



## In praise of the humble Singleton - a Dorset Button Challenge for 2014

At the start of this Project I set out to bring the Dorset Singleton Button to the notice of Dorset buttoners. I didn't expect to generate such interest with enquiries from all over the world.

From the emails I have received, and in discussions with buttoners, this challenge has achieved what I set out to do and brought the Singleton Button to the notice of buttoners. In a note I received from one contributor, a very skilled buttoner, she has decided to offer a range of Singleton buttons for sale at her regular stalls. I have also received contributions from

abroad. The deadline for your buttons is Friday 25th July after which they will be mounted and framed ready to display at



These two Singleton Buttons were sent to me from Australia. On the left is Barbara Schey's contribution and the lovely silk blue

the Dorset Record Office and subsequently auctioned off to raise funds for much needed archival material.

Like many traditional crafts little or nothing was put in writing. Dorset Archivist, Sam Johnston, is very keen to expand the

Dorset Archival information on Dorset Buttons and is even looking at the possibility of an audio project to

capture memories of Dorset Buttoners. I know from talking to some of you that you were taught by grandmothers who learnt the skill from

original buttoners. An audio project could be a way to capture your memories about this heritage craft and save them for future generations to learn and enjoy.

*I look forward to receiving your contributions by the 25th July.*

## Fiona Vann - An Embroidery Project

Earlier in the month I gave a talk about Dorset Buttons to the members of the Stow on the Wold Countryside Branch Embroiderer's Guild.

I was greeted by their Chairman, Fiona Vann, who I discover was a Dorset Buttoner and who has designed this complicated mix of line art and buttons, which she had worked herself, as a memory.



Thank you Fiona for sharing this with me.

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## The Dorset Arts & Crafts Annual Exhibition celebrates 100 years

### Help make this centenary anniversary a memorable one by submitting your Dorset Buttons.

In 1906, a small exhibition was held at Hinton St Mary, Dorset, and its success led to the formation of the Dorset Arts & Crafts Association in 1907. Exhibitions have been held annually, apart from the Second World War years.

This year the Annual Exhibition (Friday August 1st. to Tuesday August 5th. 2014) will be the 100th.

Many counties had arts and crafts associations but Dorset's is the survivor and is still flourishing and attracting thousands of visitors. One of the sections of this exhibition is for Traditional Dorset Crafts and

includes Dorset Buttons.

This 100th Anniversary ties in



Button made by women from the mission at Lytchett Minster. Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading.

nicely with the early revival of Dorset Buttons. In the early 1900s, Florence, the Dowager Lady Lees, was responsible for saving the art of making Dorset Buttons. She visited farms and cottages all over Dorset to

discover how these buttons were made and sought to revive the industry at Lytchett Minster. She set up a small business. In 1908, buttons were in full production. Unfortunately, this revival was brought to an end by the outbreak of the First World War.

The Dorset Arts & Crafts Exhibition is open to anyone, not just to those living in Dorset. All you have to do is to become a Member or Associate Member. Once you have joined the Association, you

can submit an entry to the Exhibition.

Full details on how to join the Association and submit your entry can be found at [www.dorsetartsandcrafts.org](http://www.dorsetartsandcrafts.org).



Original Birdseye button decorated on the side.

### A decorated Birdseye button no-one seems to have seen before

Last year I received a commission asking for a number of buttons taken from the collection I have on my website of original buttons. One of the buttons I was asked for was the Birdseye with decorated sides. As time was short I asked Marion

Howitt to help me with this design leaving me free to make two sizes of the Blandford Crosswheels with Judy Adam's help, and High Tops.

Marion had never seen this type of Birdseye button before and immediately rose to the

challenge of recreating one. Using her embroidery skills and the linen thread I had sourced, she developed a very close copy of the original. I hope Marion will add this button to her Dorset Button Fact File, the definitive book on how to make Dorset Buttons.

### The Dorset Button Accessories Book by Jen Best

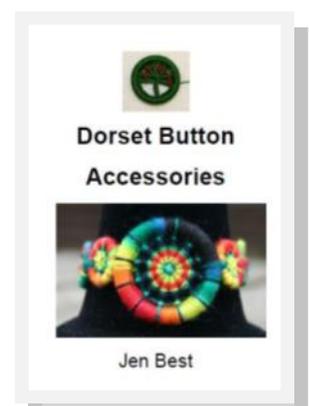
My Gran taught me to make Dorset Buttons when I was a child. I love making buttons and so this book came into being. I've designed a variety of projects using Dorset Buttons, ranging from jewellery to belts! Each project has a list of materials, written

instructions and colour photos.

There are fourteen button designs to make, and twenty individual projects.

You can even create your own designs with your new found skills!

You can order my book from my website [Beaker Buttons](http://BeakerButtons)



## The fate of a Dorset Buttoner. Excerpt from the Morning Chronicle 1849

I found this article in the Morning Chronicle for 28th November 1849. The article is about Dorset villages. In this excerpt the writer reports on this visit to a family in Stourpane. It is particularly poignant as it describes the living conditions of a Dorset buttoner.

"I visited several other houses, but they were all of the same class, and all equally bad. One occupied by a family of the name of Upwood, was particularly so. Its clay floor was full of holes, which formed receptacles for moisture during wet weather. The family numbered seven, and they all slept in the roof.

Two of them slept in a bed which rested on a kind of elevated stage, near the angle of the roof, which was gained by a ladder. The eldest daughter, a tidy and interesting-

looking girl, was seated at the window making buttons. These buttons are made with cotton thread sewn upon a small steel ring. She was getting 10d. a gross, but it would take her a week to earn it. She had to find the cotton too out of the 10d., which would reduce



Inside of a Dorset Cottage. Illustration from the Illustrated London News 1846. Reproduces by kind permission of the Dorset History Centre. Document reference D.1/NL/14

her earnings to 8½d. a week. She had been at work all that day since nine o'clock, from which hour till four o'clock when she gave up work because it got dark, she had earned about a penny! No wonder she was anxious to go out to service."

## A report from Peter Jameson on the durability of a Dorset Button



I have two out of four buttons on my chainsaw trouser braces which are Dorset Buttons made by myself. These replaced the plastic buttons which snapped in cold weather. Last Sunday whilst two of us were handballing a 8

foot diameter charcoal kiln onto a farm trailer, during the worst part of the lift, one of the Dorset Buttons was torn off. Picking the button out of the mud, the button had not failed, it was the thread used to stitch on to the garment, I have reattached the button

using sail makers thread and will keep up the research.

Peter Jameson is a charcoal burner in The New Forest. He has also learnt to make Dorset Buttons and is a regular member of Button & Banter group.

## How to make a Singleton Button

Singleton buttons were the only Dorset Buttons made out of fabric to cover a ring. I have seen these charming understated buttons on original items of clothing in museum collections. They seem to have been a very popular button in the early 1800s. Whilst going through a museum's

collection, I discovered a dress made of Swiss muslin fastened with Singleton buttons. What made these button particularly interesting was the embroidery on the button which reflected the pattern on the fabric, thus making the button a very discrete button and almost invisible.



Original Singleton Button from my collection. The underside of the button on the right.

You can download instructions on how to make these buttons from my website [Henry's Button](#) and click on Singleton Button Challenge instructions.

## Events - for 2014

**Saturday 21st June 2014**

### **St Peters Vintage and Collectable's Fair**

Venue: St Peter's Church Hall, Top of Gold Hill, Shaftesbury, Dorset.  
Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm  
Entry: Donation to the church hall funds

**Sunday 22nd June 2014**

### **Homingsham Village Fayre, Homingsham, Lonleat, Wiltshire**

A traditional village fair with bunting, cream teas, a dog show, an amazing plant sale, the best locally baked cakes for miles and a fun, family friendly atmosphere. Venue:  
Time: 12 noon – 6.00pm. Grand opening by Viscount Weymouth  
Entry: Details on Facebook page

**Wednesday 16th July 2014**

### **Iwerne Minster Women's Institute**

Talk on the history of the Dorset Button Industry by Anna McDowell

**Saturday 19th July 2014**

### **St Peters Vintage and Collectable's Fair**

Venue: St Peter's Church Hall, Top of Gold Hill, Shaftesbury, Dorset.  
Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm  
Entry: Donation to the church hall funds

**Sunday 20th July 2014**

### **Larmer Tree Festival Adult Workshop**



Try your hand at making these traditional thread buttons which originated in Shaftesbury, Dorset. We will look at how to make a Dorset Cartwheel Button and if time permits you can turn your button into a Festival brooch

using oddments of ribbon, lace, thread and fabric.

Venue: Larmer Tree, Wiltshire  
Time, entry, details: Go to the [Larmer Tree Festival website](http://Larmer Tree Festival website)

**Friday 25th July 2014**

### **In praise of the humble Singleton – a button challenge and fundraising event for 2014**

Closing date for entries.

**Thursday 18th September 2014**

### **“Dorset Buttons: The rise and fall of a local craft” Talk by Anna McDowell**

Contributions to the Challenge will be mounted and displayed at this fundraising event at the Dorset History Centre, Dorchester. The mounted contributions will be ‘auctioned off’ to help raise funds.

Venue: Dorset History Centre, Bridport Road, Dorchester Dorset DT1 1RP

Time and entry: TBC

**Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th**

**September 2014**

### **Sturminster Newton Cheese Festival**

Craft Marquee  
Dorset Buttons and Designer Women Clothing.  
Anna McDowell of Henry's Buttons has joined with fashion designer Vivienne Dines to offer a selection of women's clothing and accessories. Vivien has moved to the area from London and now has her own label 'Viva'. Her collection includes a range of tops featuring Dorset Buttons.

Venue: Sturminster Newton, Dorset

Time: 10.00am – 5.00pm

Entry: £5.00 per adult Under 15's free Includes programme & parking

Contact: Details from [enquiries@cheesefestival.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@cheesefestival.co.uk)  
Or visit [Sturminster Newton Cheese Festival](http://Sturminster Newton Cheese Festival)

**Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th**

**September 2014**

### **Holnest Country Fayre**

Family event with farm tours, displays of farm machinery, classic cars, local crafts and craft workshops and lots more!  
Venue: Rylands Farm in the village of Holnest, 4 miles south of Sherborne.

Time: 10.00am – 5.00pm

Entry: Details from [Future Roots](http://Future Roots)

### *News, views and projects*

*I'm always interested to hear your news, views and projects with Dorset Buttons and from the emails I have received I know that some of you are involved in exciting projects, 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 [henrybuttons@aol.com](mailto:henrybuttons@aol.com).*