



NEWS November 2025

From the Chair

Dear Guilds - your Secretary's inbox will be receiving lots of information from the Association in the coming weeks.

Our Conference on 10-12 July 2026 has been confirmed and will incorporate next year's AGM as part of the weekend - one of the changes requested by our member Guilds as follow up to the 2025 AGM. This will be timed so that Conference delegates do not lose the opportunity to hear any of the speakers on the programme and online AGM attendance and postal voting will be in place as usual.

We'll also confirm information about the National Exhibition with the theme of 'A Festival of Flora and Fauna'. This should be a brilliant opportunity for all weavers, spinners and dyers to respond with examples of how our crafts reflect this theme in almost everything we make and do. The open (non-juried) section with bunting pennants as the vehicle for colour and design should be particularly enticing for Guilds to respond to.

Secretaries have already received the notice of paying affiliation fees based on the number of members of each Guild, so please do send your payments through to our Treasurer.

Scoping for the 2027 Summer School has also taken a step further and more details on that will follow next year. So many students at the 2025 Summer School told me what a brilliant time they had with their chosen creative course. If you are interested in shaping the next Summer School, do consider joining the GPC at the next AGM. The only thing you really need is enthusiasm, an appreciation of our crafts and wanting to help others learn more about them. If you want to know more about joining the GPC and what it entails - do contact me, and hopefully I can help with some details.

Andrea Easey

AGWSD Chair (Acting) chair@wsd.org.uk

Foundation Certificate in Natural Dyeing

The Association is now able to launch a Foundation Certificate in Natural Dyeing. This foundation certificate is intended to enable those who are new to natural dyeing and others who wish to gain more skill and understanding in this craft. This is self-directed learning.

The Student Information Pack can be downloaded from the [GIH](#) on the Association website from the end of November. You can also email the co-ordinator foundationdye@wsd.org.uk for more information.

As there are currently only a few mentors available to support this new foundation certificate student numbers will initially be restricted to the first twelve people who register. A waiting list will be created of people interested in registering to undertake this certificate as more mentor spaces become available. The first registered students will start their studies in January 2026.

With many thanks to the volunteers who have kindly given their time in developing the syllabus for this Foundation Certificate, the mentors who have agreed to support students in their studies and the students who have piloted this certificate and provided feedback to support its development.

Chris Knowles

Foundation Certificate Coordinator

National Conference 2026

I am delighted to confirm that we have a volunteer, Kay Johnston, a member of GPC, who is happy to convene the National Conference in 2026, so arrangements will now start to happen in earnest.

Make sure the date is in your diary (10th – 12th July 2026 at the Burleigh Court Hotel, Loughborough) and watch out for further information in due course.

Sue Collins, Events Coordinator

Focus On.....the Northern Area Guilds

As North Area Link, I get to meet up several times a year with members of Guilds in the North of England. Not face to face, that would be impossible as there are over 25 Northern Guilds, however, the next best thing is by Zoom. We chat about what's going on in their area, pass on information from the General Purposes Committee (GPC) about conferences, Exhibitions and Summer schools that the AGWSD runs voluntarily every year.

The AGWSD newsletter is a way of informing you all about what's happening in the weaving, spinning and dyeing world and your Guilds. So here is a resumé from some interesting activities in the North.

Cheshire Guild: They have 40 members in the Guild and have had some interesting workshops over the year. Fiona Nisbett did a spinning clinic covering all aspects of the craft. Julie Hedges ran a split-ply braiding workshop and Jane Dyer's eco-printing on cotton and wool went down well.

Guild members also contributed by talking about Summer Schools they had attended, workshops on thrum knitting and a talk about the history of Kilts and Tartan.

Demos happened at Malpas Yesteryear Rally and Pop -up Wool Show at Port Sunlight. There was a Friendship Day in October and excitingly, two Guild members have been voted onto the GPC and the Journal Editorial Committee.



Craven: Craven celebrated 50 years this year with cake! Friendship and fellowship is important in the spin and chat sessions where members get advice and share skills. There is also the ubiquitous stash busting!

Guild members enjoyed Angharad Thomas showing her collection of traditional gloves from many parts of the world including the Yorkshire Dales. Debbie Davies did a macramé workshop and Freyalyn Close-Hainsworth showed how to long draw spin. Jim Holmes gave a talk on textiles of Southeast Asia. At Masham Sheep Fair in September Craven shared space with Bradford Guild to demonstrate spinning to the public and to raise awareness of Parkinsons UK charity. The Guild, also, had a mention in the local paper, the Craven Herald.

Derbyshire: This Guild is trying to get back up to numbers after covid and have managed this year to attend ploughing matches and WI events at the County show. There was an interesting "Wool Takeover" at Derby Silk Mill, part of Derby Museums with lots of interested visitors enjoying the spinning demos interspersed with robotics and 3D laser printing.



Eden Valley: This Guild has had two exhibitions celebrating the tapestries of member Heather Seddon, who died early last year. Jan Beadle took a workshop on clasped weft weaving and Carrie Hedges was teaching drop spindling. Many talks and workshops continued over the year with outside demos and children's workshops.

Focus On continued

Leek and District: This is a fairly small but growing Guild which has mainly in-house workshops. This year they celebrate 20 years and have given members two main challenges,

- To grow some flax at home, either in a pot or in the ground. Members were given seeds and over the summer the flax has grown. Now most has been retted and should now be drying ready for storage. Next year we plan to process the flax in June and eventually spin and weave into linen thread and cloth. Quite an undertaking but extremely fun.
- The second challenge was to use a “bag of fibre” bits and produce something in December. All the bags contained identical bits and there will be prizes for the winners.

Members have also grown Japanese indigo plants from seed and been dyeing materials with the leaves.

Nalbinding was a craft they tried and for the most part succeeded in. November brings the local Christmas Tree festival where guild members felt, knit, or crochet the decorations. This year’s theme is Christmas Films so the tree will look like “The Chronicles of Narnia” with wardrobe, fur coats, children, the White Witch, Mr Tumnus and Aslan with lots of snowflakes and icicles.

Many thanks to the Guilds who have sent me items to include. I hope you won’t mind me shortening them due to space restrictions. I have tried to give you the names of the professional speakers so that other Guilds may use them. I’m sure the Guilds above will be happy to share their speaker information with you, and many will be on the Association’s speakers list as well.

Ann Martin (North Area Link)

Invitation to a Viewing

You may remember ‘The Linen Issue’ of The Journal (#282, Summer 2022) featured the pioneering ‘Homegrown Homespun’ project – an experiment between Northern England Fibreshed’s founder Justine Aldersey-Williams, Patrick Grant and the British Textile Biennial.

During 2021, with a community of local volunteers, they tested whether disused land in Blackburn could grow flax and woad suitable for the commercial production of jeans by the appropriately named, Community Clothing. Working collaboratively with help from members of Lancs and Lakes Guild, in just 6 months they’d grown, spun, dyed and woven the first piece of indigo linen denim in well over 100 years, reaching the screens of BBC1’s Countryfile viewers, and catalysing numerous other projects.

A newly released film, [Woman Grows Jeans](#) documents the incredible highs and lows involved in producing the U.K.’s first historic pair of homegrown jeans.

“This film is important viewing for anyone who cares about making textiles truly sustainable... Justine’s achievement of growing the UK’s first fully local pair of jeans sketches out a map for where the textile ecosystem must go if we want any chance of a liveable future. And it’s a joyful future too!”

Malú Colorín, Fibreshed Ireland

After being selected by the prestigious UK Green Film Network to be shown across their cinemas nationwide, Justine hopes to share the film, jeans and lessons she’s learnt at Guild meetings next year. Believing the skills of those who’ve preserved our pre-industrial textile crafts to be crucial to a better future, she’s inviting the Chair from each Guild to a free online screening at 8pm on Wednesday 7th January 2026, with after-show Q&A to find out how to host your own event. Use this link to find out more <https://WomanGrowsJeans.com>

Speakers List Update

Guild Challenge

New Forest Guild responded to my challenge, issued last month, to send details of a successful meeting. Here is what they sent:

Rising like a phoenix

The New Forest Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers held an Open Day on November 8th, 2025. Our membership had been waning over time, and our Guild's future was precarious. Our new Chairperson, Kim, put out a call to arms and the response was truly astounding. Former Open Days had been damp squibs, due to lack of interest and poor advertising, so in a blaze of publicity, this year we chose to recreate a mini version of our New Forest Show stand, which had been so successful this summer. The day was a whirl of colour, demonstrations, charts, cakes and creativity in abundance. Our members demonstrated and showcased their many talents to the full. The hall was buzzing, and the public were enthralled. We gained six new members that day, with more to follow. We also had on display our Guild Competition entries, which were judged by the Chairperson of the Dorset Guild and her fellow Member. Their Guild have kindly offered us full support for the future, and our Open Day certainly has put NFGWSD back on the map!

Thank you so much for sharing this. Maybe other Guilds might be inspired to consider the use of an Open Day to stimulate interest in our crafts and skills within their local community – publicity seems to have been a key element in the success of the New Forest Guild's Open Day.

Have any other Guilds had a stand-out meeting involving a speaker from the Speakers List in the past year? Do share.

Biennial Speaker's List Review

In a few weeks' time the Biennial Speaker's List Review will take place. This is an opportunity for Speakers and Workshop Tutors on the list, to update their information. I will also be asking Guilds to send me details of any bookings they have made from the list in the past 12 months. Look out for more details in next month's Speaker's List News

The online Speaker's List is 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: jeckary@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