Jones of the Button Shop of Lytchett Minster that looked very like a decorated



buttons on display at Dorchester Museum. She was luck to find an old buttoner who lived in one of the cottages in Lytchett Minster who, in her

Top: the original decorated Birdseye in my collection.

Above: Marion Howitt's interpretation of the buttons.

Birdseye button. Thelma had a collection of these buttons tied

together as if they had just been made and were waiting to be washed, graded and carded ready for sale.

After researching this button, I found no details on how these buttons were constructed. On receiving a commission for these buttons I approached Marion Howitt, author of the comprehensive book Dorset Button Fact File, who very kindly worked out how she thought these buttons were made. A few months ago, Marion added this button to her publication making it even more comprehensive and, like Lady Lees, helped to save this little known button for future generation to enjoy.

A quilter turns to buttony by Freda Wlaton



We have a cottage in France, and being a quilter if you don't visit a quilt shop now and again you get withdrawal symptoms! We found one in a Hambye, Normandy. The English lady who

owns the business told me they had been making Dorset buttons! So I looked them up on Internet and found Henry's Buttons website.

Back home, my quilt and embroidery group's Christmas challenge was "use your button boxes to make something". So I made Matilda Button, a turtle

made from an old toy pattern which adapts well to a doorstep. I sat looking at her a couple of nights ago and decided she needed a little bit of a tweak. So out came the laptop and looked up Dorset buttons again. This is the result, my first attempt at making Dorset Buttons.

JC Embroidery, a website to look out for by Anna McDowell

This online store offers original needlework designs and kits or instructional booklets. Using traditional techniques applied in modern styles. I haven't succumbed to the temptation to ordering one yet, but I particularly like these Dorset Button Flower brooch kits.

The website is owned by Julie

Clemett based in New Zealand. Her interests lie mainly in the traditional techniques which we are gradually losing from our culture. Inspiration also comes from the many glory-box items that have been handmade by her mother, grand and great-grand mothers.

www.jcembroidery.co.nz



Events for 2015

Saturday 16th May 2015

St Peter's Vintage and Collectable's Fair

Anna McDowell of Henry's Buttons for gifts featuring Dorset Buttons, Dorset Button Kits, hollow brass and handmade rings and instructions for making Dorset Buttons.

Venue: St Peter's Church Hall, Top of Gold Hill, Shaftesbury, Dorset.

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Entry: Donation to the church hall funds

Saturday 23rd May – Sunday 31st May 2015

Wylve Valley Art Trail

A nine day festival of visual art and craft in and around the Wylve Valley, South Wiltshire. A unique opportunity to see the wide range of art being created in this area. Anna McDowell's Dorset Buttons are on display at the Black Barn, Ginger Piggery, Boynton.

Venue: The Black Barn

Gallery, The Ginger Piggery, Boynton BA12 0SS

Time: 10.00 am – 5.30 pm daily

Entry: Free

Details: [Wylve Valley Arts Trail](#)

Friday 29th May 2015

Have a go at making Dorset Buttons

Have a go at Dorset Buttony with Anna McDowell and get inspired by Varity Scott's vintage style wedding dresses.

Venue: Lace is More, 1 Tamworth Studios, Ginger Piggery, Boynton, Wiltshire BA12 0SS

Time: 10.30am to 1.00pm

Cost and details: Tel: 01225

768260, Mobile: 07804 023498 or email www.laceismore.co.uk/contact

Saturday 20th June 2015

St Peter's Vintage and Collectable's Fair

See Saturday 16th May for details.

Wednesday 24th June

"Dorset Buttons: The rise and fall of a local craft" Talk by Anna McDowell

Anna will talk about the Dorset Button Industry which began in Shaftesbury in the 1620s and became a major cottage industry throughout Dorset, employing, by the 1780s, 4,000 women and children.

Machine buttons replaced Dorset Buttons during the first half of the 1800s.

Venue: Bradpole House Wives, Dorset

Sunday 19th July

Larmer Tree

Festival Adult

Workshop

Dorset Buttony –

Silver Spectacular

Celebrate twenty five years of the Larmer Tree

Festival with a special Dorset Button medallion.

Designed for this special occasion participants will

be able to learn this local heritage craft to make a medallion using yarn with a silver glitter.

Venue: Larmer Tree, Wiltshire

Time, entry and details: Visit the [Larmer Tree Festival](#) website

Friday 31st July – Tuesday 4th August

Dorset Arts and Crafts Association Annual Exhibition

Venue: The Purbeck School, Worgret Road, Wareham, BH20 4PF

Time: and details: Visit [Dorset Arts and Crafts Association](#)

Saturday 15th August 2015

St Peter's Vintage and Collectable's Fair

See Saturday 16th May for details.

Saturday 12th September – Sunday 13th September 2015

Sturminster Newton Cheese Festival Craft Marquee

Visit Henry's Buttons stand at this popular festival. You can't miss it as the stand is covered with Dorset Buttons, rings to make Dorset Buttons, kits and instruction books.

Anna McDowell is always keen to hear about your experiences and discuss Dorset Buttons.

Venue: Craft Marquee, Sturminster Newton, Dorset

Time: 10.00am – 5.00pm

Cost and details: from enquiries@cheesefestival.co.uk or visit [Sturminster Newton Cheese Festival](#)

Sunday 11th October 2015

Workshop – Dorset Buttons for Beginners with Anna McDowell

This course is designed to teach participants how to make two types of the most used of the Dorset Button range – the Cartwheel and Blandford Crosswheel. Participants will either work a button on a fine .08 wire ring, similar in size to the original rings, or experiment with how different threads can be used to bring these lovely buttons into contemporary use. The aim of the day is for each participant to leave after working on at least three different Dorset Buttons.

Venue: Walford Mill Crafts, Stone Lane, Wimborne Minster, Dorset BH21 1NL

Time: 10.30am – 4.00pm

Cost and details: [Walford Mill Crafts adult workshops](#) or 01202 841400 or



For full details of all events please visit the Events Page on my website [Henry's Buttons](#)

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 preferable with an image to Anna McDowell at henrysbUTTONS@aol.com.