

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.

DORSET GUILD OF WEAVERS, SPINNERS AND DYERS.

A GENERAL MEETING of the above GUILD will be held at ALL SAINTS' CHURCH HALL, Icen Way, DORCHESTER, on WEDNESDAY, 8th OCTOBER, 1947, at 2-30 p.m.

AGENDA :

1. To elect a Chairman for the Meeting.
2. To receive a Report of a Meeting held at Wootton Fitzpaine, by the kindness of Mrs. Pass.
3. To discuss a Draft Constitution, as enclosed.
4. To elect by ballot a Central Committee and Officers:—
Hon. Chairman, Hon Treasurer, and Hon. Secretary.
5. To receive a Report from the Director of the Poole School of Art on the facilities offered to the members by the School.
6. To report on a proposal for a School of Spinning and Dyeing to be held in the autumn of 1947.
7. To report on an invitation to all members for a Lecture on Flax at the Flax Factory at Devizes.
8. To receive suggestions for future meetings from the members.
9. Date of the next meeting.



DORSET GUILD OF WEAVERS, SPINNERS AND DYERS.

Founded - 8th October, 1947.

CONSTITUTION.

Name of Member.....

Chairman

Address.....

Hon. Treasurer.....

Address.....

Hon. Secretary.....

Address.....

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.



**DORSET GUILD OF
WEAVERS, SPINNERS AND
DYERS.**

1. This Guild shall be called the Dorset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers.
2. THE OBJECTS OF THE GUILD SHALL BE:—
 - (a). To further the skill and excellence of craftsmanship in all its members.
 - (b). To set up and maintain by means of tests, exhibitions, scholarships, etc., a high standard of craftsmanship within the boundaries of the County of Dorset.
 - (c). To co-operate with all other organisations relative to the activities of the Guild.
 - (d). To seek and to offer affiliation with other organisations of like activities within and without the British Empire for the exchange of information and for mutual aid.
 - (e). To collect and collate all information, specimens of craftsmanship, books, pamphlets, etc., as may be of use to the members in their craft and to hold them at the disposal of the members.
3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GUILD shall be restricted to persons who reside within the boundaries of the County of Dorset.
4. Persons wishing to join from other counties shall be associate members and shall not have powers of voting or of membership of any Committee other than by co-option. They shall pay a subscription of 5/- per annum.
Notices of resignation shall be given in writing to the Secretary.
5. THE SUBSCRIPTION FOR MEMBERSHIP shall be 5/- per annum, 2/6 per half year, unless the Committee decide otherwise in cases of special circumstances; members who are two years in arrears of their subscriptions shall be deemed no longer members, and such cases shall be brought before the notice of the Central Committee.

6. The Guild shall conduct its affairs by means of a CENTRAL COMMITTEE elected at the Annual General Meeting by postal ballot. The Committee shall be Fifteen in number, one third retiring each year, being eligible for re-election. For the first three years they shall retire in alphabetical order of their surnames. Five members shall be considered a quorum at any meeting of the Central Committee.

The Officers shall be :—Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, elected by the members at the Annual Meeting. They shall be eligible for re-election.

At any meeting, in the event of equal voting, the Chairman shall have the casting vote.

The Central Committee shall take powers to co-opt a member to fill any casual vacancy until the end of the financial year.

SUB COMMITTEES.

7. Powers shall be taken to appoint SUB COMMITTEES for approved objects; such Committees to work under the direction of the Central Committee. Persons not members of the Guild, may be co-opted on to such sub Committees with the consent of the Central Committee, but shall not have powers of voting. The Hon. Officers shall be ex officio members of any sub-Committee.

No expenditure may be undertaken by the sub-Committee without the written consent of the Central Committee.

8. The Accounts of the Guild shall be audited once a year and the Balance Sheet and Financial Statement shall be submitted to the Members at the Annual Meeting. The Financial Statement and Report of the Guild shall be published at the discretion of the Central Committee.

9. MEETINGS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

The Central Committee shall meet not less than once a quarter.

Fourteen days at least before the Annual, or before a General Meeting, of the Committee, or of the Guild, a written notice shall be sent to every Member of such a Meeting stating the business on the Agenda, and only the business thus stated shall be allowed at the Meeting, for discussion. Members wishing to move a resolution at the General Meeting shall do so in writing not less than four weeks before the date of such Meeting.

At the General Meetings of the Guild each member shall have one vote and the Chairman the casting vote.

Extraordinary Meetings shall be called on the written request of fifteen Members, stating the object of the Meeting.

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.

The treasurer presented the very first 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 12½p) for half a year.

See balance sheet below

ANCIENT CRAFTS REVIVED Spinning And Dyeing Course At Dorchester

MANY visitors have been attracted to the Art Department 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 dyeing. 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 taught to spin and dye and even those who had had previous experience in the

crafts left the school with a wider knowledge.

All the students worked from raw material—sheep fleece—for 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 residents and non-residents of the county, and members 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 representative 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, Bridport.

ROAD ACCIDENTS.—At the November meeting of Bridport, Lyme Regis and District Road Safety Committee it was reported that five accidents occurred in the area last month.

DORSET GUILD OF WEAVERS, SPINNERS & DYERS	
<i>Balance Sheet from 6/7 to 30/11-1947</i>	
<i>Receipts</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
57 Subscriptions @ 5/- = £ 12.15.0	Printing £ 4. 7. 6
2 " " @ 2/6 = 5.0	Ribbon stamps & Pads 15.3
Donation 3.3.0	The Western Gazette 1/4 12.-
	2 notices for Press 1/10 12.-
	All Saints Hall 10.-
	Postage etc. 2. 3. 1
£ 16. 3. 0	£ 8. 19. 10
Balance £ 7. 3. 2	<i>Balance</i> <i>Receipts</i> <i>Expenditure</i> <i>Net Profit</i> <i>£ 7. 3. 2</i>
	<i>G. Coates</i> <i>30/11-47</i>

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 52½p). 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.

First Annual General Meeting on Saturday 23 October 1948

held at All Saints Hall, Icen Way, Dorchester at 2pm

The membership of the Guild had reached 101 members and associates and 74 people attended this first AGM. The Agenda is shown opposite and on the next page are the Central Executive Committee and Programme for the coming year.

The Annual Report states the aim of the Guild is to stimulate true craftsmanship and high standards of workmanship and of beauty in material texture and design amongst the members. Educational work is undertaken by the Guild in which the most sympathetic and enthusiastic cooperation is from the Dorset County Education Committee and the Poole School of Art. An interesting development in the near future will be the opening of a textile department at the School of Art where it hoped that advanced classes for weavers can be arranged.



DORSET GUILD OF WEAVERS, SPINNERS AND DYERS.

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the Dorset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers will be held at All Saints' Hall, Icen Way, Dorchester, on Saturday, 23rd October, 1948, at 2 p.m.

AGENDA.

1. Minutes of the First Meeting for the foundation of the Guild for information.
2. Correspondence.
3. To receive the Annual Report of the Guild.
4. To receive the Financial Report from the Honorary Treasurer.
5. To declare the names of the members, nominated to fill the vacancies on the Executive Committee for the year 1948-49.
6. To elect, by votes of the members present, the following Honorary Officers for the year 1948-49,
Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary.
7. To welcome the Guest of Honour, Mr. Ernest Goodale, C.B.E. M.C., of the Worshipful Company of Weavers.
Proposed and seconded that Mr. Goodale be asked to accept Honorary Membership of the Dorset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers.
Presentation of a copy of the Constitution by Mrs. Heenan, Vice Chairman, 1947-48.
8. Any other business.
9. Date of the next meeting, Saturday, November 27th, 1948, at All Saints' Hall, Icen Way, Dorchester, at 2 p.m.

Signed HESTER VINEY,
Honorary Secretary.

The Meeting will be followed by an address by Mr. GOODALE on :-

The History of the Worshipful Company of Weavers.
LADY WALWYN will move a vote of thanks to the speaker.

NOTICES.

1. Members are asked to pay in their Annual Subscriptions of 5/-, now due, to the Honorary Treasurer at the Meeting.
2. Members are warmly invited to bring with them specimens of their own work to show to the Guest of Honour and to arrange them on arrival on the tables provided. The Hall will be open from 12 noon.

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, Oldfield, Swanage.
Hon. Secretary.
- LADY WALWYN, Lower Wraxall House, Dorchester.
Exhibition sub committee.

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS 1948-1949.

- 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.

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.