



## Issues affecting the viability of the craft

On Wednesday, the Heritage Crafts Association, a charity which promotes and supports traditional crafts, published The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts. This research set out to assess the current viability of every heritage craft in the UK and identify those which are most at risk of disappearing. It also identified the key issues affecting the future of heritage crafts.

Of the 169 crafts covered by the research, four are known to have become extinct in the last ten years, and seventeen have been identified as Critically Endangered (i.e. at serious risk of no longer being practised). The reasons crafts become critically endangered are varied, but may include limited opportunities for training, low financial viability, or no way for the skills and knowledge to be passed on.

Button making (defined in the research as 'The making of cloth and stitched buttons, the most famous of which is the Dorset button') has been given the status of Currently Viable.

Button making was found to be affected by the following issues: lack of



awareness about the craft, market issues (the impossibility of earning a living from making buttons alone), loss of craft skills (most people only learn how to make one type of Dorset button, and don't necessarily learn the traditional methods), and training issues (a lack of standards for button making).

To find out more about the research and its

recommendations, and to view the full list of crafts and their status, visit <http://redlist.heritagecrafts.org.uk>

### Notes:

Both the Heritage Craft association and the Radcliffe Trust are charitable organisations based in the UK.

The Heritage Crafts Association is the advocacy body for traditional heritage crafts. Working in partnership with Government and key agencies, it provides a focus for craftspeople, groups, societies and guilds, as well as individuals who care about the loss of traditional crafts skills, and works towards a healthy and sustainable framework for the future.

The Radcliffe Trust supports the development of the skills, knowledge and experience that underpin the UK's traditional cultural heritage and crafts sectors.

## Dorset Buttons into the future by Anna McDowell

This report has certainly highlighted many issues that affect the making of Dorset Buttons today. Should a craft keep to its heritage or should it move into the 21st Century? Although buttony has been given the status of Currently Viable, the report is right to assume that it is impossible to make a living from making buttons and that the button that everyone knows is the Cartwheel. What about the others?

The report is also right to say that there is a lack of a common standard for Dorset Button making. When I first started to make Dorset Buttons

and became hooked I spent many hours examining original buttons in my collection and held at the Gold Hill Museum in Shaftesbury. Together with the help of Marion Howitt's book, I have come as close as I can to emulate the traditional Cartwheel button and others in the Dorset Button range.

Today, I still use this traditional method although the yarns and size are contemporary. I'm guilty of using a heritage craft in a contemporary way.

I would be interested to hear what you have to say. Please send me your views on this report to [My views on the Radcliffe Report](#)

### Inside this issue:

Dorset Arts and Crafts	2
U3A textile group	2
'A present for my sister'	2
Blandford's on clothing	3
Edinburgh Yarn Festival	3
Featured website	3
2017 Events & Workshops	4

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## Dorset Arts and Crafts Annual Exhibition by Anna McDowell

It's that time of year again when I put on my thinking hat on and wonder what to submit to this year's Dorset Arts and Crafts Association Annual Exhibition. As



2014 Marion Howitt's winning entry

this is an arts and crafts organisation based in Dorset of course they have a section for Dorset specific crafts known as The Dorset Shield.

The section includes Dorset buttons which can be individual buttons, sets of buttons, or buttons used in a creative way together with

bonnets, smocks and any item using Dorset featherstitch.

Last year the entries for Dorset Buttons seem to be declining, something that I would hope you will help to stop and make this year a bumper year for Dorset Button entries. We welcome work from everyone, from beginners to those with more experience.

Work can be entered by individuals or as a group project. Your work does not have to be made recently. Provided it has not been previously exhibited in the Exhibition, it can be entered this year. If you are not resident in Dorset, you will need to join the Association as an Associate Member before entering work. Dorset residents can enter work whether or not they are members.

This Annual exhibition is an opportunity for you to show your buttony skills, and to show that this heritage craft is still alive and not forgotten. It would be lovely to see a whole table full of your work and show how this heritage crafts can be used for more than a way to fasten clothing. You never know you might win the Dorset Shield.

The exhibition runs from Friday 4th August to Tuesday 8th August. So download the entry form which has to be with the organisers by the 19th July and you can hand in your work to The Purbeck School, Wareham, Dorset between 10.00am and 5.00pm on Monday 31st July 2017.

Contact [Dorset Arts and Crafts](#) for details.

## U3A Creative Textiles Group by Ann Power



This panel of Dorset buttons has been made as part a banner to promote the U3A Creative Textiles group based in Wareham, Dorset. Some buttons were basic designs, some were made from patterns obtained from the Internet and some were just improvised from

previous attempts. The banner itself is made up of about 18 similar panels displaying different crafts, embroidery, patchwork, quilting, fabric painting, tatting, beading, knitting and many others. The individual panels were then backed and joined together with buttons and loops. This enables the panels to be linked together in different layouts according to

the display shape required.

Still a comparative beginner, I was first introduced to Dorset buttons at the Purbeck Workshop in Wool, a small local charity for people affected by cancer. After continuing 'buttoning' on my own, I found Anna's classes at the Thomas Hardy Visitor Centre and have continued to make progress since then.

## 'A present for my sister' by Pauline Hincks



I'm new to the craft of Dorset Button making but absolutely love them. The necklace will be third set of Dorset Buttons. My first, was a set of five to frame with some lace and the second set for a cardigan I knitted.

This third set will be for a necklace for my twin sister in New Zealand, she lives in the Bay of Plenty overlooking the sea hence the colours chosen in a variegated Peale cotton no. 5. I thought it would be nice to make a necklace for her as she likes

jewellery and with my love of needlework especially Dorset Buttons it is a coming together across the miles apart. With a bracelet to match too hopefully.

## Blandford's on Historical Clothing by Naomi Barnes

I think the very first time I came across Dorset buttons was in the book "The Art of Dress - Clothes and Society 1500 to 1914" by Jane Ashelford. On page 182 there is a vibrant pink silk dress, with yellow Dorset buttons at the back opening. I remember thinking 'oh, wow, what are those!?' To come across those pieces of needlework, beautiful in their own right, was a revelation. At the time I

had just begun sewing custom Regency clothing, so I made it my business to find out more, and then I started to add them to my spencers, dresses, underthings and chemisettes (and I was one of the earliest seamstresses to offer these buttons on clothing). And of

course, once I had mastered the basic Crosswheel button, I then wanted to go further, to create the other Crosswheel designs, and then move over to the more complicated, less easy ones. I then became obsessed with finding extant clothing with Dorset Crosswheel buttons on, or the older, and much more easily found Dorset Cartwheel buttons (or 'Old' Dorsets as they are also known). So these images here show a section of clothing items that have passed through my hands.

Although I no longer make the historical dress items, I do continue to make Dorset buttons (Blandford Cartwheels, the basic Crosswheel, Bird's Eyes and Singletons), for individuals and TV productions, and my interest in them certainly hasn't waned. I am always finding new buttons to make, new techniques to battle with. Dorset High Tops have

always fascinated me. So tiny and yet so well crafted. I was, as you can imagine, delighted to find that Henry's Buttons are now selling a wooden mould to make them with. As of yet I haven't quite got round to trying it out, but cannot wait to do so.

And lastly, I need to mention the other joy linked to Dorset Button making. After many attempts, tears of frustration (and I truly mean that!), and "how the heck did anyone make these?", at some point along the way, something clicks, and the technique eventually slots into place in my hands or brain (or both), and that wonderful moment of "Yippee! I can do it too! How beautiful is that!" fills me with much pride and happiness, and, in turn, I feel that little bit more connected to all those people long ago who were involved with the industry that was 'Dorset Buttony'.



*Clockwise from top left: 1820s/30s Cuffs; 1820s/30s Wrapper; Early 1800s 'Undress' jacket; 1820s-30s Men's Under Drawers, early 1800s.*

## Edinburgh Yarn Festival by Tania Ashton Jones



How a Dorset Button can look on a handmade knitted garment. Beautiful hand-dyed yarn with a handmade finish.

Here is a picture of the completed cardigan with the Dorset Buttons on.

It is the Anthro Cardigan, pattern by Hanna Maciejewska & was on display at Edinburgh Yarn Festival.

It was knitted by Helen Lockhart of Ripples Craft in her own hand dyed yarn, the Na Danssairean 4ply BFL / Nep.

I made all the buttons for Helen. Her hand dyed yarn is beautiful.

[https://www.ripplescrafs.com/index.php?main\\_page=index&cPath=52\\_37\\_73](https://www.ripplescrafs.com/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=52_37_73)

## Featured website: [www.katelarsontextiles.com](http://www.katelarsontextiles.com)

Kate Larson loves using fiber arts as a bridge between her passions for art and agriculture. Her fiber journey has led her to a degree in Environmental Soil Chemistry, travels through northern Europe in search of textile traditions, and back to the farm where her family has lived for six generations. Kate started workshops on how to make Dorset Buttons in 2014 which included a knitting pattern that incorporates Dorset buttons to get

participants creativity flowing. The Gold Hill Cowl combines a straight-forward lace pattern with her favorite one-row buttonhole—a great way to show off button-making skills!



# Events for 2017

**Saturday 27th May – Sunday 4th June 2017**

**Working in the round with Yve Sturgeon and Anna McDowell Wylve Valley Art Trail**

The Wylve Valley, South Wiltshire, is a festival of visual art and crafts. Yve Sturgeon as kindly invited me to join her with my Dorset Buttons. I gather

my inspiration from the traditional craft of thread buttony. To help keep this heritage craft alive, my work is based on the traditional Dorset Button and worked in the traditional way using contemporary materials and designs. Both Yve and I work in the round as all my work is based in a ring and includes wall art using fabric, ribbons, lace and yarn to small fabric jewellery and accessories. Each piece is inspired by the local Dorset Button.

Venue: 1 Whitebridge Cottages, Sedgehill, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 9JU  
Time: 10.30am - 5.30pm daily

Entry and Details: [Wylve](#)

[Valley Arts Trail 2017](#)

**Friday 4th to Tuesday 8th August 2017**

**Dorset Arts and Crafts Association Annual Exhibition**

The Dorset Arts and Crafts Association was founded in 1907 and is one of the oldest in the country. The Association is dedicated to the promotion of traditional and modern arts and crafts and organise an exhibition with twenty-four different craft sections including one for Dorset Buttons under the section for Traditional Dorset Crafts. This is an opportunity to help keep the heritage

craft of Dorset Buttony alive by exhibiting your work. Click here for details on how to enter.

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

Time: Friday to Monday 10.00am - 5.00pm. Tuesday 10.00am - 4pm

Entry and Details: [Dorset Arts and Crafts Association](#)

**Saturday 2nd – Sunday 3rd September 2017**

**Dorset Artisans Craft Marquee Dorset County Show**

Dorset County show is launching a new Dorset Artisans Craft marquee at this year's show, featuring handmade quality arts and crafts from Dorset, including Henry's Buttons Dorset Buttons.

Venue: Dorchester Showground, DT2 7SD

Time:

Entry and details: [Dorset County Show](#)

**Tuesday 26th September 2017**

**Dorset Button Master Class with Anna McDowell**

This workshop was requested by experienced buttoners who want to test their skills with a new challenge. The workshop will be centred on the Dorset 'Cartwheel' Button. Participant will be able to experiment with different yarns and threads including ribbons and lace and the differing properties and effect they make when working a Dorset Button. The challenge is to incorporate the minimum of four different yarns to show off their individual properties into the overall design of the finished button.

This workshop is for experienced buttoners.

Venue: Hardy's Birthplace Visitor

Centre, Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 8QJ

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm

Entry and Details: Tel: 01305 251228, Hardy's Birthplace on Facebook or [hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

**Monday 17th October 2017**  
**Dorset Button Workshop for beginners.**

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 Henry's 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: 01305 251228, Hardy's Birthplace on Facebook or [hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

**Monday 20th November 2017**  
**Bright as a Button – Dorset Button Workshop with Anna McDowell**

Advanced - Dorset thread Buttons  
Extend your skills of Dorset Buttons with new designs such as the spiral and daisy.

This workshop will be run by Anna McDowell (from Henry's 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.

See above for details



## *Share your news, views and projects*

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

*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*