



DORSET GUILD OF WEAVERS, SPINNERS AND DYERS

Established 1947

Registered Charity Number 1200685

Competitions, Trophies and Awards

Competitions have always had an important dual role within the Guild, they not only encourage members to produce items of work for entry into them, but also provide an inspiration for other members as examples of what can be achieved.

The Guild has for many years had a number of trophies and awards that have been generously donated, usually in memory of a past member and competed for on an annual basis, some of which also had a cash prize. Sadly, the number of entries for these competitions has dwindled and due to the Covid outbreak in 2020 it was not possible to hold any competitions again until 2022. The financial situation at that time only allowed cash prizes to be given where specific donations had been made to the Guild in addition to a trophy, such as the Norah Whittaker-Hall Memorial Prize and the Rendell Trophy. However, with the generous donation from the Anita Furzey estate a decision was made in 2023 to make all the Guild competitions more attractive with cash prizes and modern trophies for those competitions where none existed.

In memory of, and appreciation of, Anita Furzey it was decided in 2023 to call the tapestry competition the "Anita Furzey Award for Tapestry" with a modern trophy reflecting the concept of tapestry.

In 2023/24 a full review of the awards was undertaken to clarify the details for each competition including their history. Jocelyn Banks had previously reviewed the competitions, and this served as the basis for the 2023/4 review.

All competitions are held annually, and all members are entitled to enter, except for the winner of the Harold Woodrow Trophy which is for members who have not previously won a Guild competition and the Norah Whittaker-Hall Memorial Prize where the previous trophy winner is not entitled to enter the competition in the year following.

In 2023 it was decided that, due to the expense, the trophies would not be engraved with the winners' names, the 2023/24 review upheld this decision. Whilst there was a book recording the names of prize winners, unfortunately it was incomplete, and it was decided that a register of winners should be made available online with a printed copy also available.

A recent innovation has been to ask all trophy winners from the previous twelve months to create a display of their winning items and trophies at the November AGM meeting. This will not only show the range of work undertaken by members during the year, but hopefully will encourage members, especially new members, to take part in the Guild's competitions.

All competition winners are asked to return the trophies at the meeting immediately prior to the competition being held, except for the Rendell Trophy which will form part of the AGM display.

The meetings at which competitions are to be held will appear on the year's programme, some competitions will be held at the same monthly meeting each year, but to match the meeting's topic and speaker with specialist competitions, it may be necessary for some competitions to be moved accordingly.

Whilst the Guild is known as the Dorset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, it was agreed in 2023 that, with the increase of popularity of felting, it should be included as one of our core skills and admissible for inclusion in competitions such as the Woodrow Trophy and the Rendell trophy. In 2026 a Felting trophy was introduced. The decision to include felting as a core skill was a local decision and not at the time nationally accepted, care should be taken to check details of schedules for all competitions, especially those that take place outside of the Dorset Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers.

Tim Parker 2026



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History and Competition Details for individual trophies

The Guild Challenge

The History

The Guild Challenge is not an annual competition but has been held a number of times when it was considered to be appropriate. The last time this was held was in 2018 when Wessex Woolcraft sponsored the challenge and provided the raw materials and also undertook the judging. Sadly, Wessex Woolcraft appear to have ceased trading since this, and the challenge has not taken place again.

Competition Details

The Challenge would be set so that members could use their own interpretation of a statement or idea using any of the Guild's core skills or skills or art techniques not normally used in Guild competitions. Each Challenge could vary these conditions to suit the sponsorship.

Award

There is no trophy for this Challenge and if it is reintroduced the prize money would have to be decided by the committee and/or sponsor.

Judging

This would be either judged by the sponsor or by popular vote.

Judging Criteria

To be decided upon by the committee or sponsor.

The Harold Woodrow Trophy

The History

Originally called the "Woodrow Novice Competition", Harold and Joy Woodrow were active members of the Guild in the 1980s and 90s. Harold instigated this award as he said that the same people kept winning the awards and therefore this was a competition for members who had never won a Guild prize. With his approval the word "novice" was dropped to encourage more entries and not put off more experienced members. Harold was able to turn his hand to most skills. In 2020 the late Peg Polglaze donated 2 bronze figures, one of these is awarded as a runner-up prize for this competition. The first record of this competition being held was in 2006 but may have taken place before this date.



Competition Details

This competition is open to all members who have not previously won a Guild award so If you have won a prize (first or second) in any one of our competitions in the past, then this disqualifies you entering the Woodrow competition. It is for any item using the skills of spinning, weaving, dyeing or felting. All items must clearly state the skills to be judged, fibre content and if commercial yarn has been used.

Award

1st prize – The Harold Woodrow Trophy with a cash prize of £50

Runner-up – A "Peg Polglaze" bronze and a cash prize of £30

Judging

As this is a competition of mixed skills, the Guild's committee will be asked to undertake the judging. Should a member of the committee wish to enter a piece of work, they will be asked to stand down from the judging panel.

Judging Criteria

There is no theme for this competition, but all entries should be judged on their excellence of the Guild's skills. Knitted or crocheted items must be worked in hand spun yarn or hand dyed yarn and the quality of the spinning or dyeing and suitability for the item should be judged and not the knitting or crochet skills.

Norah Whittaker-Hall Memorial Prize

The History

John and Norah Whittaker-Hall were professional weavers known for their beautiful scarves and tray cloths. In the 1990s Norah became the President of our Guild. After Norah's death, John donated a trophy and £1000 with instructions on investing it to provide an annual return of £80 to be used as prize money, £50 for the first prize and £30 for the runner up. Initially John wanted the competition to reflect the work that Norah was known for and specified that the competition should be for a woven tray cloth, however as this type of item had fallen out of favour, after discussion the committee of the time decided that the competition should alternate between an item of table linen and a scarf. In recent years this was again amended to any item woven on a heddle loom. An additional stipulation he made was that the winner could not enter the competition the following year.

The first record of this competition taking place is 1996.



Competition Details

This competition has normally been held before the summer to coincide with a meeting where weaving is the main topic and the speaker can be asked to take part in the judging of the competition. As the member who was placed first in the previous year's competition cannot enter, they should be invited to take an active role in the judging, this was introduced in 2023.

Any item that has been woven by a member on a heddle loom can be entered into the competition, this includes a length of woven fabric, rug, woven wall hanging but not items where tapestry techniques have been used.

All items must clearly state the fibre content and whether commercial or hand spun yarn has been used. Also, if it is an original or adapted design and in the case of a length of fabric, what its finished use it will be. Whilst any background information regarding the item is always welcome, this is not an essential part of the competition and will not be considered in the judging.

Award

1st prize – The Norah Whittaker-Hall Memorial Prize trophy with a cash prize of £50.

Runner-up – a cash prize of £30.

Judging

Assuming this competition is held where the speaker is a competent weaver, they will be asked to judge the items together with the previous guild member who won the competition. If the speaker is not agreeable to this or it is not within their scope, a competent weaver from an adjacent Guild or organisation could be asked to undertake the judging as it would be unfair on the previous year's winner to solely judge fellow members' work.

Judging Criteria

All entries should be judged on the excellence of their weaving, this should include suitability of the yarns used and the design.

The Anita Furzey Award for Tapestry Weaving

The History

With an increase in the interest of tapestry weaving a new competition was introduced in 2023, to distinguish it from the Norah Whittaker Hall loom weaving competition.

Initially there was no dedication or trophy for the competition but following the bequest from the estate of Anita Furzey in 2023 the committee at the time felt it would be a fitting way to show our appreciation of her generous bequest

by purchasing a trophy and dedicating this competition in her name. It was understood that she was a keen tapestry weaver. The first record of this competition being held was in 2023.



Competition Details

This competition is open to all members. The item of tapestry submitted for the competition may be worked using any tapestry weaving technique with no limitation of weaving materials. The item should be suitably mounted in a manner to which it will eventually be displayed. It should be appropriately labelled with a title for the piece and state if it is an original design or based on an existing piece of artwork ie a photograph.

Award

1st prize – The Anita Furzey Trophy, with a cash prize of £50

Runner-up – a cash prize of £30

Judging

As this competition is normally held at the same time as the Norah Whittaker Hall competition, the judges for that competition will also be asked to undertake the judging of the tapestry competition. If this is not possible an independent judge from an adjacent Guild or organisation could be asked to undertake this task.

Judging Criteria

As tapestry weaving is an art form, this competition should be judged not only for its excellence of weaving but also for the artistic flair. Due consideration should be given to whether the item is an original design or if it is based on existing artwork and to the mounting of the item for the way in which it will be eventually displayed.

The Fortescue Award

The History

This competition, originally known as “The Fortescue Fleece” was in memory of Olivia Pass, herself a co-founder member of our Guild and author of “Dorset Feather Stitchery” published in 1957 which still remains the standard work on this topic. Mrs Fortescue, Olivia Pass’ mother, was a successful breeder of Jacob sheep and donated a fleece each year to the Guild to be used as the prize in a competition for a one ounce skein of hand spun wool. Mrs Fortescue continued breeding Jacob sheep into her nineties and after her death a cash prize of £5 was given to enable the winner to purchase a fleece of their choice.

Competition Details

It is not clear when this competition was introduced but has been held for many years. When it was necessary for spinners to work from the fleece rather than prepared tops, the competition called for a one ounce skein of hand spun wool, stating for what purpose it was intended. As the use of commercially prepared tops is being increasingly used by hand spinners in addition to a wide range of other fibres being available, it was decided in 2023 to amend and extend the competition into two sections. The original competition, which now requires a 25 gram skein of hand spun wool, prepared and spun from the fleece, and a new competition for a 25 gram skein of yarn, hand spun from commercially prepared tops or other fibres. The skeins for both competitions should be labelled with details of the breed of sheep or fibre that has been used and the purpose the skein will be used for.

Award

Prior to 2023 there was no trophy for this competition, only the Jacob fleece or cash award. With the update of this competition it was also decided that a trophy for each section would be purchased and awarded.

- A) The “skein of wool from the fleece” – Ewe with Twin Lambs, a cold bronze sculpture from the Frith collection by Veronica Ballan mounted on an oak base with a cash prize of £50

Runner-up – a cash prize of £30

- B) The “skein of yarn from commercially prepared tops or fibre” – miniature upright silver spinning wheel, hallmarked for London 1975, mounted on an oak base with a clear domed cover and a cash prize of £50

Runner-up – a cash prize of £30



Judging

Assuming the speaker for this meeting is well versed in spinning, they will be asked to judge both competitions. If the speaker is not agreeable to this or it is not within their scope, a competent spinner from an adjacent Guild could be asked to undertake the judging.

Judging Criteria

All entries should be judged on the excellence of the spinning and suitability for the stated use of the yarn.

Brenda Deakin Memorial Trophy

The History

Brenda Deakin was a member of the Dorset Guild for many years and upon her death in 2000 her husband donated a trophy. As she was a keen spinner and knitter he asked that the trophy should be used in connection with a competition for a hand knitted or crocheted item using hand spun yarn.

The competition

The theme of this competition has not changed. An item that has been knitted or crocheted by the member using their own hand spun yarn is eligible for submission, it should be accompanied with details of the yarn and whether the knitting or crocheting was from a commercial pattern, adapted or original design.



Award

1st prize – The Brenda Deakin Memorial Trophy with a cash prize of £50

Runner-up – a cash prize of £30

Judging

As this competition involves the skills of spinning and knitting/crocheting, it has often been held at the same meeting as the Fortescue competition takes place and is judged by the same person. If this is not possible, a judge from an adjacent Guild or organisation could be asked to undertake the task.

Judging Criteria

The quality of the spinning and suitability of the yarn for the item should be considered in conjunction with the skills of knitting and/or crocheting and whether a commercial pattern, adapted design or original design had been used.

The Gail Coldham Prize for any hand-dyed item

History

This is a new prize awarded for the first time in 2025. It is in memory of Gail Coldham, a treasurer to the Guild, who sadly died in August 2024.

The trophy, which has been made by Nicky Footer, takes the form of a mounted coiled basket using wool dyed by Gail.



Competition Details

Any item dyed using natural or acid dyes is eligible for submission. This may be simply a skein of yarn or an item created from a piece of dyed fabric or yarn. Stitched Shibori is also acceptable.

Award

1st prize – The Gail Coldham Trophy and a cash prize of £50

Runner-up – a cash prize of £30

Judging

Assuming the speaker for the meeting when this trophy is awarded is well versed in dyeing, they will be asked to judge the competition. If the speaker is not agreeable to this or it is not within their scope, a competent dyer from an adjacent Guild could be asked to undertake the judging.

Judging Criteria

All entries should be judged on the excellence of the dyeing.

The Rendell Trophy

The History

Miss Rendell was very active in the early years of our Guild and gave £50 many years ago as a prize fund to the Guild. Sadly, there are no records available to say exactly what the competition was originally for, although the annual prize appears to have been £5

Whilst John Whittaker-Hall was discussing the purchase of a cup for the Norah Whittaker-Hall competition with Susan Blencowe in the early 1990s, she remarked that there was no cup for the Rendell Competition. As a result of this conversation, he later bought another cup which became The Rendell Trophy. The cash prize of £5 continued for some years and the competition became one for any item of clothing, made by and worn by the member in a light-hearted fashion parade-style competition.

The first record of The Rendell Trophy being awarded was 1995 but the £5 prize money may have been awarded before this.



Competition Details

The competition is now traditionally held after the AGM at the November meeting and continues to take the form of a light-hearted fashion parade. Any item that may be worn and has been made by a member using the core skills of our Guild (weaving, spinning, dyeing or felting) may be entered. Items that have been knitted or crocheted must be made from yarn that has been hand-spun by the member. The person modelling the item, not necessarily the member who made it, will be given a number and will parade fashion show style before the members.

As this is a light-hearted event, any member who has produced a garment that is outside the Guild's core skills, may join the fashion parade, but without a number and will not be eligible for consideration when voting takes place.

Each item should be accompanied by a script which can be read out by the compere to give full details of how it was made, the materials used and if it is an original design, adapted or modified design or made using a commercial pattern.

Award

The member with the most votes will be presented with The Rendell Trophy and a cash prize of £50
Runner-up – a cash prize of £30

Judging

This is a "members' choice" competition so those members attending the AGM will be invited to put the number of the item they most admire on a secret voting slip, these will be collected and counted by a committee member. Each member will have one vote.

In the event of a tie for first place, both entries will be treated as winners, each receiving a cash prize of £40 and asked to share the trophy. In the unlikely event that more than two entries receive the same number of votes, the Chairperson will be asked to make a casting vote. Only the number of the winner will be announced.

Judging Criteria

As this is a members' vote, there is no criteria for judging but they should be encouraged to consider the degree of difficulty and skills used in each item.

Judging

Assuming the speaker for the meeting when this trophy is awarded is well versed in felting, they will be asked to judge the competition. If the speaker is not agreeable to this or it is not within their scope, a competent felter from an adjacent Guild could be asked to undertake the judging.

Judging Criteria

All entries should be judged on the excellence of the felting.

The Felting Trophy

The History

Wet felting is one of the oldest textile techniques, originating over 7,000 years ago in Central Asia and evolving from a practical survival skill into a global craft. Wet felting predates weaving and knitting, making it one of the earliest forms of human-made fabric.

Industrial needle felting was developed in the 19th century and it was only in the 1980s that small scale craft needle felting emerged.



As a Guild, we now have members who enjoy feltmaking and have developed their skills to a high level in this field. We have also found that whenever we have a presence at external events, feltmaking is of great interest to the public. Adding feltmaking to our list of core skills in 2026 can only add to the amazing knowledge base of our members old and new going forward.

The Competition

The theme of this competition is an item, either decorative or practical, which has been made using the wet felting technique, needle-felting technique or a combination of the two.

Each submission should state the techniques used, a materials list and the inspiration for the piece.

Award

1st prize – The Felting Trophy with a cash prize of £50

Runner-up – a cash prize of £30

Judging

Assuming the speaker for the meeting when this trophy is awarded is well versed in felting, they will be asked to judge the competition. If the speaker is not agreeable to this or it is not within their scope, a competent felter from an adjacent Guild could be asked to undertake the judging.

Judging Criteria

All entries should be judged on the excellence of the felting.