



A new look at Dorset Buttons by Anna McDowell

I have always been inspired by textile artists who take the art of Dorset Buttony to a new level. I particularly liked how artist Sally Webster has brought a new dimension on how we can use the High Top and Dorset Knob buttons in art pieces. Inspired, I set myself a challenge of turning a single button into a piece of wall art. Some of you may have seen this button on my Blog page.

My button was to be worked using the traditional Dorset Cartwheel design like many Dorset Buttons I've made in the past – just on a much larger scale. For the ring, I used a 24 inch (61cm) hula hoop. After several months of careful planning, the decision on which yarns I was going to use and how I was going to construct the button, finally came to fruition.

Eventually, I decided on a mix of strips of a Designer Guild fabric to cover the hoop. For the 'spokes' and centre I used Mulberry silk natural double knitting yarn. The rest of the button is filled with a mix of reclaimed sari silk and other fibres,

vintage black ribbon and further strips of Designer Guild fabric. Buttons with shanks, both old and new, from my



button box embellish the design and add further texture. These represent the buttons made by machine that replaced the Dorset Button industry.

Every year, the Dorset Arts &

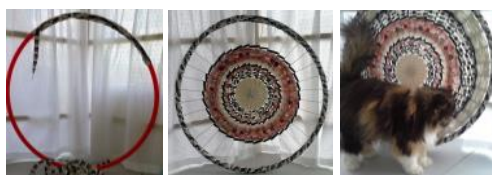
Crafts Associations organise an exhibition held over the first weekend in August. Over the last few years, I have entered my Dorset Buttons into the Dorset Crafts category.

Last year I won the Dorset Shield for my buttons. As one of last years winners I was invited, this year, to submit a piece of work in the Champion of Champions category. My large button was the obvious choice, but I expected the judges to argue that this was not a button in its true sense and therefore not eligible for entry.

To my joy, they accepted it and I received Silver in the Champion of Champions category.

I hope that 2017 will see more entries in the Dorset Crafts category and perhaps we will see a wider selection on how the heritage craft of Dorset Buttons can be interpreted in the 21st century.

Work in progress. I did have a little of help!



Samples of your buttony. Sent by Trudi Hodges

I've crocheted since I was a child and incorporate buttons into it sometimes.

Here is a photo taken of the friendship blanket produced by the volunteers of a charity I'm a member of, Cherished Gowns UK. This was made for one of

the very active lady's from the onset of the group who is now very poorly. We made squares with our own personal skills or personality added, so I just had to send friendship from Dorset.

Usually we are all sewing, knitting or crocheting for specially

prepared packs sent to hospitals to provide for bereaved parents of babies, so this was a short spell of distraction.



Inside this issue:

Blessing of the Bonnets	2
A wartime memory	2
Living history	2
Who was Abraham Case?	3
Button in a wood	3
Hat embellishments	3
2016 Events	4

Blessing of the Bonnets sent in by Susan Lendon

Earlier this year the Tasman Historical Museum at Taranna on the Tasman Peninsular held a Blessing of the Bonnets. This event was to celebrate the wives and families of the convicts and their connection with this particular area of Australia. The bonnets were made by local residents to commemorate their convict ancestors.

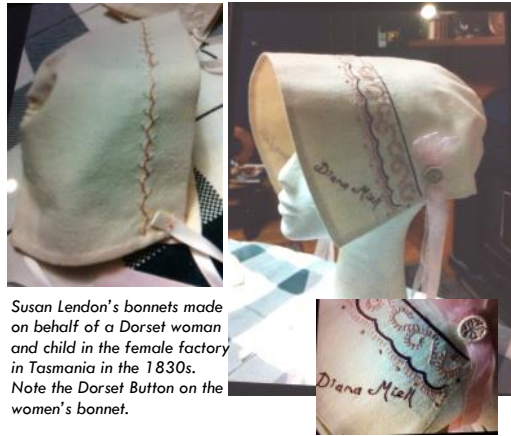
This project was the organised by Dr Christine Henri, an honorary artist-in-residence at the Cascades Female Factory in South Hobart, Tasmania.

Since 2003, she has been focusing on the lives of the women sentenced to transportation to Australia from 1788 to 1853.

Over half the convict women sent to Australia were sent to Tasmania and the majority spent some time at the Cascades Female Factory as

it was the main place for their reception and imprisonment.

Cascades Female Factory is highly significant because of its



Susan Lendon's bonnets made on behalf of a Dorset woman and child in the female factory in Tasmania in the 1830s. Note the Dorset Button on the women's bonnet.

association with the lives of these convict women, its demonstration of the changing philosophies of punishment and reform as they relate to women and as a place of tremendous suffering and inhumane treatment.

As the numbers of women convicts grew, the value of their labour was questioned and they were seen as useless and contributing to immorality. The building of female factories was undertaken to manage women convicts. They operated as places of work, of punishment, as hiring depots and places of shelter for women between assignments, when they were sick, ill or pregnant.

Reform through work and constant supervision offered female convicts the opportunity to re-join respectable society. This was particularly important in Tasmania where men outnumbered women by 10 to one. Elizabeth Fry, the English prison reformer, social reformer and philanthropist, wrote to the British government in 1823 asking for a separate prison for women convicts under the control and guidance of a respectable matron. Built in 1828 and operating until 1856, the Cascades Female Factory became one of Tasmania's longest running penal institutions.

A wartime memory by Ros Atkins

My mother was born in Sheffield in 1923 and left school in the early part of the second world war and joined the Wrens to work as an electrical engineer on aircraft in Scotland. Many years ago (in the late seventies), she was watching me working a cross wheel and it stirred a wartime memory.

She said that in the forties when metal was in great demand for the war effort, costume jewellery was very hard to come by and she and her friends used to make their own brooches using curtain

rings and oddments of wool, starting in the way that I did with my cross wheels. I asked her to show me how she worked them which she did and I started to make them to sell as a Dorset Posy brooch alongside my traditional Dorset buttons.

I still sell them to this day and they have proved very popular and have been taken or sent all over the world. I also have a simple kit to make the brooch too.



Living History and Dorset Buttons



Paula Perry, Rio Frio, Texas FWLHA (living history group) writes "I am just teaching myself to do a basic button and am still trying out different threads. I have tried Mohair and DMC embroidery

threads #3, #5, and #25. Except for the little 1/2" rings, I think I prefer the thicker DMC. I am getting better at the basic button and I plan to work on some different designs."

Editor's note: I too have received commissions from living history groups over the years. The Cartwheel and

Blandford Crosswheel are the most popular but I have also been asked to make High Tops and Dorset Knobs. High Top buttons are based on a form made from fabric and flour and water paste and, however careful I am, my whole workroom seems to be covered in this white paste.

Who was Abraham Case? Can you help solve the mystery? by Anna McDowell

The Case family were instrumental in starting the Dorset Button industry. For over 200 years, there were Cases associated with the industry until its demise in the 19th century. Each member has been traced with the exception of the founder member, Abraham Case.

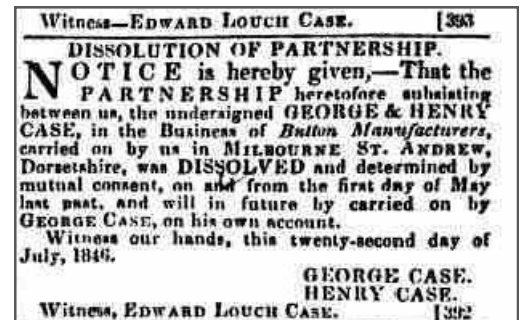
Abraham's ancestors and researchers into the Dorset Button industry had all failed to find any primary information about the elusive man. It is thought that he was a professional soldier and sought his fortune as a mercenary in Europe in the early 1600s. Leaving Europe in around 1620s, he somehow found himself in Wardour or Donhead St Andrew near Shaftesbury. He married a local girl and had a number of children.

There have been a number of pamphlets and books written about the Dorset Button industry and nearly all mention Abraham, a name that was to be passed down the generations. A label about the industry in the Gold Hill Museum

before it was refurbished and the display vastly improved, states that Abraham died around the late 1650s. Where this information came from I have yet to discover but, if it is remotely true, how old was Abraham when he died and when was he born?

We know that William Case who died in 1731 was the father of Peter Case who was born in 1694. Peter Case was to make the business the success it later became and incorporating the use of metal rings. We are not sure when William Case was born or when he was married, but he started fathering children in 1676, Peter Case being the last.

William Case could therefore possibly have been born around 1645. If Abraham Case was his father, bearing in mind it is



Dissolution of the Case brothers partnership. The Salisbury and Winchester Journal. Saturday July 25 1846

suggested that he married in 1622 and died in 1658, then this would set Abraham Case's birth at somewhere between 1590 and 1600, making him between 60 and 70 when he died.

My husband Patrick and I have tried and, like others, been equally unsuccessful with tracing the first Abraham Case so if anyone can help with solving this mystery I would appreciate your help.

Please contact me by emailing dorsetbuttons@henrysbuttons.co.uk

Making buttons in the middle of a wood by Anna McDowell



The Living Classroom can be found in the middle of a wood near Blandford in Dorset. The classroom is run by the Dorset Coppice Group in May hosted our Button & Banter group. Members of the Button & Banter Group that I belong to enjoyed the lovely early



evening drive along the winding lane which leads to the classroom. On arrival we were greeted by members of the group eager to learn how to make Dorset Buttons. The evening ended with bangers cooked on the wood burner.

Many coppice workers have a rather solitary working existence. In 1999, a number of the Dorset woodsmen decided that a local group was needed to help promote their services and products. Bonsley

Wood is part of Blandford Forest, a commercially managed Forestry Commission operation and, allows the Dorset Coppice Group have use of the woodland for educational purposes and to manage part of it as traditional, rotational coppice woodland. They hold events throughout the year to promote the coppice industry and its products to the public.

To find out more about the group go to www.dorsetcoppicegroup.co.uk

Hat making and embellishments by Jane Edmonds



I spent a weekend at the Denman College the Women's Institute's own Residential and Day Adult Education College near Oxford, making this hat. It was a course on making cloche hats, which was quite hard work on the hands. We then embellished them with a felted flower. I had taken along a few of the Dorset Buttons I had made previously, with no clear idea how they might be useful. This one went

so well with the colours of the hat that I used it as the centre of the flower.

I taught myself to make Dorset Buttons from a pamphlet in Dorchester Museum and passed on the skill top a few others, including the history of the Dorset Button industry. One of my 'pupils' won a prize at a craft fair, which I was pleased about.

Editor's Note:

Denman in Oxfordshire is the home

of WI learning and hundreds of different craft, cookery and lifestyle courses are run every year to appeal to everyone - members and non-members alike. The WI Cookery School is also based in the grounds of Denman and boasts a vast range of different cookery courses to attract the most experienced cooks through to novice home cooks, and a new website for the college means that guests can enjoy a more standardised booking system.

www.denman.org.uk

Events for 2016

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th September 2016

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:

Cost:

Details: for full details go to the [Dorset County Show](#) website.

Monday 12th September 2016 Workshop - Let your creativity flow - Dorset Buttons 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: £13.00 to include morning coffee plus £1:00 for materials direct to Anna

Details: Tel: 07900 137882 or hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Sunday 18th September 2016 Vintage Brocante

A superb assortment of vintage collectors bringing fabulous furniture, antiques, ceramics, kitchenalia, brocante, fabrics & haberdashery including Dorset

Buttons from Henry's Buttons. Homemade lunches, teas and cake will be on sale. There will be live music and activities for children.

Venue: The Larmer Tree Gardens,
Tollard Royal, Salisbury SP5 5PY

Time: 10.30am – 4.00pm

Cost: £5 including entry to the gardens. Children free. Sorry, no dogs.

Details: www.vintagebrocante.co.uk or email hello@vintagebrocante.co.uk



Monday 7th November 2016 Workshop - Bright as a Button – Dorset Button Workshop 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.

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

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm

Entry: £13.00 to include morning coffee plus £1:00 for materials direct to Anna

Details: Tel: 07900 137882 or hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Monday 5th December 2016 Workshop - Sparkle and Shine Christmas Decorations

Enjoy traditional Dorset craft of Dorset button making in the lovely woodland setting which inspired the writer Thomas Hardy.

Anna McDowell (from Henry's Buttons) will share her creative flare with attendees to create 'Dorset Buttons' which sparkle and shine and can be used to help decorate your home this Christmas.

Using original methods Anna combines contemporary materials and designs to help keep the tradition of Dorset Buttons alive. With Christmas around the corner this great workshop will enable you to learn a new skill or refresh old ones while creating a truly bespoke item to bring out every Christmas.

Venue: Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre DT2 8QH

Time: 10.00am to 1.00pm



Cost: £13.00 to include morning coffee plus £1:50 for materials direct to Anna

Details: Spaces limited so Please book 01305 251 228 or hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.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