



A Note from Anna McDowell

So much has happened since my last eNewsletter. So much sort out and so many adjustments to make after the passing of my husband in March. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who sent lovely notes of condolence. It is very comforting to know that we are not solely buttoners but that we also care about our Dorset Button community.

My husband, Patrick, loved his two dogs, George and Monty, and after his death both boys missed him dreadfully, so I had to make certain they were not left on their own. As a result, I moved small buttonery projects into the house so I could be with them. One of which was an experiment with weaving a bracelet that also incorporated buttons with shanks including Dorset Buttons. I used the Birdseye and Cartwheel

design. This was a new concept for me as I haven't tried weaving since I was at school during the 1960s. It's



Work in progress. Tweed and doilies.

incredible how memories suddenly return and some of the techniques come back. But one thing I am certain of and that's how much I enjoyed revisiting a skill I'd thought I'd forgotten.

Over the last few months my dogs have settled down and

I'm able to spend more time in my studio. They now accompany me to my sanctuary and settle down to a good long sleep

whilst I work. I have started a new project incorporating vintage doilies which are covered in the usual brown age stains and buttons worked in Harris Tweed end of line strips and yarn

made from textiles fragments by women in villages in the north of India. This is still a work in progress but the more I play with the textiles the more I enjoy working with this medium.

Creating has certainly helped me over the last few months.

Community Group take up Buttony in August edited by Anna McDowell



Earlier in the year I was contacted by members of Dadesley Crafting CIC. They wanted to use my worksheets available on my website for workshops. Of course, I agreed. So August at Dadesley Crafting was spent learning about and making Dorset Cartwheel buttons. They began making large bag charms,

which meant they could easily understand the techniques involved. They then planned jewellery projects, which they hope everyone agrees, are both lovely and unique. Here's some of the comments from their members:

"Loved how unusual and pretty the Dorset buttons are. A great new craft"
"Excellent and good fun"

"...very different to previous crafts I have learnt. I shall continue to make them and try different colours"

"I hadn't heard of Dorset buttons and enjoyed making them..."

Dadesley Crafting CIC (Community Interest Company) are a not-for-profit group working for the benefit of their community. The aims of the group are, to bring people together, improve

mental health and well-being and to combat loneliness through the use of crafting. They are open 6 days a week running craft workshops.

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Henry's Buttons

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Wimborne Minister Flower Festival by Anna McDowell

You may be asking how this festival is relevant to Dorset buttons? Diana Moss very kindly sent me images a friend sent to her of one of the floral displays. I was stunned when I saw it. One of the flower arrangements celebrated the Dorset Button industry and must have taken many hours to plane looking at the number of buttons that were worked each carefully chosen according to colour.

Apparently, this was the first major Flower Festival to be held



in the Minster Church of St. Cuthburga in Wimborne for seven

years and took place from Friday 2nd to Monday 5th September 2022. In recent times the Minster has held a major Flower Festival every five years and this festival should have taken place in 2020 but postponed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The event celebrates the 900th anniversary of the start of the Minster building as we know it today. However, the original foundations go back to the year AD705 and the 1300th anniversary was celebrated in 2005 when a host of events were held including a Flower Festival.

Upcycling and Dorset Buttons by Anna McDowell



Over the last few years, I have started to look at how upcycle fabrics to use in my Dorset Buttons. Especially when working on the larger rings of 45cm and over. My most fun piece has been a Dorset Button worked on a 90cm wooden ring using T-shirt yarn. I

developed this idea and held several workshops around this theme using T-shirt yarn and adding wooden beads.

It is always lovely when you manage to inspire others to experiment with upcycling especially when buttoners contact me with their works.

Karen Smock, from America, contacted me with details of her project when she decided to enter an upcycling contest. Inspired by

my large buttons and the art of Ian Berry, she made a 55 cm button using a hula hoop and yarn. She embellished it with roses, leaves and butterflies made out of blue jeans. All the materials were purchased at second hand shops. Her comment "Please know that you really inspire me!" went straight to my head.

A plea for help from Pamela Murphy

In July I received an email from Pamela Murphy, who lives in Sydney, Australia. Pamela wanted to learn how to make Dorset Buttons and bought my booklet, "The Dorset Button Industry — a modern day instruction manual".

Pamela used to live in Dorset many years ago, and still has family connections going back hundreds of years, with the west of England.

In 1969 Pamela moved to

Sydney. Her interest in Dorset Buttons stemmed from a little Dorset Button brooch her mother gave her to remind her of the county where she was born. Pamela has always been very fond of it and recently decided to try and make some Dorset Buttons herself. She asked if I knew of anyone in Sydney or NSW who is experienced in the craft and may be able to help her.

Otherwise, she will teach herself.

I know of a couple of you that live in or around Sydney and if you are willing to make contact with Pamela please email me and



I will send you her email

The Dorset Button brooch given to Pamela by her mother

Dorset Buttons 2022

Dorset Arts & Crafts Showcase 2022 Exhibition celebrating 400 years of the Dorset Button Industry

This year Dorset Buttons celebrated with an exhibition of contemporary Dorset Buttons mounted by Jen Best of [Beaker Buttons](#), with the help from Tania Ashton Jones of [TJFrog](#).

Dorset Arts and Crafts Showcase opened on Friday 5th August and for five days there was a steady stream of people. This exhibition attracted around 2,000 visitors and



from talking to Jen on the final day I think most of them must have stopped to look at the 'Button Display'. There was much interest in the display, especially how these

buttons can be applied. With luck many visitors have now gone home thinking of new ways to use these lovely buttons.

I must thank Jen for manning the display for all five days. I met with her on the last day and she looked exhausted but elated from all the wonderful comments and the interest she received.

My thanks also go to Tania, who was unable to make the journey down from Skye, Scotland, but was determined to help so prepared all the signs for the exhibition ready for Jen to display.

Dorset Buttons 2022

Diana Moss Celebrates 400 years of Dorset Buttons

I thought you might be interested in my project to celebrate 400 years of Dorset buttons which I have just completed. I based it on a 19th century map of the county using heather-coloured fabric as Heather is the



flower of Dorset. I researched the heraldic colours of all the well-known Dorset towns and villages, created buttons to suit and placed them appropriately, adding Cranborne Chase, Badbury Rings and Maiden Castle. I filled in with various sizes of buttons in differing shades of green.

Editor's note: I would like to congratulate Diana who has obvi-

ously dedicated much time to research the appropriate colours for Dorset towns before she started to work the buttons. It just shows how such projects can take many hours in the planning process before starting to work on the piece. Some of my pieces can take up to a month, sometimes longer, in the planning process until I'm satisfied with the colour and texture combination and ready to start.

My buttony journey by Lawrence from Leeds

I am 70 years-old this year and a self-taught buttoner. As such, I probably drift away from received wisdom. I think I came across Dorset buttony on Pinterest. I have stayed within Dorset buttony tradition but veer more towards the contemporary. I derive much pleasure from my button making. I particularly appreciate the minimalism of the materials and the mindfulness of the repetition, even more so over



the recent pandemic. There are very few crafts you could carry about in an Altoid's tin. I generally listen to music or audio-books whilst stitching. Is it weaving or stitching? I think it may just be miniature circular tapestry weaving? I think of it as stitching a button but perhaps "working a button" would be a cover all.

I do other crafts but find I am regularly drawn back to another buttony session. My buttons are usually either rather formal or jolly.

Editor's Note: Lawrence sent me seven pages filled with her buttony journey which I read with great interest. Like Lawrence I also listen to audio books when working on my buttons and after reading about her buttony journey I find we have much in common as I use many of the threads mentioned in her story. I have attached her full story as an attachment to this eNewsletter so you can read it at your leisure.

Workshops and Events 2022

Monday 3rd October 2022
Basket Weave and Spiral Zoom Workshop
The Lace Museum,
Sunnyvale, California, USA

Details: This workshop is organised by the Lace Museum. For full details go to <https://thelacemuseum.org/virtual-education/> and scroll down the page.

Sunday 9th October 2022
Dorset Button Talk
Dorset Thimble Society
A private talk for members of the Society at their AGM

Saturday 15th October 2022
Demonstration
Dorset Coppice Group
Saturday 15th October 2022
Dorset Button Demonstration
Dorset Coppice Group
I will be demonstrating in the group's living classroom at



Handing in day at Donhead St Andrew Church

Bonsley Wood which is part of Blandford Forest, a commercially managed Forestry Commission operation. It is with their agreement that Dorset Coppice Group have use of the woodland for educational purposes, and to manage part of it as a traditional, rotational coppice woodland.

Details: Please keep an eye on my website for details.

Thursday 20th October 2022
The Rise and Fall of a Cottage Industry
Dorset Archive Trust

Online Talk to help raise funds to support the Dorset History Centre which holds information about Dorset and the Dorset Button industry.

Details: Details on how to book through Eventbrite are covered on the next page or go to my website.

Saturday 19th November - Saturday 24th December 2022

Tuesday 3rd January – Saturday 7th January 2023
Exhibition by local artists supported by the Slade Gallery

Since it opened in 2000, The Slade Centre has built an enviable reputation for showing some of the very best works by contemporary artists from the South West and beyond, and has established itself as one of the most important and exciting exhibiting spaces in the area.

Venue: Slade Gallery, The Slade Bldg, The Square, Gillingham SP8 4AY

Time: Tuesday to Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm, Saturday 9.00am – 2.00pm

Friday 25th November – Monday 28th November 2022
Donhead Art Exhibition
Donhead St Andrew Village Church

I will be one of the participating artists at this exhibition to help

raise funds the charities the Trussell Trust and the church. The Medieval church of Donhead St Andrew underwent an extensive refurbishment to enable the building be used for a place of worship and as a cultural space for productions, concerts, exhibitions and classes.

Venue: Donhead St Andrew Church, St Bartholomew St, Donhead St Andrew, Shaftesbury, SP7 9EB

Time: To be advised
Details: To be advised

Saturday 26th November 2022

Dorset Button demonstration
Blandford Fashion Museum
Pop in for a chat whilst I demonstrate the heritage craft of Dorset Buttony. I will also have my kits, instruction booklet and other gifts featuring Dorset Buttons ideal for Christmas presents.

Venue: Lime Tree House, The Plocks, Blandford Forum, DT11 7AA

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm
Entry: Contact the [Museum](#) for details

Thursday 1st December 2022
Dorset Button Christmas Tree Workshop – to be confirmed

The Lace Museum,
Sunnyvale, California, USA
This workshop is organised by the Lace Museum. Please keep an eye on my website for links when this workshop is confirmed.

Workshops
For details of all my workshops please [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

The Rise and Fall of a Cottage Industry

Dorset Buttons and how this industry is not forgotten today



Anna McDowell developed a passion for textiles and social history whilst working in the museum industry for 20 years. Since 'retirement' Anna has combined these two interests by researching the history of this Dorset cottage industry, expanding the art of Dorset Button making and passing her expertise and enthusiasm to others. Like many heritage crafts and skills, information



was passed down from generation to generation. The Dorset Button industry was no exception and affected the lives of hundreds of families in Dorset for more than 200 years. This is their story.

Thursday 20th October 2022
7.00p.m.

An online event via Zoom

Tickets £6

To book your place visit: <https://Dorset-buttons-a-cottage-industry.eventbrite.co.uk> or dorsetarchivestrust.org/events and follow the links to booking on Eventbrite.

Joining instructions and a link to the event will be sent by email by Thursday 20th October 2022

My Dorset Button Journey

By Lawrence from Leeds

I am 70 years-old this year and a self-taught buttoner. As such, I probably drift away from received wisdom. I think I came across Dorset buttony on Pinterest. I have stayed within Dorset buttony tradition but veer more towards the contemporary. I derive much pleasure from my button making.

I particularly appreciate the minimalism of the materials and the mindfulness of the repetition. More so over the recent pandemic. There are very few crafts you could carry about in an Altoid's tin.

I generally listen to music or audio-books whilst stitching. Is it weaving or stitching? I think it may just be miniature circular tapestry weaving? I think of it as stitching a button but perhaps "working a button" would be a cover all.

I do other crafts but find I am regularly drawn back to another buttony session.

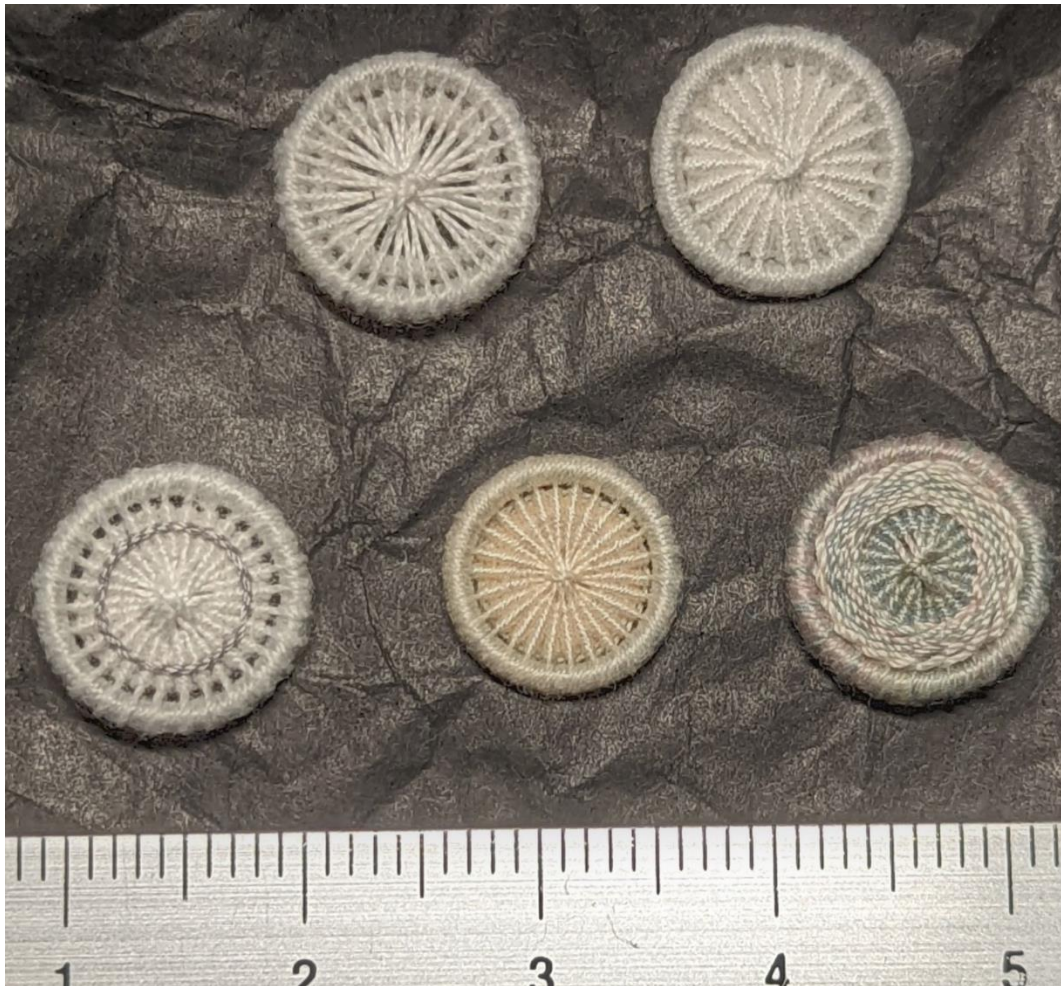
My buttons are either rather formal or jolly.

Below

Formal buttons worked using my favourite thread - "Lizbeth #80". Having no "give" it enables excellent definition of stitches and thus overall clarity of patterns. I also use DMC Special Dentelle #80 which is a little softer and glossier than the Lizbeth.



Below – my attempt at replicating the Case production technique. So, hand-made brass rings, soft soldered (but using a soldering iron not dipping). The smallest, my best button to date) worked in #100 linen thread, the remainder probably fine cotton sewing thread. Scale is in cm. I know soft soldering (I presume this is what Case used) does not make for strong joints especially when joining the small areas at the ends of brass wire. I note that some of my joints have broken whilst working later stages of the button. However, the laying and its gradual tightening by the rounding kept the joint very tight.



Page 3 - some Jolly buttons (2 images some duplication of buttons in images)

Mainly worked on plastic rings apart from the 2 larger buttons. Threads from Paint-Box Threads and OliverTwistsThreads on Etsy. They both are described as Perle 12 style cotton threads but with a firmer twist. They are trickier to use as they are a little stretchy. The patterns are not as well defined. However, they have a wonderful silk-like lustre and the colours are vibrant.

I am probably a bit of a rebel about joining threads; I use a needle! A number 11 “Between” or “Milliner”. It helps a lot when making frequent changes of colour. I find trying to stitch with a number of tail-ends floating about is a pain. A fine needle enables the light catching of threads to secure such that new thread doesn't bleed through at the front.

Variegated threads are fine but are really “one trick ponies”. Changing colours is trickier but the outcome is more uniform and controllable. My next buttony challenge is to dye my own threads.

Nowadays, I rarely plan my design or colourways for jolly buttons. I just pick a first colour and set off. Further colour and design choices are on-the-hoof.



Below - Jolly buttons all worked on metal rings 25mm O.D. Includes my lobsided "Jubilee" button and some with Toho #12 seed beads.





I stitch/weave my buttons slowly. I cast using what I think of as "Gina-B" technique (only because I first saw it on YouTube I am sure it was used centuries ago). I manipulate the needle using the 1st and 2nd fingers which frees the thumb and 1st finger to pull the thread through. I am sure you will know what I mean.

I keep a log of buttons worked, including the ring size and type, thread make and colour(s) and recently I have added photos.

I prefer metal rings over plastic for 2 reasons. Firstly, the metal ones are usually thinner in cross-section in relation to the diameter this makes it easier to work the spokes right up to the ring. Secondly, I like the heft of the ring.

I use needles that I especially blunt. Tapestry needles, I find are too short and wide, so I use hefty "darners". The latter have the weight to carry the needle through the spokes without almost any effort (again I think you will know what I mean). I position the forefinger of the button holding hand upon the back of the last "stitch" in order to maintain the tension. I can then run the needle over the forefinger for the next stitch without stabbing myself nor losing the tension on the previous stitch. I clove

hitch the thread to the eye of the needle when casting as fine threads slip through the large needle eyes all too readily.

I generally slick the casting to the back and not the inside unless stitching one of the traditional designs where it is nice to fill any gap at the edge of the stitching.

I do like to get the stitches as even as possible and to get my circles circular. I secure the spokes with just 2 stitches in a cross shape. I find to get a nice cross-shape requires stitching more of a X than a ✕. Two of the arms are connected the reverse of the button. Using an X shape, the arms connected are over one of the longer lengths. This permits the cross to be tightened pulling the mis-shape into a neat even cross. I do tend to make a firm cross. All easier to show than explain.

I complete the ring of casting by just stitching under the thread between the 1st and 2nd slicked stitches. For me, it is easier than attempting to insert a needle between the ring and the slicking. My casting is rather firm!

Such refinements are probably unnecessary and a bit excessive. However, it is remarkable how much personal challenge one can find by the stitching of buttons. The refinements have been incremental and probably a result of gaining both confidence & competence. For me, the journey has always been more interesting than the arrival at the destination.

Talking of which, this is where my train of thought stops!

Best wishes,
Lawrence from Leeds