# Early History of the Dorset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers

On 4 July 1947 a meeting was convened by Mrs Pass to discuss the formation of an organisation for weavers, spinners and dyers in Dorset. It took place in her home at Wootton Fitzpaine.

Miss Hester Vinney, one of those at this first meeting, gave a short address on the aims of such an organisation should it come into being.

They were:

- To bring weavers, spinners and dyers together for mutual aid and discussion
- To promote a high standard of hand work in these crafts in the county of Dorset
- To organise classes of instruction throughout the county
- To collect and make available for the members' use all information useful to their craft
- To organise such meetings etc as seem to the members to be helpful to them in their work

After some discussion it was agreed that: -

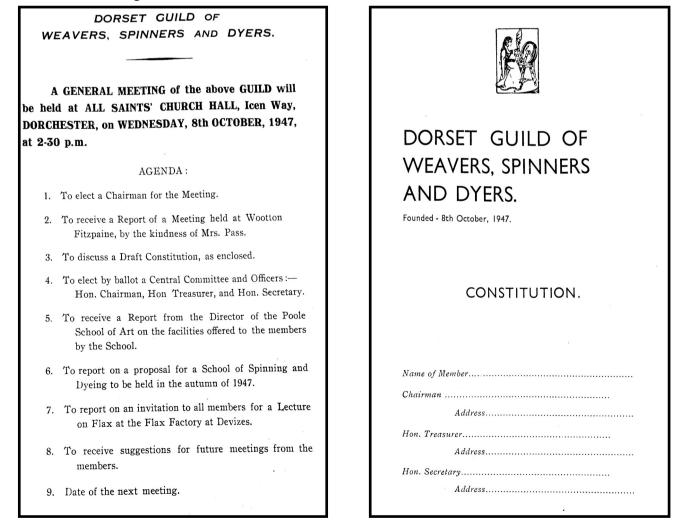
- 1 A Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers for Dorset would be formed
- 2 That the minimum subscription for the year should be 5/- (25p)
- 3 That a general meeting be held in Dorchester on Wednesday 8 October 1947

# First General Meeting on Wednesday 8 October 1947

held at All Saints Church Hall, Icen Way, Dorchester at 2.30pm

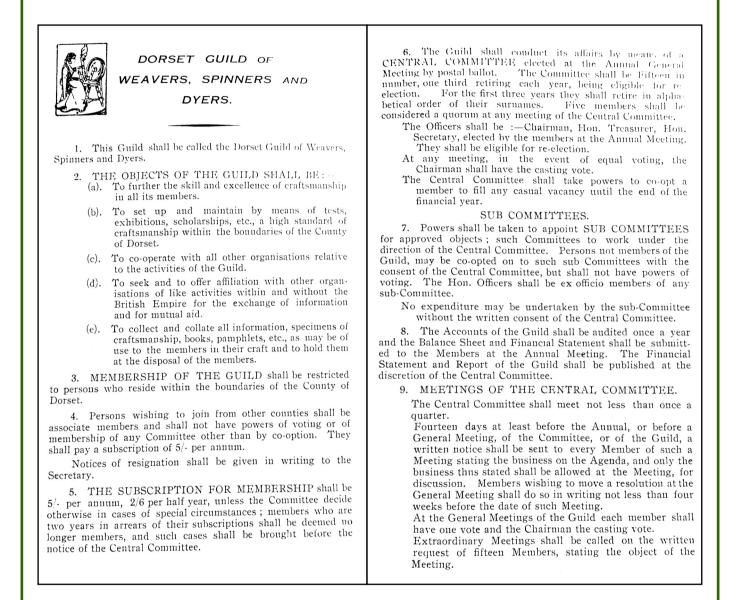
This was the **official date** of the formation of the Dorset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers (DGWSD).

At this first meeting twelve members were elected onto the Central Committee and the Constitution was agreed.



At this first General Meeting twelve members were elected onto the Central Committee and the Constitution was agreed.

Two pages of the first Constitution stating the Objects of the Guild, Sub Committees and Meetings of the Central Committee are shown below.



Even at this early stage in the formation of the Guild, contact had been made with the Director of the Poole School of Art to ascertain what facilities could be offered to the members by the school.

A school for spinning and dyeing was to be held in the autumn term and an invitation had been received for all members to a lecture on flax at the Flax Factory in Devizes.

It is through the enthusiasm of these early members that the DGWSD became so successful and encouraged the formation of other Guilds in the country, many of which became affiliated to the Dorset branch. In addition, affiliation schemes were set up for guilds in other countries, one in particular being the Seattle Guild of Weavers.

## First Meeting of the Central Committee

The first meeting of the Central Committee was held on Wednesday 19 November 1947 at 2.30pm in the Art Department of Dorchester Secondary Modern School.

At this meeting there was a report on the first Spinning and Dyeing Course which took place for a week in November. See the report in the local paper.

presented The treasurer the first very income and expenditure sheet for the first few months and recorded a membership of 59 members. Subscription for a year being 5/-(5 shillings which is 25p) and 2/6 (2 shillings and 6 pence, which is  $12\frac{1}{2}p$ ) for half a year.

### See balance sheet below

# ANCIENT CRAFTS REVIVED

# Spinning And **Dyeing** Course At Dorchester

MANY visitors have been at-tracted to the Art Depart-ment of Dorchester Secondary Modern School to examine the work of over 30 students who have been taking part in a course of instruction in spinning and dye-ing. The course was organised by the Dorset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, under the County Education Committee and Poole School of Art, with the object of giving educational help to people interested in these ancient crafts.

Saturday was the last day of the school, for which students came from all parts of Dorset, as well as from outside the county. With qualified members of the Dorset Guild acting as instructors, students were first taught to use primitive spindles originally worked by desert Bedouin women in Egyptian times. They then learnt to ply wool for knitting yarns on wheels, followed by instruction on dyeing with vegetable dyes by Miss E. Champ, from Swanage. GREAT SUCCESS

Miss H. Viney, hon. secretary of the Guild, told the "Echo" that the school, the first of its kind in the county since the war, had been a great success. Nearly 30 students had been target students had been taught to spin and dye and even those who had that five accidents occurred in the had previous experience in the area last month.

crafts left the school with a wider knowledge.

All the students worked from material-sheep fleece-for raw which educational permits were granted.

The students included two members of the Secondary School staff and two senior girls, all of whom made good progress during the week. Pupils at the school were among visitors to the course and they, in common with the other visitors, watched with fascination the nimble fingers of the spinners as they worked amid the faint hum of the spinning wheels. On display were skeins of knitting wool in bright and pastel colours, all the work of the students.

The Dorset Guild is open to and non-residents county, and residents of the county, and mem-bers are doing their utmost to revive interest in the useful and fascinating crafts of spinning, weaving and dyeing, the products of which are invaluable in these days of coupons.

### Bridport

BRANCH OFFICE.—The "Dorset Daily Echo's" resident representa-tive in West Dorset is Mr. J. R. Hall, whose office address is c/o Messrs. Hine and Son, The East-street Library, 12, East-street, Brid-port. port.

ROAD ACCIDENTS. November meeting ROAD ACCIDENTS. — At the November meeting of Bridport, Lyme Regis and District Road Safety Committee it was reported the

DORSET GUILD CF WEAVERS, SPINNERS & DYERS	
Balance Sheet from	6/7.7~ 30/4-1947
Receipts	Expuditure
57 Jubscriptions 2 57 = = 12.15.0 2	Printing Ribber Stauger & Pads 15.3
2 - 4 - (-4) = 0.0	The Western gazette 1/9 12
Voudhou	- 2 notices for Press The 12 all Saints. Itall 10
	Postage etc. 2. 3. 1
£ 16.3.0	1 8. 19.10
Balance \$. 7. 3. 2	Besonch 24654/10th Cartina He.
	G. Coates
	30/4-47

The next General Meeting was planned for 3 December 1947 in All Saints Hall, High East Street, where it was hired for 10/6 (ten shillings and 6 pence, which is 521/2p). All Saints Church closed in November 1970 and is now a store used by Dorset County Museum.

# Events in 1948

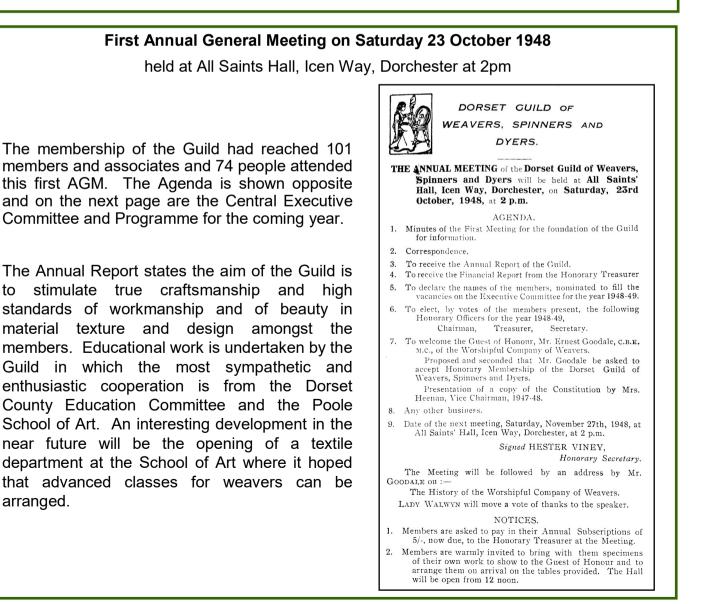
Meetings continued throughout 1948 with the membership increasing steadily. In May the membership reached 85 of whom 12 were associate members (members who lived outside the county of Dorset).

There were various courses and exhibitions during the summer months. In particular the Weaving course at Wareham Secondary Modern School during the Easter holidays.

The highlights of the summer were the two events in August - The Dorset Arts and Crafts Exhibition at Canford, and the Melpash Show. The exhibition from the Guild had been designed to show the whole process of the crafts from the raw materials with each stage of the processes being demonstrated. The members had cooperated with such enthusiasm and were rewarded with a Silver Cup for the best class exhibit. There had been three foot-looms at work and the spinning section had shown the work on the drop spindle and on the wheels with the complete process from carding through to spinning and plying. There was also a good exhibit of yarns dyed with vegetable dyes showing the beauty of the natural colours.

This exhibition was repeated at the Melpash Show. The Guild's work was again the centre of attention: it was reported that the crowds assembled all day long around the looms and wheels.

The committee thanked all its members for such a well planned and executed exhibition that brought so much honour and recognition for the Guild.



to

## ANNUAL REPORT.



DORSET GUILD OF WEAVERS, SPINNERS AND DYERS.

THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 1947-48. MR. A. H. ANDREWS. Principal, The Poole School of Art, Poole. COMMANDER H. T. ANDREW R.N. (Retd)., Holman's Farm, Ilminster. Hon. Chairman. MRS. BARRATT, Knapp Cottage, Corscombe, Dorchester. Acting Tutor to the Craft Schools. MRS. COATES, Way-a-Long, Charmouth, Dorset. Hon. Treasurer. MISS CHAMP, Stonehaven, Hillsea Road, Swanage. Acting Tutor to the Craft Schools. MRS. CHURCHILL, Muston Manor, Dorchester. Chairman, Exhibition sub Committee. MR. ROLF GARDINER, Springfield, Fontnell Magua, Shaftesbury. Expert on Linen. MISS GORDON, British Red Cross Offices, Dorchester. Recreational occupation for disabled. MRS. HEENAN, Old Lime Kiln, Shipton Gorge, Bridport. Vice Chairman. MRS. IRWIN, Silver Bridge, Chideock, Dorset. Exhibition sub committee. MISS PEARCE, Homestead, Morecombelake, Dorset. Advisory member, Exhibition sub committee. MRS. RADWELL, Old Mill House, Sturminster Newton. Weaver. MISS VINCENT, 44, Icen Way, Dorchester. Head Teacher, Dorchester Modern Secondary School. MISS HESTER VINEY, Barton, Oldfeld, Swanage. Hon. Secretary. LADY WALWYN, Lower Wraxall House, Dorchester.

Exhibition sub committee.

### November 27th. Saturday. 2 p.m. Members' Meeting (see Agenda), when plans for the next Arts and Crafts Exhibition will be discussed and the sub committees appointed. February, 1949. A School of Dyeing at Bridport. Members are asked to collect walnut husks and to leave them steeped in water until the school; also to collect lichens of all varieties, which should be stored dry. These are needed for dyeing the yarns. Easter Holidays. A Weaving School at Dorchester, with special instruction for teachers on simple looms suitable for the children. There will be sections for advanced weavers and beginners, etc. Shearing Picnic at Washingpool Farm, Bridport, by the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. White, Possibly in May. Wool Sorting Demonstration by the Chief Wool Sorter, Mr. Nelson Fowler, of Messrs. Prior, Chichester, in the Bridport area in June. It is hoped to arrange for a class in Textile Printing in the Spring. In August the Guild will again take part in the Dorset Arts and Crafts Exhibition at Canford. All members are asked to make their contribution. The Guild was awarded the Silver Cup in 1948. October. A Spinning School for instruction on spinning of wool, flax and cotton. It is hoped, in the Sherborne area. CONFERENCE OF TEACHERS FOR THE DORSET COUNTY SCHOOLS. If the teachers wish, it can be arranged to have a conference in some convenient place and at a time suitable to them, to discuss with them how the Guild can best serve the interests of the schools and help the children in their craft work. The Honorary Secretary will welcome suggestions from the teachers. FOR SALE. Messrs. Dryads Ltd., St. Nicolas Street, Leicester, have for sale a leaflet called "Wool sorting for the hand spinners" by Mr. Peter Prior. Apply to the firm direct. Good, reliable, well made spinning wheels, carders, distaffs, spinning hooks for wheels, wool skeiners, can now be ordered as required. Details from the Honorary Secretary. An invitation is enclosed for each member, who so desires, to bring a guest to the Annual Meeting on the 23rd October, 1948.

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS 1948-1949.

The Affiliation Scheme has brought the Guild into friendly contact with guilds in Newfoundland, Seattle USA, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Fez and New Zealand as well as many guilds in the United Kingdom.

The Guild wishes to have a friendly contact with all who are interested in the three crafts and to extend to all craftsmen and women visiting the County the famous Dorset welcome

'Come along and you shall vind That Do'set men don't shaeme their kind'.

William Barnes (Dorset Poet)

Text taken for the Annual Report from the Guild's Archived Material at the Dorchester History Centre.

# Liaison with other Guilds

During 1951 there were two meetings with members from other guilds to discuss the suggestion of an inter-guild quarterly journal with standard articles on all three crafts of weaving, spinning and dyeing. The support for the journal had been enthusiastic and it was hoped to be launched in early 1952.

The affiliation scheme set up by the Dorset Guild was the forerunner to the Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers which was founded in 1955 with the Dorset Guild being a founder member of the Association.