



## NEWS January 2026

### From The Chair

#### Dear Guilds

We know that transport disruption due to inclement weather often means that Guilds decide not to hold a meeting in the month of January. This is often the time when members find themselves with new equipment that may have been gifted at Christmas, to put together and with which to try new creative work.

This can often mean that the expected moment when a helpful word of advice from a fellow Guild member would have been most welcome, is when they're least available. This is a time when the resources of the Online Guild are called into action. Over the past year the Online Guild has seen a transition away from being led by the brilliant Margaret Parker, to a transition team who are helping the Guild continue with new leadership.

The Online Guild will continue to be a great source of information and project led workshops for individuals who enjoy our crafts but are unable to attend an in-person meeting for various reasons. If you have been a member in the past, do renew your membership as its excellent themed workshops and archive of essential resources will continue to be produced and to be available to members.

Andrea Easey  
Acting Chair, AGWSD

Please feel free to contact me, Andrea Easey, [chair@wsd.org.uk](mailto:chair@wsd.org.uk)

### National Exhibition 2026 update

Information about themes and entries has now been sent out to your guild so ask your Secretary if you haven't seen it yet.

The un-juried section promises to be a delight and we hope that those of you who have made a start are enjoying prepping and planning your bunting flags.

We have already seen some great ideas for designs and are looking forward to seeing what you bring together as a community in your guild for this fun festival display.

### Funding of up to £18,000 available for craftspeople

QEST offers three grants to support makers and conservators at various career stages, strengthening the pipeline of talented craft professionals in the UK. QEST supports contemporary and traditional craft, as well as the exploration of innovative techniques. QEST provides funding for education and training, with Scholarships of up to £18,000, Emerging Maker Grants of up to £10,000, and up to £12,000 towards an apprentice's salary.

Deadline: 18 February, 5pm.

*Applications are open twice a year, the Autumn round will take place 15 Jul – 19 Aug.*

See our [Instagram](#) & [LinkedIn](#) posts to like or share [Access our media folder](#) with suggested images and text

[Visit quest.org.uk/questgrants](http://visit quest.org.uk/questgrants) to apply

## Public Liability Insurance

Thank you to Guilds for returning their affiliation fees for 2026. Your certificate will be emailed to Guild secretaries as soon as payments have been processed. Watch out for it in your inbox.

Insurance queries are a regular feature of my volunteer role as I monitor emails that come into the AGWSD. These are responded to individually and lots of discussion and explanation has taken place at Area Link meetings. We take all queries seriously.

We share the sections of our policy that are relevant to affiliated Guilds rather than the whole policy as the rest of the policy (items such as employer liability, trustee indemnity, etc) applies only to the AGWSD and does not cascade to Guilds.

Our policy covers affiliated members of the AGWSD (i.e. the Guilds). It covers members of the public attending meetings, workshops, lectures, exhibitions run by your Guild members in the name of the Guild (point 98 Miscellaneous Endorsement). The Guild committee must be involved in agreeing to the running of the event and should assure themselves that it is being run properly e.g. a risk assessment has been carried out and is followed. More information about this, including a risk assessment form, can be found on the Guild Information Hub, point 8, Health and Safety Policy and Information link, then by clicking on the Health and Safety Information for Guilds link. The list of specific exclusions is hopefully self-explanatory.

If your guild is a registered charity, can I suggest that your trustees assure themselves that they comply with the legal requirements for insurance cover. A useful overview can be found here [Charities and insurance](#) The link above applies to charities registered in England and Wales and there may be some differences for charities registered with other regulators so please check the relevant website.

- Please note that the reference to "members" in the above extract refers to Guilds NOT individuals.
- Personal equipment is NOT covered by this policy. Individual Guild members should have their own home insurance policy to cover their equipment.
- It is good practice to ask to see a copy of the Public Liability Insurance of the venue that you use for meetings.

Sue White  
Hon Secretary AGWSD

## Focus On....the South and South West

As usual, the Guilds of the South and South West have been busy over recent months exhibiting, demonstrating and teaching our crafts throughout this large area. It is great to hear how successful they have been in attracting new members.



Gloucester, for example, has welcomed several new, younger members and the Guild is trying to ensure that meetings cater for them as well as more established members. The Guild's members have a wide range of abilities and expertise – from those who breed their own sheep and sell the fleeces, to others who grow and harvest flax and are expert spindle spinners, some who maintain the Guild's own dye garden, and those involved with the Guild's weaving group - but the new members have brought an energy and enthusiasm to the group. One of them (Zoe - laces pictured left) used an inkle loom to make laces for her boots. They look fantastic – now everyone wants a pair!

Recent major changes of committee have meant a steep learning curve for new officers. However, this too has injected new energy into the group. They have updated the library lending, membership and equipment loan process – and now can use a Sumup machine to accept card payments.

Programme highlights over the year included a visit from Simon of Flaxland. The room was a mess at the end of the day, but now many people are having a go at growing flax in their gardens. Two alpacas came to visit in April and members were able to purchase some fleece to play with. The Guild also joined the Spin in Public Day at a local garden centre and had a go at fractal dyeing and ice dyeing. The Guild is now looking forward to the coming year with Sophie Holt (pigment dyeing) invited to their January meeting.

## Focus on...continued

Somerset Guild enjoyed a summer outing in August to the local Eko-Alpaka farm (yes – that is the correct spelling!) First, there was a farm walk to inspect the animals and some rarer breeds, then learning about the eco farming methods, and finally a look at the machine that produces high-end knitted garments. Yes there was chance to spin too. In October they had a talk from a local shibori artist and tutor, and in November a talk on conserving and mounting textiles. In January a couple of members will demonstrate machine knitting, and in February, after the AGM, the talk will be on self care - crafting without pain; Somatic tools for spinners and weavers. An illustrated talk about how Somatics may help relieve aches and improve your posture whilst crafting.

Wiltshire Guild's programme year got off to a flying start in September with an 'in person' talk from the wonderful Janet Phillips. Janet brought work to show, as well as giving fascinating insights into her design processes. Thoroughly inspiring! This was followed the next month by a talk from Janet Haigh, who gave a very entertaining and interesting talk on her beautiful embroidery work. Then in November the Guild welcomed Liz Clay, who shared her processes from design through to the finished piece using Nuno felting techniques.

The autumn edition of The Journal contained an article from one of Wiltshire's very talented members, Cathy Plummer, about her natural dye quilt piece. It's a stunning piece of work using almost 100% sustainable materials. Cathy is working to complete the CoA in Natural Dyeing.

Do read the piece and look up the speakers above – all are thoroughly recommended!



Cornwall Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers started 2025 with the sad loss of their Treasurer, Audrey Durrant. Audrey and her husband, Bob, who is Chairman, have been an important part of the Guild for many years and she is greatly missed by all. However, in true Audrey fashion, the Committee and Members stepped up and the Guild has continued to appear at Shows throughout the year.

In March, they spent 2 days at Royal Cornwall Showground with Farm and Country, engaging with 1,600 Primary School children between the ages of 7 -9 year olds. It was a hectic but enjoyable time. The children were eager to see what the Guild members were doing and there were hands-on weaving and braiding activities for them to try.

This was followed by a day at Royal Cornwall Show demonstrating with the Shearers, a day at Merlin Country Fayre, 3 days at West of England Steam Rally at Stithians Show Ground, a day at Penryn Town Fair and a day at Cornwall Heritage Trust's Awenek at Enys House. The Guild offered hands-on weaving, spinning and braiding demonstrations at all the Shows.

Apart from their various travels, this Guild has enjoyed in-house workshops over the year and is now looking forward to a busy, interesting and enjoyable 2026.

Cornwall Penrith Guild is also steadily growing and gaining a presence in the community being at two sites some 10 miles apart. As well as attending two country shows to demonstrate the craft and raise awareness, they have given talks to the local U3A and WI. The Guild has offered several short workshops covering various aspects of our craft, culminating in an excellent day-long workshop from BLOTZ showing the amazing scope of using indigo dye. In December, they had two Christmas parties when everyone brings and shares food. This year they were making Christmas tree decorations from their own hand spun; limited only by their imagination!



Kay Johnston  
Area Link for the South and South West

## Speakers List Update

### Biennial Speaker's List Review

This is currently under way and to date 37 of the 81 Speakers on the list have reviewed/updated their entries. These are clearly shown on both the PDF version of the list and on each entry on the web page version.

In addition, I have contacted every Guild and reading the feedback on how the list is being used has proved fascinating. I am better able to understand the challenges Guilds find when using the list and can start planning ways to improve it. So far, I have only heard from 14 out of 118 Guilds so PLEASE, do let me have your response to my email which went to every Guild Secretary.

### New Speaker: Jean Leader



Jean has been added to the list this month. She is a maker of decorative braids that can be made with little or no equipment. Jean started weaving and making braids over 30 years ago, then discovered bobbin lacemaking and that became her main textile interest for quite a while. In addition to teaching lacemaking, she has written books about lacemaking and has taken an active part in lace organisations in the UK and USA. Jean was a tutor on the AGWSD 2025 Summer School and lives in Glasgow, within the Scottish, Northern Ireland and Others Area.

### Highlight of the Month



If you are looking for a speaker, then do consider **Rita Parniczky**. Rita is a multidisciplinary artist exploring structure through weave, mixed-media, installation and photography, with a concept-driven focus on experimentation and development of different techniques. Her work is both contemporary and innovative and with some amazing outcomes.

### Speaker News



**Helen Leaf**, who is an active ply-splitter, working primarily with baskets and structural forms, and researching traditional techniques, has two **paid-for events** coming up: a 2-day workshop on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, and a talk on the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> April, both near Lutterworth, Leicestershire: <https://www.helenleafdesigns.com/shop/p/workshop-april-22nd-and-23rd-ply-split-braiding-get-started-leicestershire-uk> and <https://www.helenleafdesigns.com/shop/p/evening-talk-ply-split-braiding-from-deep-in-the-desert-to-where-we-are-now-and-everything-in-between>

### And Finally....

The printable version of the Speakers List is now 45 pages long! I would strongly recommend those using the list to access it via the far more manageable webpage. This has an additional advantage of being fully searchable by topic, location, delivery type and much, much more. I know how tricky it can be to find the web page version, so I have now updated the Speakers List page in the GIH with what I hope are very explicit instructions on how to find it. In this day and age of climate change and environmental vulnerability, printing off a 46 page document every month is not a good idea!

To access the Speakers List go to the GIH at <https://wipagwsd.wordpress.com/contents/speakers-list> and follow the instructions. You will need your Guild user name and password. If you have any problems, then please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Matty Smith

[speakerslist@wsd.org.uk](mailto:speakerslist@wsd.org.uk)

## Certificate of Achievement

The AGWSD Certificate of Achievement (CoA) has five areas of study to choose from: spinning, weaving, tapestry weaving, natural dyeing and synthetic dyeing. All five syllabi for the CoA encourage a broad and balanced exploration of techniques for each discipline, completion of which will add a whole range of knowledge and expertise to your practice. These are to be used in conjunction with the Certificate of Achievement Handbook which has been updated for 2026, to include information which clarifies queries made by current students.

The CoA was introduced in 1989, in response to guild members asking for a way of covering the techniques of weaving, spinning and dyeing, with assessment at the conclusion. It is not a taught course; it is self-directed learning.

As an organisation with charitable status, the AGWSD aims to provide affordable educational opportunities for the members of the guilds and therefore registration for the CoA remains at £40, and this lasts for five years. The AGWSD also makes funds available through a bursary application process, to help with the cost of attending a course which will help you as you work towards your CoA.

Please contact the CoA Coordinator for more information before starting your chosen course.

### CoA Assessments 2026

The arrangements for the assessments taking place at the AGWSD Conference in July, at Burleigh Court, Loughborough, are still to be confirmed. If you are intending to put your work forward for assessment this year, please complete the registration for assessment form 2026, pay the registration fee, and I will be in touch about the arrangements in due course. There are three students whose registration for assessment I have received already.

The registration form for the CoA and the registration for assessment 2026 forms have recently been updated. These are on the website [wsd.org.uk](https://wsd.org.uk) and are also available from the coordinator.

Take a look at the CoA Handbook 2026 which can also be found on the website, following the links from the Certificates page. Included are photographs of previous year's assessment exhibitions.

I am sure that all whose work is shown would say, that, when they started their CoA, they knew a bit and finished knowing a lot. You don't know until you try quite what you are capable of doing.

AGWSD Certificate of Achievement Coordinator

[certificate@wsd.org.uk](mailto:certificate@wsd.org.uk)

### Contact Us

If you have an item for inclusion in the next monthly newsletter, please send to: [newsletter@wsd.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:library@wsd.org.uk)