



NEWS March 2025

News from The Chair

The paper work for the AGWSD AGM on 7th June, has been emailed to the secretaries of all the guilds, for return by the 24th May. The AGM is historically the one opportunity for all the guilds to have their opinions voiced through their delegate. I anticipate that the AGM information is shared with your guild members; your guild members have their own discussion and agree to giving your delegate their decisions and questions. The Points for Discussion are included for your delegate to bring your guilds thoughts to the meeting. They are just that, items that guilds put forward for discussion. Sometimes I wonder if guilds think that the GPC goes out of its way to be difficult, to keep information hidden. We don't, after all we are members of guilds too, just as you are, working in the best interests of the AGWSD.

The Area Links and this AGWSD Newsletter have done much over the past few years to help guilds understand how the Association works as a body, we are delighted to have met so many guild members through the Area Link zoom meetings. I very much hope to see as many as possible at the AGM.

Janet Crowther
AGWSD Chair

Summer School Latest News

A few spaces have unexpectedly become available on some of the popular courses at Summer School. If you are interested in taking up one of these, please email me to ask if your preferred course has availability at bookings@wsd.org.uk. They will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Summer School Reminder

Everything is ticking along nicely in preparation for Summer School. I know some of you will have had contact from your tutors already, but it is not a requirement that your tutor contacts you in advance, so please don't worry if you haven't heard from them. If you confirmed your course allocation and you pay your money, you will be expected in August!

Which brings me to say thank you to those who have already paid and to remind others that the balance of all fees is due by the end of this month – 31st March. The amount you still owe is on the form I sent out with course allocations along with the payment details – which in short are the same as you used for your deposit. Please make sure we receive your money by the end of the month – it involves a lot of unnecessary work if reminders have to be sent out individually.

Sue Collins – Joint Summer School Coordinator

Please feel free to contact me about any of the above, Janet Crowther, chair@wsd.org.uk

Focus On... The South and South West Area

The Guilds of the South and South West of England have had a busy year, with some Guilds reaching important milestones.

The **Avon Guild** is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year with a small exhibition in Bristol city centre and they hope to confirm a date soon. The exhibition will be in "Sparks", the old Marks and Spencer's building. They have lots of ideas about how to educate people about the crafts with displays and posters, but just have to pull it all together. More details to follow.

Devon Weavers Workshop is 20 years old this year. They are planning a big members' hands-on day in July to encourage their weavers to have a go on all their looms - Glimakra, Megado, Octado, David, Wolf, Magic Dobby, Delta... There'll also be inkle weaving, braidmaking, Fiberworks, indigo dyeing and lots more on the go (plus lunch, of course)!

For the **Wiltshire Guild**, the major recent event was undoubtedly the 'Homegrown' textiles Exhibition held last August. Members were challenged to make something to wear using locally grown or produced fibre. They could use yarns or fleeces, natural dyes or naturally coloured fibre raised or made within the Southwest region. Additionally, members were encouraged to collaborate if they wanted to share skills. Different categories allowed entries of items made 100% from the Southwest, through to items which were mostly from the Southwest but perhaps with materials which just couldn't be sourced easily, such as cotton. All members of varying levels of experience were encouraged to submit an item to wear and the end results were just beautiful!

The exhibition was open to the public for 4 days and attended by visitors from all over the country, with much discussion with members about methods used and wonderful compliments about the standard of work.

Huge thanks to all those at Wiltshire Guild who rose to the challenge, or collaborated, supported, set up the room, stewarded, demonstrated, welcomed and shared their space for the duration. Special thanks to Victoria Ross for the vision and determination to see it through.

Other Guilds have been exploring the use of specific fibres. The **Peter Tavy Guild**, who are also working towards an exhibition in the autumn, have been learning more about cotton, thanks to a link with Arts University, Plymouth. In October the university hosted master weaver Shamji Vankar, and cotton spinner Sachin Sachar on a residency in the textiles department. The Guild lent looms for the students to use, and as a result had a visit from Shamji and Sachin. They demonstrated weaving the most beautiful cotton cloths on a simple collapsible table loom, and spinning fine cotton with both the charka and takli. The men also gave an informal talk about their processes, including how they make the reed for their loom from different thicknesses of reeds. They kindly gifted a backstrap loom with one such reed.

Meanwhile, the **Somerset Guild** began 2025 with a full day of flax with Simon and Ann from Flaxland. Flax was traditionally grown in this area, still seen in local place names and there are several Rope Walks locally. First, was a talk about the development of the flax industry, and then they moved onto Simon's experience of growing, processing and weaving the fibre. There was a demonstration of flax processing in the car park at lunchtime and then a flax spinning workshop in the afternoon for both beginner and experienced spinners.

Not forgetting the joys of wool, **Liskeard Spinners** have set themselves a fleece challenge. Every member has been given a bag of Lincoln Longwool fleece and has been challenged to produce an item for the next AGM.

Focus On... The South and South West Area continued

Frome Weavers Spinners and Dyers have been settling in to their new premises at Wanstrow, between Frome, Bruton and Shepton Mallet. They have set up their equipment in a purpose-built eco-friendly unit at Redwood Rare Breeds Farm, with lovely views of the countryside and the occasional visit by baby pygmy goats! While the members have been busy assembling shelves and floor looms in their space, work has been underway outside as the site owners prepare for summer visitors to the adjacent café, shop and gallery. The weavers will be using part of the gallery to showcase their work during this year's Frome Festival which runs from 4th to 13th July.

A number of short introductory courses have taken place since the move last year and have proved both successful and enjoyable to run in this attractive setting. The group has a number of enthusiastic new members, and the venue offers great possibilities for the future including creating an area to grow dye plants and access to outdoor space to expand their activities. Visitors are welcome, please contact enquiries@fromeweavers.org.uk to arrange a visit.

Many of the Guilds are delighted now to have the opportunity to invite speakers. **Peter Tavy** recently enjoyed a talk and workshop on ply splitting with Julie Hedges, while **Somerset** hosted Sarah from The Spinning Weal in Clevedon. She brought a sales table, a Great Wheel and gave a hilarious talk about her experience of farming and how she started her store. Tears of laughter were noted in the audience. They are looking forward to their March meeting when tapestry weaver Anne Jackson will speak about her intricate work inspired by themes of witchcraft. The **Avon Guild** welcomed Nicky Footer from the Dorset Guild, who gave a fascinating talk on growing plants for a Dyers Garden. Just in time for some spring planting. They also enjoyed a tapestry weaving workshop with Terri Shires.

However, most of the time, the Guilds enjoy sharing skills within their groups. The **Hampshire Guild** has taken this to a whole new level by holding an annual Skills Sharing day each March, and each year they are amazed at the breadth of skills and interests within their Membership. In 2025, members ran mini-workshops in 14 different skills, teaching and demonstrating their skills to around 50 members and visitors. The range was amazing: they had Art yarn spinning using traditional, modern, electric and iSPIN wheels (a charkha even made a brief appearance!), the use of a blending board, Dorset Button making, locker hooking, double sided knitting, beginners' crochet, nålbinding and needle felting. There were tips and tricks for weavers, and the weaving techniques of tablet weaving, frame weaving, inkle looms, peg looms and using a Saori loom.

The room was abuzz with concentration and chatter. So many smiling faces, and lots of proud people showing off their recently acquired skills. After lunch and cake, they had a Show and Tell, where successes and the odd failures were shown to keep everyone motivated and valuable lessons were learnt. A sales table helped members to de-stash, grab some bargains and raise funds for the Guild. One member asked if this event could run twice a year, the programme organiser replied with a polite 'NO!'

As this is a mostly rural Area, many of the Guilds attend agricultural shows in the summer months and find they are a great way to interest and attract new members. **Liskeard Spinners** is a well-established group of spinners, weavers and dyers who can usually be found at the local agricultural show in July, even if when they have to plod across a muddy field to reach their tent. **Avon** have participated in a number of local shows, fleece fairs, Fernhill Open Day and Craft4Crafters and **Devon** is organising an exhibition at Buckfast Abbey for August Bank Holiday.

If you see any of the Guilds out and about over the summer, do stop and say hello!

Kay Johnston

Area Link for the South & South West

Focus on...Pictures

Wiltshire Guild
'Homegrown' exhibition



Hampshire Guild Skill Share,
spinning, art yarns and peg loom weaving



Avon Guild
Tapestry Weaving with Terri Shires



Breaking News for 2026

National Exhibition 2026

Exciting news! We have secured a venue for the 2026 National Exhibition. This will be held for the month of October in the Rose Paterson Gallery at Weston Park, Shropshire. Yes, that's right, the whole month of October – so plenty of opportunity to visit and for other people to see what wonderful items we produce. The good news is that the Gallery provides volunteer stewards for the whole exhibition, leaving us to demonstrate our skills and talk to visitors whenever there is someone available.

Now the next stage of the planning begins, and we are starting to look for volunteers to take the exhibition forward. Do you have artistic skills? Are you a good organiser? Please get in touch with me at events@wsd.org.uk if you think you would like to be involved. Whilst there are advantages of being local there are also tasks that can be undertaken from a distance.

AGWSD Conference 2026

More exciting news! We have secured a venue for the AGWSD Conference, to take place from 10th-12th July 2026. This will be at the Burleigh Court Hotel, Loughborough University. It will all be under one roof with spacious conference facilities and plenty of bedrooms – so save the date now!

This also means that we are starting to look for volunteers to organise the conference. Do you know good speakers in the area? Do you have the organisational skills to coordinate the bookings? If you feel you could help in any way, please contact me via events@wsd.org.uk. Again, it is not essential to be on the doorstep to be part of the team making our conference come to life.

Sue Collins
AGWSD Events Coordinator

Speakers List Update

Another two speakers have been added to the list:

Aggy Rucin delivers macramé workshops in Kent and around the Bristol area. Aggy is a Polish-born macramé tutor using this technique to help her clients relax, learn new skills, and develop self-esteem. For her macramé pieces and workshops she uses recycled cotton cord produced with no toxic dyes, minimal CO2 and water use and sourced from a small-scale family-run producer. Aggy operates primarily within the East & South East and the South & South West Areas.

Stacey Harvey-Brown Stacey is a weaver of over 30 years, a self-confessed sample queen, and an explorer of techniques. Since moving to France in 2017, Stacey has presented regularly online to Guilds and Regional Conferences in the US/Canada. She is the author of three books – Honeycomb Hybrids (2017), Woven Optical Illusions (2024 with Katharina Kronig) and 3D Weaving: Surfaces & Sculpture (2025). She was weave editor for the Journal WSD from 2019 – 2024. Stacey brings together different approaches and lateral thinking, along with a dose of humour to make entertaining, absorbing and stimulating talks. Studio course information and her teaching and art philosophy can be found on her website.

Highlight of the month: Anna Champney



Moving to Northern Spain at the age of 30, becoming a weaver in a mountain village, setting up a professional weave studio and developing her own contemporary weave style, and then lecturing in Textiles. How did all this happen? Through beautifully illustrated, entertaining, and informative talks, Anna reflects on her life experiences, shares weave knowledge and expertise, and describes living and working as a self-employed weaver in Spain today, in tandem with her basket-maker partner, Lluís.

If you have booked a speaker or workshop tutor from the Speaker's List, do share your feedback which can be added to the speaker's entry, to help other Guilds make their choices.

You can access the web-based Speaker's List at <https://www.wsd.org.uk/speakers-list> using your Guild's login. Or if you prefer the print-based/fully searchable PDF version it can still be found, without any password, on the GIH at <https://wipagwsd.wordpress.com/contents/speakers-list>. If you have any problems, then please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Matty Smith

speakerslist@wsd.org.uk

Contact

If you have an item for inclusion in the next monthly newsletter, please send to: newsletter@wsd.org.uk
All news received by 20th of each month will be considered for that month's edition.

If you have an event/exhibition for inclusion in the next issue of The Journal, check page 3 of the Journal for print deadlines and send to: jecdiary@wsd.org.uk If you miss the deadline your copy could still be included in the Diary on the Journal website.

Association Website: <https://www.wsd.org.uk/>

Stuart Groom Memorial Library: library@wsd.org.uk