



## Looking forward to a creative 2019 by Anna McDowell

This year is going to be full of new ventures and I will be looking forward to using my creative skills. I have two exhibitions to prepare for - the Wylde Valley Arts Trail and one other which still has to be confirmed. When I started Henry's Buttons, I wanted to, not only spread the word about Dorset Buttons and the impact they had in rural east Dorset for 200 years, but also to explore how this heritage craft could find a new outlet in this day of mass production. Dorset Buttons may not be widely used to fasten clothing as in years gone by, but they can have another life as textile jewellery, accessories and art.

Dorset Buttons are made in four different ways and this year I will be exploring how all four of the Dorset Buttons range can be incorporated in



*This is a detail from a Dorset Button I made in 2016. Its worked in exactly the same way as a traditional Dorset Button with a modern design, like many Dorset Buttons I've made in the past - just on a much larger scale as I used a 60cm ring.*

to a textile piece of art.

I have already started to look at how a mix of yarns and threads can give texture to Dorset Buttons. The use of beads, including my own handmade paper beads, adds another dimension to a design. This I have to look at the

overall setting on how to display my buttons so will incorporate other materials such as paper and wood, I hope to see how my 'textile collages' will work when viewed as my first solo exhibition as part of the Wylde Valley Arts Trail.

Wishing you all a very happy, peaceful and Creative New Year.

### The four ranges of Dorset Buttons

1. **High Top and Dorset Knobs:** the first Dorset Buttons and made with sheep's horn, fabric and thread
2. **Birdseye and Mites:** used just fabric and thread  
*Wire rings were introduced in the 1730s and two further types of buttons were added to the range:*
3. **Singletons:** made with wire rings, fabric and thread.
4. **Dorset Cartwheel and Blandford Crosswheels:** used wire rings and thread.

## "Where an angel blows on snowflakes, snowdrops with grow" by Anna McDowell

I love making large pieces of wall art using Dorset Buttons and, with the Snowdrop season only a month, away I thought I would share this with you. I worked on it in 2014 for our local Snowdrop Festival.

My inspiration came from the following description of our lovely snowdrop.

*"...After the Fall of Man, Adam and Eve were driven to a land of permanent winter. An angel consoled them by promising there will be better times ahead and blew upon the falling snowflakes which, as they touched the ground, were transformed into snowdrops. Where ever the snowdrop grows as soon as it raises its head is a sign that spring is on the way."*



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## From Shetland to Dorset by Trish Gray

I first met Anna when I spotted an article written by her describing the history of the makings of Dorset Buttons, at the same time she was advertising a course at the Abbey in Shaftesbury. So I signed up to attend it.



It was a whole day course and required extreme concentration especially for those of us who were new to it.

We were taught using a very fine thread and it took me all day to produce one and a half very small buttons.

Having enjoyed the workshop, I bought the book and some thicker thread at the end of the day, and came home and I practiced.

Having had a boost with people admiring the buttons that I was making and trying different designs, as well as different threads. So I decided to change to a larger ring and see what a woollen button would look like.

As I am a breeder of a pedigree flock of Shetland sheep who produce the most wonderful fleece, (it is a Shetland shawl that can be passed through a wedding ring) which is processed into yarn, I decided to have a go at creating a Shetland Dorset Button and was very pleased with the result. So much so that I have managed to win prizes in craft classes where I have used my Shetland Dorset buttons to compliment the craft that I make.

*Left: Wet felted Shetland fleece hat with a Dorset Button using thread which I bought from you at The Abbey in Shaftesbury.*

*Top right: A knitted head band using two balls of natural colour Shetland yarn complimented by a Dorset Button made from four Shetland natural colours.*

*Bottom right: A knitted Bo leaf in two Shetland natural colours with a central Dorset Button using the thread which I bought when I came to your first course.*



## The Space In-between by Anna McDowell

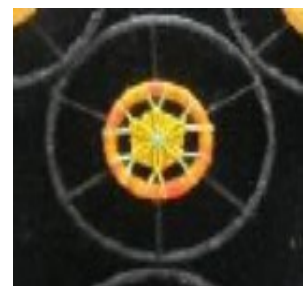
Just before Christmas I received an email from Barbara Schey from Australia with lovely news of her year. Half way through reading her news I spotted a photo of a necklace with a Dorset Button which she exhibited at the Palm House Gallery at Sydney Botanic Garden. She had, amongst other things, produced a necklace inspired by a trip across the Nullarbor Plain to fit in with the theme of "the Space in Between".



The Nullarbor Plain is in South Western Australia, and 1125km long. Barbara said she and her husband towed a van for 9,500 km in seven weeks across land. Barbara said the wildflowers were mostly yellow, the ground was mostly dusty and there was a long space in between "towns" hence the inspiration for her work for the Space in Between exhibition.

I have known Barbara for a number of years having corresponded by email and was

pleased to hear she continues with her art and craft work and still enjoys her research into Buttony and Shibori.



## Wrist warmers ready for the winter by Anna McDowell

Over the years, I have been sent images of winter mittens with Dorset Buttons and this got me thinking. I decided to make wrist warmers rather than mittens and designed them so they just covered the back



of your hand and would look similar to a lace edge when worn with a jersey or jackets.

I used a vintage pattern for the lace edge and worked out how many stitches to make a pair

suitable for an average wrist. Like most of my projects, I test wore them to ensure they 'did the job'. Having found that my pattern was success, I got knitting and here are the results.

## I have moved into my Button Studio by Anna McDowell

I expect many of you know what it's like to work in a confined space where

all your materials, threads or whatever your hobby may be are all in boxes

which are piled high one on top of the other. Each time you want something, it's like moving house with the amount of

boxes that have to be moved before finding the right one, which usually was at the bottom of the pile!

This was me when I decided to build my own studio. I made a list of all the things I wanted

from my studio including the masses of shelf space, enough wall space to hang my large works, lots of work table

space, good lighting, a coffee machine and toilet to name a

few!

My husband Patrick and I earmarked a piece of land that fell between our house and

garage for this new timber

structured building. Building work started in June when one small digger arrived to clear and flatten the land. I

hadn't realised how much of a slope there was as lorry after lorry of soil had to be removed. Then it was time for

concrete for the foundations. The lorry arrived, and with great difficulty managed to turn in our narrow lane and position itself so the

mix fell in the correct space. The first stage was now complete.

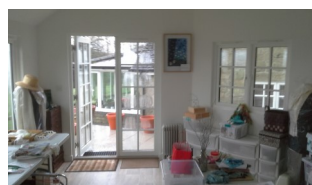
It was time for our carpenter to take over to build the wooden structure, arrange for the laying of our reclaimed tiles, and insert thick insulation for all the walls, ceiling and

floor. Patrick helped the carpenter when necessary and also was the official decorator. Inside all the walls and ceiling were covered and plasterboard after

which Patrick moved in and painted the interior white.

Finally, the plumber arrived to install my small toilet and corner basin.

The lighting was installed, flooring was laid and I finally moved in earlier this month and friends joined us to celebrate this auspicious occasion.



## A five way Dorset Button Challenge by Anna McDowell

I have always loved a challenge especially when I have just taken over an hour to come up with a solution. This is what happened when Hilary Mackenzie contacted me to help with a button her son had asked her to make as buttonholes for his wedding which was to take place in South Africa. The colours had to reflect the colours of their family tartan

so when I met Hilary at the Dorset's

Crafty Barn, she came armed with about five or six different colours of tapestry wool.

Hilary already knew how to make Dorset Buttons so there was no need to start at the beginning. The first decision we had to make was to decide on the size of the ring. Once we had our ring we had to decide how to incorporate all the colours. Two or three were to be used to cover the ring, one to form the spokes and the rest to fill the ring in even stripes.

After one or two changes of mind, the button I worked seemed to please Hilary who was watching me closely so she could complete the full complement that her son had requested.

On her return from South Africa, after a very successful wedding, Hilary emailed this photo of the button hole she made with her Dorset Button. Apparently, her new daughter-in-law was so taken with these buttons she asked Hilary to make one for her hat.



## A Dorset Button Remembrance Wreath by Jane Edmonds

This is the Beaconsfield WI wreath for Remembrance Sunday. I taught the basic button and some of the women elaborated on the pattern with bangle sizes. I made the white one for peace. It took about three weeks to get it all together to make and there were

about five or six WI members involved with making Dorset Buttons. It was protected from the weather by some stuff called mod podge!

*I love to hear about your projects and stories please keep sending them to me.*



# Events for 2019

## Monday 14th January 2019 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 Henrys 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 28th January 2019 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 Henrys 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*

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## Monday 25th February 2019 Dorset Button Workshop Extend your skills of Dorset Buttons with new designs such as



the daisy.

This workshop will be run by Anna McDowell (from Henrys 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 and Details: Tel: 01305 251228, [Hardy's Birthplace](#) on Facebook or [hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:hardysbirthplace@dorsetcc.gov.uk)*

## Monday 18th March 2019 Dorset Button Master Class with Anna McDowell

This workshop was requested by experienced buttoners who wanted 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 to explore the textures they have when

working a Dorset Button. The use of beads will also be explored. 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)*

## Saturday 18th May – Monday 27th May 2019 Wylve Valley Art Trail

My Studio will be open every day of this ten day festival of visual art and craft in and around the Wylve Valley, South Wiltshire.

Details to follow.

## 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 information preferably with an image to Anna McDowell at [dorsetbuttons@henrysbuttons.co.uk](mailto:dorsetbuttons@henrysbuttons.co.uk)