



NEWS April 2026

From The Chair

Dear Guild Members - as May approaches, there's just time to get your Conference places booked by 7 May. It promises to be an inspiring three days with talks on sustainability, the Leicester Longwool rare breed, historic weaving, embroidery and framework knitting. All in the setting of a 4* hotel with excellent catering and leisure facilities if you fancy a break from the programme.

This might be during the AGM if you are not a delegate, or after viewing the work of our Certificate of Achievement candidates and the Jennie Parry Graduate Showcase. It will be a Conference to remember - so do book a place.

Every member of every guild should already have details of how to book their place - opportunities to attend activities organised by the Association are all part of the affiliation fee that each guild member pays to their own guild each year.

I'm really looking forward to the Conference in July and hope that you will be there too.
With best wishes - Andrea

Andrea Easey
AGWSD Chair (Acting)

chair@wsd.org.uk

AGWSD National Exhibition 2026

A Festival of Flora and Fauna

1st and 29th October 2026

Rose Patterson Gallery
Weston Park
Weston-under-Lizard
Shifnal TF11 8LE

The weather is brightening, giving us lots of inspiration!

We are looking forward to seeing your entries for the exhibition selection. We understand it can be quite confusing with lots of forms to complete so just a reminder:

- For selected item entry please complete form 1 and give this to your guild secretary with photos and sample piece
- Guild secretaries please complete form 2 and send all forms and items to the address on form 2
- If you would like to be considered for the Lylie Smart Trophy please complete the 'yes/no' section at the bottom of form 1

We will remind you of forms 3-5 in the Summer Happy making!

The Exhibition Team
exhibition@wsd.org.uk

The 2026 conference
'THREADS THROUGH TIME'
is to be held from 10th to 12th July 2026
At the Burleigh Court Hotel, University of Loughborough Campus
All details are available on the website www.wsd.org.uk or through your guild secretary.

Book your place before 7th May

Introducing the Speakers for the AGWSD Conference 2026

Claire Powell – Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders Association

Claire not only looks after her own flock of these rare breed sheep, but she also enjoys spinning, dyeing and weaving their fleeces. She will talk to us about the origins of the Leicester Longwool sheep and the joys and challenges of owning a small flock of them. She will also tell us of her own textile practice and how this is affected by her love for these sheep.

Sue Russell – Peak Gate Textiles

Sue defines herself as a weaver, teacher and witch! She has always crafted, but pursued a different career until she saw the tapestries at Stirling Castle and knew she had to learn to weave. She will talk about how she has been using weaving as a method of exploring the history of Masson Mills and how that has influenced her textile practice.

Ruth Singer

Ruth is an award winning artist with a background in museum education which has influenced her textile practice. She has written a number of books about sewing and women who sewed, exploring heritage and culture from a non-traditional angle. Ruth has recently produced an exhibition in Leicester about Mary Linwood, a talented embroiderer of the 1800's who stitched replicas of famous paintings.

Susan Russell

A retired lawyer, Susan is an enthusiastic volunteer and trustee of the Framework Knitters Museum, Ruddington. She will talk to us about this fascinating history of this local textile tradition and of the very difficult lives of those who were involved in this industry.

Professor Amanda Briggs-Goode

Amanda is Director of the Fashion and Textile Research Centre at Nottingham Trent University. Amanda has a special interest in the heritage and conservation of Nottingham Lace and has worked with the NTU lace archive since 2006. She has some interesting stories to tell us about this local industry and its global influence.

Dr Chetna Prajapati

Chetna is a Senior Lecturer in Textiles at Loughborough University. Her research explores the application of enzymes (biocatalysts) produced by microorganisms such as fungi as creative design tools to produce textile dyes, surface pattern textiles, and deconstruct textile fibres to create new and interesting materials.

Kay Johnston

AGWSD Conference Convenor

conference@wsd.org.uk

Living Heritage UK – Inventory of Intangible Heritage

Many thanks to all of you who responded so promptly to my request for consent. I know there was confusion around what exactly the Inventory was so I have printed an explanation here which formed my report to the recent GPC (General Purposes Committee) meeting.

In 2024, the UK signed up to the UNESCO 2023 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Intangible Cultural Heritage or Living Heritage is any cultural heritage that is lived and practiced. Broadly, traditions and social practices such as folk lore, performance, customs and crafts.

The UK has undertaken to compile an inventory of Living Heritage as a base for being able to safeguard such practices as may need help to continue in the future.

The first step in this process was to gain an understanding of what was being practiced where. It was suggested by Living Heritage UK that an Association such as the AGWSD was best placed to represent all practitioners of our crafts. Other groups have put in expressions of interest, specifically around distinct regional differences, such as Welsh blankets for instance. However, at this stage a broader overview of the crafts of hand spinning, weaving, and dyeing was deemed sufficient.

Our next step was to gain the consent of all practitioners of these crafts in the UK. There was no way that this was going to be feasible, so I undertook to approach every secretary of our affiliated guilds.

Out of the 115 guilds on our mailing list, I had 61 replies. Of these, seven were asking for more information and even though clarification was given, they did not come back to me.

Most guild secretaries approached either their committees, or their membership and came back to me with a group decision. A few sent out my email to their members and left it to the individual to reply.

All the responses I received were positive and most thanked the AGWSD for taking the lead in this matter. I therefore decided that we had reached a positive majority and sent in the application.

The application form was thorough, but each subject box allowed for only 200 words. The form covered the history of the crafts, the how, when and where of current practice and how we saw the future viability of the crafts.

I simply did not have the space to go into every variation of fibre and technique or different equipment used. At this stage I see our submission as a place marker for the crafts of spinning, weaving, and dyeing and am hopeful that in the future Living Heritage UK will make it possible to record all the many regional specialties and different processes and fibres that we all work with.

Lorna Shannon
AGWSD Vice Chair (Acting)

Some ideas for providing a successful demonstration

Over the years visiting various events it has come to my notice that some guilds do not always think carefully enough about the layout they use when demonstrating.

I realise that there are often constraints such as space or serious drafts due to being by an open door etc. but when setting-up consideration needs to be given as to what we are doing at an event. Are we there to just to meet our friends or are we there to promote the guild? Do we want to attract new members and show off our wonderful skills or just get that project finished? If it is just for a chat then set up another day for the guild to meet don't do it when out promoting the guild.

If we are demonstrating to the public and are there to raise the profile of our guild then consideration needs to be given as to how to do this to the best of our abilities. In many cases less is more. Serious thought needs to go in to how much space there is available; how we can use that space to the best advantage and where we can put the bags and general packaging that is needed for our wheels or our looms. Can we spread past the designated boundaries without causing problems with blocking public thoroughfares?

Here are some recommendations that I think work.

- Take it in turns to demonstrate possibly only have only one wheel. Use a guild fleece so it's not someone's precious fluff. Inkle looms and table looms look good demonstrating. Set up a warp that can be played on, not a precious silk wedding shawl.
- Have someone standing to explain what is happening so the demonstrator can carry on demonstrating.
- If space allows, make a ring of wheels facing out so that people can move around and the spare fluff, carders etc. can be stacked or displayed in a basket in the middle where they can't be trodden on.
- Have a space designated for teaching. Guild wheel, spindles, weaving card with a warp on, etc. Children love to have a go and that draws parents in.
- Place a table against a wall if you have one and do not sit behind it but stand and be accessible to explain what the items on display are and how they were made.
- Do not stack items as though in a jumble sale but put a few good items out and then restock if selling. If possible sort out beforehand what you are going to display so you can set up quickly when you get there.
- Make sure you have the table covered to the floor so you can put packaging and personal items under it out of sight. Double bed sheets work well for this but consider the colour. Black shows dyed items up better than white, but consider what you are displaying. Fold the corners of your table cover using 'hospital corners' (ask an older guild member) to make it a box not just a tablecloth. A few safety pins are always helpful.
- The items we display are precious so make sure they are pinned down as most of us do not have security guards watching for the items that get popped into a bag while you are distracted, explaining how things were made.
- When you have set up, go to the other side of the walkway and see if the space looks inviting or if it looks cluttered and 'cheap'. Can you move round the space easily or is there only room for one person at a time to get to see the goods on display?

Finally, if you are selling items from the stall, please make sure that someone is always at the till. It's a good idea for the guild to have its own card reader, payments can then go straight into the guild account and a percentage taken for funds before being handed out. Keep a note book, or if you're really organised, a stock list next to the cash box and make sure everyone knows to record all sales. Getting members to label their own items with price, details and their name will make this easier. The quicker the customer can walk away with their precious item and the quicker your next customer can get to the stall.

Just think through every part of it and enjoy bringing new people into our wonderful craft.

Andrew Johnson
AGWSD President

Speakers List Update



A new speaker has been added to the list.

Joanne Lamp is an Irish artist based in London whose practice centres on woven textiles and sculptural vessels, often incorporating traditional basketry techniques to create one-off works that evoke the cycles and seasons of the natural world. With fifteen years of experience in textile design, she brings a deep understanding of material, structure and process to her work, which is rooted in a close connection to landscape, ecology and the handcrafted. Joanne offers Guilds a range of talks and workshops, both in person and virtually.

Highlight of the Month: Becks of Tiny Fibre Studio

Becks began spinning in 2011 and quickly built up a sizeable stash of mismatched single skeins. She now focuses on being more purposeful about the yarn she produces, usually spinning specifically for a project... or at least a type of project... unless she's spinning samples for her next workshop! An educator by trade with a background in film and television, Becks combined her professional experience and love of fibre arts in 2017 with the launch of her YouTube channel, Tiny Fibre Studio. There she shares the projects she's working on and provides instructional content for other spinners. She also teaches in-person and online spinning classes.



Details of both speakers can be found in the online or PDF versions of the Speakers List. 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: 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