



NEWS May 2025

News from The Chair

Full Circle.

Life has gone full circle. I am in a holiday cottage on the west coast of Wales where I made a life changing decision in 1981. I had been given a spinning wheel that I couldn't make work, I had bought a spindle and gathered fleece from hedgerows and tried to spindle spin, I couldn't. So there I was, reading a brochure for my local Adult Education centre looking for something to do and it was then I decided to book on a class in Beckenham and learn to spin properly.

The spinning became weaving, which led to guild membership, which led to attending summer schools, to demonstrating with guild members, to having work in the Association's national exhibitions (but not always), to doing the minutes for the GPC, to convening a summer school, to coordinating the Certificate of Achievement and finally, to stepping up when the previous AGWSD chair resigned, to the role of Chair. What a journey!

Over those forty years I have met so very many wonderful people who have all done their bit to keep the organisation running and developing. I retire as AGWSD chair in a couple of weeks, at the AGM, along with the other officers, as the constitution requires. Life has changed in those forty years but the AGWSD continues, at the moment.

The GPC gives support to the guilds and their members, but we need your support too. We are reliant on your backing as all the members of the GPC and the JEC, come from the guilds, they are nominated by the guilds. You can't be involved if you are not a guild member. Without members of guilds who are willing to commit that bit of extra time there will be no Association.

Yes, it can be hard work at times, but the rewards are many, particularly in the friendship of likeminded passionate people.

A little history.

The AGWSD came into being in the early nineteen fifties, when those enthusiastic members of the original Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, along with what were known as the 'County Guilds', agreed that a national body would keep the enthusiasm for our crafts continuing and developing. They decided to hold Annual Council Meetings when representatives of all the affiliated guilds would gather together for the formal reading and accepting of reports, to hear the views of the members of the guilds through the delegates, followed by a discussion on how to maintain the educational aspects of the Association, their thirst for learning and sharing is to be commended.

The Annual Council meeting became an Annual General Meeting, maybe this is when the emphasis changed, maybe it was with Covid and the use of video meetings. Maybe the time for gathering to discuss matters of wider importance to the Association, and hearing the views of the members of the guilds, has passed. Or has it? The AGWSD AGM is a time for discussion about the best way forward for all the guilds, to find ways in which all the members of those guilds can work together for the betterment of all and the provisions are there for all members to become involved.

With the next AGWSD AGM upon us, on 7th June, it would be a delight to see as many of the affiliated guilds as possible be represented; coming together to discuss the issues as presented, either in person or via Zoom. A huge thank you to all the members of guilds who keep their guild running, to those that take on that extra bit, to those who have stepped up and answered the call to be on the GPC and the JEC, and a huge thank you to those who will in the future.

My circle is now complete, I am back where I made that momentous decision and booked to attend an Adult Education class to learn to spin. Now for the next adventure, whatever that may be.

Janet Crowther, AGWSD chair

Focus on... the East and South East Area

The Guilds in the East and South East Area have been out and about promoting our crafts and it's great to hear from all of them. Many thanks for sharing your images and information.

Lea Valley Guild who meet monthly in Royden, Essex have a very active social calendar and regularly secure places in country shows and places of historical interest throughout the year. Most recently they attended Living Crafts at Hatfield House where they had the pleasure of attending in two pitches to support both their neighbouring guild (Mid-Herts) and Applebee Cottage, a not for profit organisation which provides rural and farm-based activities for adults with disabilities. They were delighted to be demonstrating with Applebee throughout the show with their



Chairman, Karma Wray, and her great wheel: Big Bertha (see above) who fitted in between the pole lathes and peg looms of their pitch and the besoms and woven hazel hurdles of the wattler's pitch next door.

They met hundreds of people over the course of the show with varying knowledge on spinning and weaving, but most were equally fascinated by the various forms of spinning. There were some examples of spinning through the ages from drop spindles, a great wheel, various designs of spinning wheel and an e-spinner. Many conversations were had about Sleeping Beauty especially given the very large spindle on Bertha, but most were fascinated with the magic of transforming fibre into usable thread/yarn and how easy it looked.

The show had many vendors including a Tudor re-enactor who was hand-making great wheels who sent as many people to see the spinners as they sent to him to see the making of a wheel. They had a fantastic show, with many people having never witnessed the spinning process before and hopefully inspiring a few to pick up their first spindle.

Lea Valley Guild also were also invited to Saffron Walden Museum to celebrate their 190th birthday and the opening of a new gallery. It was another glorious day. The Guild demonstrated spinning and weaving and were positioned in front of the ancient castle next to the music tent being variously serenaded by the local ukulele band and a jazz duo while locals sat on the grass with glasses of local bubbly. The Lea Valley demonstrators taught many eager children to weave on the peg loom, a couple of whom were very keen indeed.



Meanwhile, the East Sussex WSD Guild meetings have been well attended this year, whether skill shares or talks and workshops. They have also had several new members come and join the Guild, adding to their vibrant community. They have also celebrated several milestone birthdays this year with long term members reaching 90, and they're still sharing all their skills and experience.

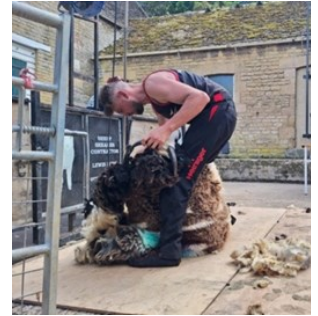
The Guild joined with a local church to make purple poppies (see right) in memory of the contribution made by animals to

both World Wars, for their Victory in Europe celebrations. Their natural dye group has been resurrected to share ideas and best practices leading to an exhibit planned for their Open Day titled '50 shades of yellow!'. The Open Day is in September so the summer will allow lots of experimenting from our gardens. This will also be shared on our website to inspire others to try new techniques and experiments.



Peterborough Guild celebrates its 50th anniversary this year and are planning to make a new banner celebrating their longevity using alpaca that was donated, and then dyed with acid dyes at one of their Guild workshops in 2023. They also have a packed schedule for May and June including an invitation to demonstrate at Peterborough Fair. At their May meeting, members brought in a fantastic array of drop spindles and unusual spinning wheels. They had some wheel maintenance and tips on how to care for spinning wheels which was very useful and helpful, especially as the Tour de Fleece is soon.

In their future planning they have an eco-printing workshop in June, printing leaves and flowers onto silk scarves using copper and iron mordants onto a vinegar-soaked scarf. On the weekend of 14/15 June they will be at Sacrewell Farm for their sheep shearing weekend, demonstrating how wool is processed after being sheared (see photo of Sacrewell Farm right) washing, drying and carding to make it ready to spin and ply for knitting or crochet, or woven, without spinning onto a peg loom or to be turned into felt. They will take wheels and drop spindles and hope to let the public have a turn at drop spindling.



Rampton Spinners is based in Cambridgeshire. As well as spinning together, members run mini-workshops and recently they have learned about silk spinning, double-faced knitting, dyeing with onion skins, wet felting and sprang. In May, they tried mosaic knitting; this activity was great fun and they marvelled at the wonderful shawls



the workshop leader had made using this technique. In the future, they have colour blending and long-draw spinning to look forward to. Amongst their members, several are historical re-enactors who occasionally arrive with a Great Wheel for others to 'have a go'. Two of their members have recently completed the AGWSD Foundation Course in Spinning, with distinction. This year, they reinstated a 'chairman's challenge' with a task to spin and knit socks; each challenger being given 100gms of sock fibre. At their bi-monthly meetings, there are sock surgeries offering each other help and encouragement. They will proudly display their finished items at their December meeting.

The guild is always pleased to be invited to local events with opportunities to keep our crafts in the public eye. Last year, they went to several events: the harvest festival at Ely cathedral; Denny Abbey Heritage Day; and the Fenland Festival in Cottenham. Upcoming over the summer are two fetes where they can demonstrate spinning and chat to the public about our crafts.

Norfolk Countryside Guild held a Guild Gather in March with guests from other Guilds from Norfolk and Suffolk (see below). They offered drop-in workshops on inkle braid weaving, making a small bird feeder with woven willow, needle felting a sheep's head using fleece and locks, and an 'Antiques Roadshow' style button display, where visitors could learn about buttons and how to date them. They also displayed the notebook covers which guild members had made for the AGWSD National Exhibition and invited visitors to bring theirs to add on the day. The room was set up as usual, with a circle of chairs where people sat and worked on their current projects while they chatted and exchanged information. There were also some sales tables which included yarns and fibres, small pieces of equipment, finished items of weaving, knitting and crochet and books. NCG members provided quantities of delicious cakes and snacks and the tea and coffee flowed all day! Everyone was happy to mingle and share their knowledge and enthusiasm about textiles, making it a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding day and they look forward to holding or attending other events with other Guilds in the future.



Andrea Easey, East and South East Area Link

Journal News

The Journal WSD has had a small flurry of Guild reports since last month's newsletter. Thank you! If your Guild would like to contribute, we can work with you to get your account into a suitable format so please don't think that your Guild's event, workshop, visit, skills-share or talk is not worth reporting. If your members enjoyed it, no doubt many others would. Please do consider sharing what is going on in your local Guild. Please remember, there can be several months between writing a piece and its appearing in The Journal because there are only four copy dates each year and it takes time to compile an issue.

As we approach the Association's AGM, the Journal says farewell and thank you to some Journal Editorial Committee members and we shall be formalising the appointments of others who, up till now, have had the status of 'volunteers' rather than JEC members. We don't expect everyone to sign up for a specific role from the start: there's always room for an extra pair of hands – or eyes – and, even before that, the opportunity to see what a JEC meeting is like. Our next one is on Friday 27 June with the option of attending as an observer either via Zoom or in person in London. If you are curious, why not email me to find out more?

Lesley Fidler

JECChair@wsd.org.uk

Summer School update

Arrangements for Summer School in August are continuing in the background. There is still an opportunity to book an extra night before and/or after the event via a link on the AGWSD website (Summer School section). This will finally be taken down at the end of May, to allow for rooms to be allocated appropriately.

You may or may not have heard from your tutor – that is their choice – but, rest assured, they are expecting you!

The Trade Fair is filling up and we have speakers for the evening lectures, so all is looking good.

The Association Needs YOU!

The GPC requires a minute secretary. It is interesting work, and is a fantastic way to learn more about the AGWSD and how it works. If interested, please email secretary@wsd.org.uk.

Event Coordinator update

Thank you to those of you who have volunteered to assist with the organisation of the National Exhibition in 2026. By the time you read this we will have had an initial meeting on Zoom – but we are still looking for more of you to join us: please get in touch with me on events@wsd.org.uk

Likewise, a meeting about the National Conference 2026 will have taken place but we would like more volunteers to help with the organisation of that event too, please.

Contact me as above.

Investigations for a venue for Summer School 2027 have begun – strictly under wraps at present – but watch this space for more information.

Sue Collins
Event Coordinator

50 Years of Ceredigion Guild

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, Janet visited the Ceredigion Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers '50 years and still going strong' celebration exhibition at the National Wool Museum, Wales. Please look at their website, www.wsdceredigion.org.uk for future exhibition venues.



Speakers List Update

Once more we have a new speaker on the list:

Sarah Stacey has been spinning for over 30 years. She runs a small hill farm in south-east Wales with her husband, and they also own Hedgehog Equipment, which sells carding, spinning, and weaving equipment, fleeces, and fibres.

Sarah particularly enjoys taking the whole process of scouring, sorting and carding/combing fleece through to spinning and weaving or knitting with it, possibly blending it with other fibres and/or dyeing it along the way, but she also enjoys making the most of the wide range of hand dyed fibres produced by other fibre artists.

Sarah loves face-to-face teaching, hoping to inspire others and give them the skills to get the most out of their spinning wheel and the fantastic fibres available to create a variety of yarns for all purposes. She offers Guilds a number of really interesting workshop. Based in the Wales & Central England Area, Sarah is highly recommended by the Crickhowell Guild.



Highlight of the month: Pauline Turner

Crochet is a topic not extensively covered through the Speakers' List, but Pauline is a very well-established expert in the field. She is the author of a number of publications, founder and organiser of the long-established International Diploma of Crochet and founding member of the Knitting & Crochet Guild. Pauline has an international reputation, is a member of the Crochet Guild of America and was inducted into their prestigious Hall of fame in 2018. Pauline likes to combine a talk with a workshop covering 1 – 3 days and provides a wide range of topics plus inviting Guilds to suggest their own focus. This allows plenty of scope for either being inspired or getting 'hands on'. Based in Morecambe, Lancashire, Pauline is ideally located within the Northern Area.

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

Demonstration of Weaving, Spinning & Other Textile Crafts

East Sussex Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers
with Brighton & Hove Textile Art Group
Sunday 27th July 11am-3pm
Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Centre

See the tools and techniques used to transform raw wool into beautiful cloth

Annual Exhibition

Shrewsbury Guild of Weavers Spinners and Dyers
9th -14th June, 10am -4pm
at St Mary's Church Shrewsbury, SY1 1DX.

St Mary's is a beautiful and historic church in the town centre where we'll be exhibiting (and selling!) our work. Our friendly members will also be demonstrating weaving and spinning, and visitors are invited to try their hand too. Entrance is free.

More info: shrewburyguild@gmail.com
website: shrewburyspinnersandweavers.weebly.com

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