



NEWS February 2026

From The Chair

There's a lot of activity happening in the Association at the moment. Your Secretaries will have been receiving important mailings about the Conference and Exhibition that happen later in the year and notifications of nominations and discussion points for the AGM in July.

If members of Guilds have questions, do ask at your Area Link meetings which are happening at the moment, or drop an email to your Area Link or write to me. If I don't know the answer, I'll happily find out and let you know.

We're also in the process of confirming the location for the 2027 Summer School which will be in Cirencester. We'll be sourcing tutors soon and so if you are a past tutor who would like to return to teach again, do start to think about the type of course you would like to offer. We'll have facilities to run all our usual types of courses so do think creatively.

We'll send out a formal notice of the dates in the coming months, but if you live locally to Cirencester or the wider area, do think about becoming Convenor for this always-popular event. Contact me in the first instance and I can pass your details on to the events team.

With best wishes
Andrea Easey, Acting Chair
chair@wsd.org.uk

Conference 2026 – Threads through Time
- Friday 10th – Sunday 12th July 2026

The wait is nearly over! Full information about Conference 2026 will be with your Guild secretaries in early March, but read on for a first glimpse into what awaits you in Loughborough.

Conference 2026 will take place in Burleigh Court Hotel, a state of the art conference centre, hotel and spa close to the University of Loughborough. Have a look at www.burleigh-court.co.uk. It will be a bit of a change from the usual student accommodation, but it means all the rooms we need will be comfortable, close together and easily accessible.

This area of central England is home to a wealth of textile history, vibrant current practice and, through the university, innovative approaches to addressing sustainability issues – hence the theme: “Threads through Time”.

Speakers will include a representative from the Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders Association to tell us about this local rare breed and its wool. Sue Russell from Peak Gate Textiles is a weaver who has been using her art to explore the history of the nearby Masson Mills, built by Sir Richard Arkwright in 1783. Ruth Singer is a textile artist and educator who has recently produced an exhibition focussing on the work of Mary Linwood, a renowned local embroiderer who lived and worked during the 18th and 19th centuries and Dr Chetna Prajapati is a senior lecturer from the nearby university who is engaged in groundbreaking research to use naturally occurring enzymes in new ways to make textile production less harmful to our environment.

The AGWSD Annual General Meeting will be held on the Saturday afternoon. For those conference attendees who are not Guild delegates and do not wish to attend the AGM, the Graduate Showcase and, from later on, the CoA exhibitions will be available to visit.

We look forward to welcoming you to Loughborough in July.

Kay Johnston,
Convenor, Conference 2026

Journal News

If you are reading this around the end of February or the start of March, your Spring issue of The Journal for Weavers, Spinners and Dyers should be with you very soon or has maybe reached you already. That's assuming, of course, that you have a subscription.

Journal print runs can be more than a thousand copies. We don't have the people to visit the printer's in Dorchester, collect the boxes, put the journals in envelopes, print several hundred mailing labels, stick them on and then deal with getting the postage right, especially for the overseas orders where different destinations have different prices. Fortunately, Henry Ling Limited at the Dorset Press do all this for us efficiently and on time as well providing their reliable, high-quality printing service.

But, it means that timing is crucial. If we don't have your subscription details when we send the mailing information to Lings, then you won't get that issue. It's out of our hands then.

Although it's now too late to start a subscription with the Spring issue (297) if you head over to the AGWSD website at <https://www.wsd.org.uk/product/4-issues-per-year> you will see how to order missing issues as well as set up a subscription.

Happy reading, spinning, weaving and dyeing!

Lesley Fidler
Chair JEC

Wanted: Guild members who would be interested in spinning unusual fibres.

One of our speakers for Conference, Chetna Prajaparti, is a lecturer in the textiles department at Loughborough. Her particular interest is in how biotechnology can help with sustainability, recycling and making various textile processes less environmentally damaging.

She is looking for Guild members who may be interested in working with her to spin recovered fibres (flax, hemp, polypropylene, etc) from their biotechnology process into yarns.

If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact Chetna. Her email address is: c.d.prajaparti@lboro.ac.uk and her phone number is 01509 223026

Kay Johnston
Conference Convenor

AGWSD Certificate of Achievement

I am delighted to say that, following the information in the January AGWSD News, There have been enquiries for information about the Certificate of Achievement (CoA), from as far afield as Australia. Remember, Online Guild members come from all over the world.

The other good news is that there are five CoA assessments planned to take place at the AGWSD Conference, Burleigh Court Hotel, 10th – 12th July. The assessment exhibition should be open to visitors from 4:00pm on the Saturday afternoon. This time the assessments will all be for spinning.

The current Journal, Spring edition, has articles and photos of the wonderful work of two of the CoA assessments students in 2025. There is also an article by Jo Glenn of her Natural Dyeing adventures whilst undertaking the CoA. Do be inspired by them, and never say, 'I couldn't do that'. You don't know until you try.

Janet Crowther, AGWSD CoA coordinator
certificate@wsd.org.uk

Meet the GPC - time to meet two of the three Sues that we have on the committee

I'm Sue Collins and I am the AGWSD Events Coordinator.

Despite knitting for most of my life, with brief interruptions when the rest of life got in the way – and undertaking various other crafts in short bursts – I didn't learn to spin until after I retired. The day job was as a teacher – initially of Maths in secondary schools and, once I went back to work after having a family, as a peripatetic teacher of children with visual impairments. I enjoyed my paid employment (most of the time) but didn't miss it once I'd left – I was much too busy learning to spin and discovering what a sociable activity it can be.

I didn't initially join a guild because the local one clashed with my on-going Welsh lessons. However, the inevitable happened and once Welsh had moved to a more convenient slot in the week, I was able to join. I am now a member of Shrewsbury and Online Guilds and secretary of North Shropshire Guild.

A few years down the line, I have done a little bit of dyeing (both natural and acid) and most recently started weaving. I have an eight-shaft loom and am very much a novice weaver but beginning to enjoy exploring different weave patterns.

I have three Soay sheep and six runner ducks (plus a sphinx cat who likes to attend Zoom



meetings) – so life is never dull!

Sue Collins
Events Coordinator AGWSD



My name is Sue White and I'm 6 months into my new role as a volunteer with the AGWSD as Hon Secretary.

I'm a retired teacher having taught across primary and secondary age ranges. Before retirement I was Head of Learning Support and latterly a specialist teacher for a local authority.

In between all of that I had four children, none of whom are the slightest bit interested in spinning, weaving or dyeing except to gratefully receive gifts of crafted items! Maybe the grandchildren will be. Having knitted from the age of 5, I came to our crafts late in life following retirement. They are addictive. If only I had more time for them.

I started with the AGWSD as a volunteer coordinator for the National Exhibition in 2024 at Hay Castle. I enjoyed it very much and offered to join the GPC. The GPC or General Purposes Council keeps everything afloat. My secretary role – although it's been a steep learning curve and continues to be – is very rewarding. I get to work with a great bunch of supportive GPC colleagues and help make things like the National Exhibition, the Conference, the Summer School and the Certificate courses happen. We are always looking for more volunteers as is our brilliant publication *The Journal*. Please consider joining us if not now at some stage in the future. If it wasn't for willing volunteers none of this would happen.

Sue White
Hon Secretary AGWSD

AGWSD National Exhibition 2026

We are really looking forward to seeing your individual bunting flags!

This is an opportunity for you to create a unique piece of art which tells us about your individual journey of spinning, weaving and/or dyeing. Once these individual flags are put together in bunting (by you as a guild, or by us) the public will wander through a collaborated showcase of the quality of skills we hold, together, in this fun, festival, installation of 'Flora and Fauna'.

Please don't feel pressured to create many flags, if your guild has four or less individual entries, send them in and we will put them together with others.

Exhibition Team

Events and Opportunities

14 days residential Natural Dye and Fibre retreat in Thailand

My name is Elisabeth Viguie Culshaw, I am an online guild member, a Natural dye and Botanical printing teacher and a registered guild speaker, last summer I was one of the teachers at the guild summer school.

I have been travelling to South East Asia for many years to collaborate with dyers and weavers and I visit Northern Thailand yearly to take part in exchanges of skills.

In November 2026 I will offer for the second time a 14 days residential Natural Dye and Fibre retreat in Thailand for a small group of 6 participants. The retreat focuses on introducing the group to, colours, good craftsmanship, sustainable dyeing and learning from local artisans and artists. Indigo features in the retreat. We visit 3 locations and work with some of Elisabeth's personal connections. During the retreat we take part in 7 workshops and work from plant to colour.

<https://thelansdownehouseofstencils.com/2026/01/23/the-colours-of-thailand-discovering-the-colours-and-fibers-of-thailand-tour-19th-nov-3rd-of-dec-2026/>

Norwich City Guild Gathering

On the 8th March we will be delighted to be able to show off our new HQ at the Norwich Unity Hub at Carrow House in Norwich. It's the former home of the works manager of the former Colmans Mustard Factory.

We would like to invite Guild members to join us for a day to talk, exchange skills, attend small workshops - or just bring your latest project and enjoy the surroundings in the Orangery and Garden Room.

Janet Crowther from the Association of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers is speaking to us about the Association and the Certificates from 1pm in the Garden Room.

There will be tea, coffee and cake. Come along and have a sociable day chatting with people with similar interests. It will be £5 for the day from 11am to 4pm.

There is plentiful free parking. Contact Norwichcitywsd@gmail.com for directions and details

The Worstead Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers - Fleece & Equipment Sale - Saturday 7th March 2026, 10:00 - 14:00

The Weavers Workshop,
The Street, Dilham, NR28 9PT.

Fleeces: Including Castlemilk Moorit, Border Leicester, Kerry Hills, Alpaca.
Equipment: Including an assortment of good condition spinning wheels, a lovely French Parlour wheel, two four shaft table looms and weaving sundries.

Colours for Change

AO Textiles warmly invites you to our latest exhibition, celebrating colour, craft, and how local ecologies can shape contemporary textile practice.

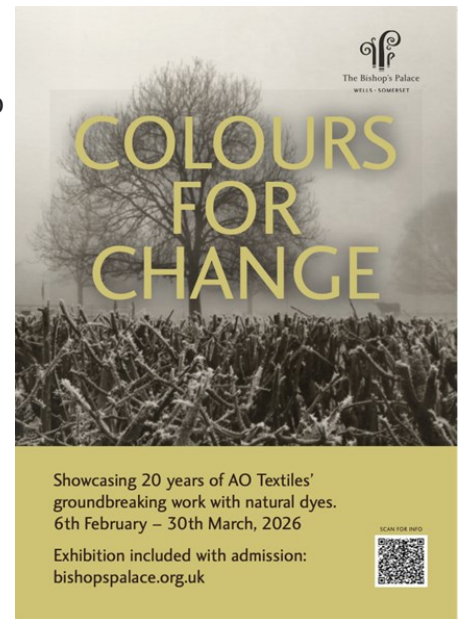
AO Textiles is pioneering a new approach to colour for the 21st century. This exhibition showcases AO Textiles' groundbreaking work with natural dyes, linking traditional practices with contemporary production to

create local, circular textile systems rooted in environmental responsibility. This exhibition highlights how our work in Somerset and particularly with the Bishop's Palace Garden has provided a living 'research lab' where sustainably foraged bio-waste from trees becomes a source of vibrant, locally inspired colour.

As part of your visit, there is an opportunity to explore the Bishop's Palace Gardens, giving you the chance to see some of the plants and trees that informed many of the colours and materials on display.

We hope to welcome you soon,
AO Textiles

www.aotextiles.com



Speakers List Update

The 2026 Speakers List review has now been completed. Every speaker has reviewed their entry; some have made significant changes whilst others have changed very little. A few speakers have taken the opportunity to remove themselves from the list. There are now 71 Speakers on the List.

This year, every Guild was also approached to provide a summary of speakers from the list they had used over the past two years as well as feedback on how they used the list. To date only 16 Guilds have replied, but some common challenges have emerged: the difficulties faced by small guilds who do not have the funds to pay for speakers or workshop tutors; the high cost of speaker travel expenses and difficulties in accessing the list.

The first two issues are longstanding. Guilds combining to secure the services of a speaker for a shared event plus utilising virtual talks and workshops are both tried and tested ways to overcome these barriers.

The revised access information, now available on the GIH, should ensure that every Guild can find BOTH the PDF version and the webpage list. Please be aware that the PDF version of the list has been updated again – it seems to be changing month by month!



Highlight of the Month: Alison Ellen

Alison has had a small business designing and making hand knitwear since 1980s. She approaches knitting as a way of constructing a fabric and building garments, usually made all in one piece without sewn seams. Having trained in textile design at UCA Farnham, her designs are led by the use of materials and stitches, but she aims to create pieces that are a pleasure to wear using simple but interesting construction. Some of her inspiration comes from the natural world, as well as studying ethnic costume and dress, and how shapes work on the body. She dyes her yarns to produce patterning, such as tie-and dip-dyeing, as well as a rich range of colours. Alison shares her ideas through lectures, teaching, and books, which explore her individual approach to knitting technique and design. She has found that many experienced knitters don't have confidence in designing, and she aims to communicate a deep understanding of the way that knitted stitches work to encourage confidence in experimenting and designing. Her latest book 'Shaping knitting' was published by Crowood Press in 2023. Alison's website is <https://www.alisonellenhandknits.co.uk/> and she offers both talks and workshops. Alison is based in Surrey.

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