

August Blog

It was another lively, inspirational and motivational get together at the DGWSD on Saturday 30th August. The focus was on raising funds for the Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance Service, slices of donated cakes flew off the plates, 100 raffle tickets were sold and the members benefited from being able to purchase the contents of the late Catherine Parr's craft room, all proceeds going to the nominated charity. The total amount raised was nearly £400.

Catherine was a former member of the Guild and an extraordinarily talented tapestry weaver.

She has left approximately 20 large tapestries to the Guild, an important legacy that the Guild hopes to exhibit in the future.

Several tapestries were on display at the meeting, an inspiring reminder of the skills of this member.



On the left - One of Catherine's tapestries which was created in 1993.

She designed and made one each year.

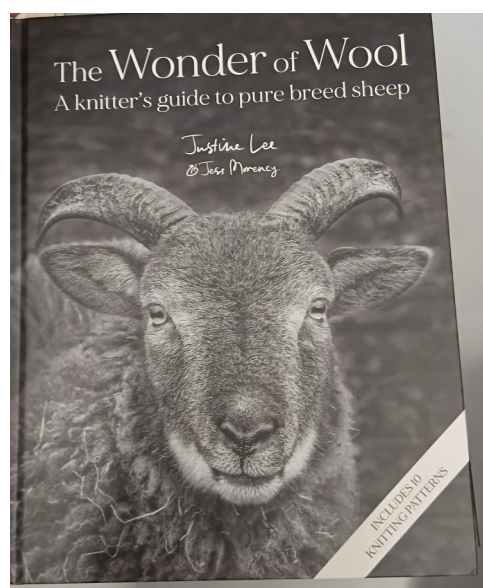
Talk by Justine Lee and Jess Morency

Jess and Justine



Although the meeting was mainly informal, the two authors of a new book on fleece – more on that later – came along to talk about their own inspirations. Jess Morency is a feature writer, novelist and staunch supporter of artisan crafts. She is based in Dorset and has previously written an article about our Guild for the Dorset Magazine. Whilst searching for a “heritage cardigan” she came into contact with Justine Lee.

Justine is a knitwear designer, previously focusing on cashmere production and processing. As part of her work she started to investigate the British wool industry, in an attempt to source homegrown fibre as wonderful as cashmere. She found that on any commercial scale wool quality was generally ignored and sheep farmers were having to sell their fleeces to the Wool Board at less than the cost of shearing.



Justine started on a project to identify the qualities of all 62 native breeds of sheep – finding the farmers preserving these breeds, purchasing fleeces, learning to spin, knitting up the results and charting how to make best use of their individual characteristics.

Together, Justine and Jess, have now produced a definitive book listing 30 native breeds, the characteristics of their fleeces, tips for spinners and knitters, and where to source these heritage wools. They have also added ten inspiring patterns, including one knitted up by our former member, Caitlin Atkinson .



Not unsurprisingly, an unruly queue formed very quickly to purchase copies of this excellent book (its sold out on Amazon!). The way its laid out, the photography, the sketches, and the information provided, are an invaluable resource for users of wool. How many members spent Saturday evening curled up on the sofa with a cup of tea (or something stronger) totally engrossed in all it has to offer?

As an extension to the initial project, Justine has been working with native breed producers and inner city farms (who often have healthy flocks of native breed sheep) to find ways of having their fleeces processed at a commercial cost, helping to preserve our wool heritage. **Definitely two ladies we take our – woollen – hats off to!**