

Advice: Handicrafts Section, Autumn 2026

Your entries don't need to be perfect. Don't be afraid, just 'have a go'!
The more entries the better the show.

Adapted from Cheshire Federation of WIs and 'On with the Show: An NFWI Handbook for Exhibitors, Judges and Show Committees'

- The purpose of these tips is to help those exhibitors who want to know more and not to discourage entries.
- Check that your entries comply with all the requirements mentioned in the schedule.
- Please don't hesitate to ask the Show Secretary if there is anything that you don't understand.
breamgardeningsociety@gmail.com
- Key features and techniques in your exhibit may be highlighted on your exhibitor card.
- **Space allowed: 50cm x 50cm, height unrestricted.**

Exhibits may be folded or stacked to fit within the space allowed but will be unfolded for judging.

- Signed work is permitted but you may be asked to cover your signature.
- Identifying features (e.g. your initials) should not be incorporated into your design.
- Handicraft items **must not** have been **exhibited at any previous BGS Show**.

Design

- All items should be safe and fit for purpose.
- **Toys and clothing for babies and children** must meet specific **safety requirements**.
Contact the Show Secretary for further information. breamgardeningsociety@gmail.com
- All items should be pleasing to look at. Consideration will be made of shape, scale, proportion, balance, colour and texture.
- Practical items should be pleasing to handle and use.
- Originality will be rewarded.

Materials

- All materials should be appropriate for the design and intended purpose.
- Items of hard craft should be properly conditioned.

Techniques

- The quality of the workmanship is the most important judging criteria.
- Where the reverse side of a piece is visible, the **neatness and quality of workmanship on the back will also be examined**. (For example, the reverse side of an unframed cross-stitch piece.)
- Difficult techniques will garner additional credit. Items incorporating a variety of techniques may also receive additional credit.

Finish and presentation

- All items should be clean and neatly presented.
- Many **soft crafts** should be finished by **dampening, blocking and pressing** etc. However, they should not be over-handled and their **original texture should be maintained**. For more information on the finishing of specific soft crafts, contact the Show Secretary or consult the handbook referenced above.
- There should be no adhesive visible on the top surface of any crafted item.
- In general, **mounts and frames** may be used, but these should be **modest** and not dominate your work. Please contact the Show Secretary if you wish to check the suitability of your frame.
- Items, such as bags, may be **lightly stuffed** to emphasise their shape.
- **Small props** may be used but these shouldn't overwhelm or distract from your crafted item. If in any doubt about the suitability of your props, please contact the Show Secretary.

Craft-specific advice

- '*On with the Show: An NFWI Handbook for Exhibitors, Judges and Show Committees*' provides some great advice for exhibiting many different crafts. However, there may be some slight differences from the class instructions provided in our Show Schedule - the **BGS Autumn Show Schedule** and our **advice notes** below **should always take precedence**.
- For further advice on the judging criteria for specific crafts, please contact the Show Secretary.

Art or Craft on a Theme: Hundred Acre Wood

- Made using any soft, craft, papercraft, hard craft, woodcraft, drawing, painting or other art technique(s).
- For advice on the judging criteria for specific arts and crafts, please see the notes below, consult '*On with the Show: An NFWI Handbook for Exhibitors, Judges and Show Committees*' or contact the Show Secretary.
- A strong connection to the theme 'Hundred Acre Wood' is important.

Soft craft

- **Needlecrafts, fabric crafts, and/or yarn crafts**. See below for specific examples.
- **Fabric painting** may be entered as soft-craft or artwork at the exhibitor's discretion. **Note: this is not in accordance with WI advice!**
- **Toys and clothing for babies and young children** must meet specific **safety requirements**. They should not include long ribbons, cords, drawstrings or similar. Fastenings and embellishments should be very firmly attached. They should not have an open knit structure that would allow small fingers to become trapped. Facial features, paws etc. must be stitched in place, not glued; no glass or plastic eyes, wires, squeakers etc. All materials and stuffing used should be washable.

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- Your piece of soft craft may be 'standalone' or incorporated within another item of craft. Your entry may be mounted and/ or framed but not glazed.
- For advice on the judging criteria for specific soft crafts, please see the notes below, consult '*On with the Show: An NFWI Handbook for Exhibitors, Judges and Show Committees*' or contact the Show Secretary.

Yarn Craft:

- Crochet, felting, knitting, lacemaking, macramé, pom-poms, rug making, spinning, tatting, weaving, etc.
- Find the best combination of tension, needle/hook size, yarn type, and ply to generate a fabric suitable for the intended use. A small trial piece may help.
- It's useful to indicate on your exhibitor card whether the item is hand- or machine-knitted, or if hand-spun or special yarns have been used (e.g. mohair, alpaca, silk).
- Using a variety of stitches, more complex stitches or techniques, a range of carefully chosen colours, or an original design may attract more marks.
- Keep stitches the same size and maintain an even tension to create the desired texture.
- Do not join yarns in the centre of the work, try to keep joins in less conspicuous places.
- The ends of yarn and threads should be invisibly worked into the item and neatly trimmed off.
- Seams and joins are very important. Match patterns from the right sides of finished pieces. Try to keep seams and joins flexible and not bulky.
- For stitching seams and sewing on buttons etc. use the same yarn that the item is made from if possible, dividing it into strands if necessary.
- Pressing should be avoided as it removes the natural 'bounce' of the yarn. Blocking and dampening individual pieces, then allowing them to dry, will usually achieve a good result.
- A finished, unframed piece of lace should appear very similar on both sides.
- If two or more items are intended to match, then width, length and pattern should be the same for all.

Knitting: Aran

- Any hand-knitted garment inspired by the textured knitting patterns of the Aran Islands.
- Your exhibit should include highly textured stitches such as cables, diamonds, honeycombs, moss, and braided patterns. Modern variations on these stitches and designs are allowed.
- Your pattern should generate a 3D effect that enhances warmth and durability.
- Aran knits were traditionally made from unsoured wool for additional water repellency; however, your exhibit may be made from soured wool or a modern yarn blend.
- Although traditionally knitted flat and sewn together, your exhibit may be knitted in the round.
- Other techniques, such as crochet edgings or surface embroidery, may be incorporated but this must be noted on your exhibitor card and should not predominate.

Crochet: Slippers

- Crocheted slippers, slipper socks or slipper boots to fit an adult, child or toy.
- Other techniques, such as knitted ribs or surface embroidery, may be incorporated but this must be noted on your exhibitor card.
- Any sole reinforcements should be hardwearing and securely attached.

Needlecraft:

- Bead embroidery, blackwork, canvaswork, counted thread work, crewel work, cross-stitch, goldwork, hand- & machine-embroidery, ribbon embroidery, smocking, stumpwork, whitework etc.
- Choose suitable canvas or fabric and appropriate threads. Threads should be chosen so that stitches fill the holes in the canvas or fabric and give a smooth texture.
- A variety of threads and stitches adds interest.
- Stitches should be evenly spaced and of the same length.
- In **cross stitch**, all lower diagonals of the stitches should lie in the same direction, and all upper diagonals in the opposite direction.
- Loose ends and trailing threads visible through the fabric and should be avoided. Where the reverse side of a piece is visible, both front and back must be neatly finished.
- In **hand embroidery**, more credit will be given for a range of stitches expertly carried out.
- In **machine embroidery**, care must be taken not to cause puckering of the fabric. In free machine embroidery the fabric must be securely fixed in the hoop or outlines will not be accurate.
- If the finished piece is to be framed, it must be pinned out and stretched before framing so the warp and weft of the fabric lie parallel to the sides of the frame. Using a mount will prevent stitches being flattened when framing. Be sure the glass is clean on both sides.

Fabric crafts:

- Appliqué, block printing on fabric, cushion making, doll & toymaking, dressmaking, patchwork, quilting, screen printing on fabric, silk painting, tailoring etc.
- The weight, pattern and other properties of the fabric(s) chosen should be appropriate for the design, scale and intended use of the finished item.
- Fabric colours and patterns should work well together.
- Unless an intentional feature of your design, take note of the grain, nap and pattern direction when cutting and sewing your fabric.
- Pay attention to openings and fastenings at the design stage. Fastenings should be well placed, neatly inserted and functional.
- Darts, pleats, gathers and tucks etc. should be evenly placed.
- Collars, cuffs, pockets and sleeves should be neatly inserted and look well balanced.
- Seams should have an appropriate allowance, and be neatly stitched and pressed. Be careful to avoid creating hem or seam impressions when ironing.
- Make sure all tacking threads and pins are removed before showing.
- Cushion covers should be a close fit without creases but should be easily removable. Also check if extra padding is needed in the corners to avoid 'ears'.
- Wires and plastic or glass eyes etc. may be used for stuffed toys and dolls but not if they are intended for young children. Stuffing should be lightweight, evenly distributed and not lumpy. The pile of fur fabric should not be cut, and if trapped in seams during sewing it should be carefully teased out.
- Dolls' clothes should be easily removable, and made and finished to dressmaking standards.

Fabric craft: Building Blocks

- An item of appliqué, pathwork, and/or quilting. You may combine different techniques within a single piece.
- Your exhibit may be decorated with embroidery and other trims, such as ribbons and beads, but these should not predominate.
- For traditional **appliqué**, the raw edges should be turned under smoothly with consistent stitches.

Where stitches are meant to be inconspicuous, the thread should blend with the appliqué piece.

Hand appliquéd stitches should be small and invisible unless used as a decorative element.

Machine appliquéd stitches should be even and close together with no raw edge of appliqué showing beyond the machine stitching. (Unless an intentional design feature.)

Identical pieces should be consistent in size and shape.

No shadow or appliqué seam allowance should show against the background.

- **Patchwork** requires good design and accurate cutting.

Hand- and/or machine-stitching is acceptable.

Patchwork sewing threads should blend with the fabrics. Stitches should be even with suitable tension.

Take care over the alignment of all joins, points and corners.

Large areas of lined patchwork should be knotted or quilted.

Patchwork panels may be finished with piped, turned-in or bound edges. Alternatively, panels may be incorporated within another item of craft or stretched and mounted as a picture.

- When **quilting**, any wadding should be appropriate for the intended use and have a balanced distribution.

Quilting stitches may blend or contrast with the fabrics but should always enhance the design. Stitches should be neat and even with suitable tension.

Hanging mechanisms for large quilts should be considered at the design stage.

Denim transformation challenge

- Any item made from one or more items of preworn denim. The original preworn denim item(s) should be listed on your exhibitor card.
- Made using any hand-stitched or machine-stitched technique. An overlocker may be used. You may combine different techniques within a single piece.
- Some additional items of haberdashery and/or small pieces of other types of fabric may be added but the original garment(s) should form the basis of your entry.

Papercraft

- Papercraft techniques include book folding, decoupage, origami, paper engineering, parchment craft, quilling, etc.
- Other techniques and materials may be incorporated but the basis of your design should be crafted from paper.
- Papier-mâché should generally be entered as 'papercraft' unless it is combined with other 'hard craft' techniques.

- Always check that the materials and colours you use are suitable for your piece – don't use paper to make a greetings card for example.
- Any creases in card or paper pieces forming part of the design should be crisp. Origami paper can be creased by finger pressure, but a bone folder or other specialist tool is recommended for other work.
- Any paper or card items with glued edges should be checked to make sure no glue is visible along the edges or elsewhere.
- Visible sticky pads are not acceptable in 3D decoupage. Birds and animals are not usually varnished.
- For advice on the judging criteria for specific papercrafts, please consult *'On with the Show: An NFWI Handbook for Exhibitors, Judges and Show Committees'* or contact the Show Secretary.

Woodcraft or Hard craft

- **Hard craft** techniques include basketry, beadwork, candle-making, ceramics, cold porcelain, enamelling, glasswork, lego, metalwork, modelling clay, painting on china/glass, papier-mâché, pottery, resin crafts, salt dough, sugarcraft, stonecraft etc.
- **Woodcraft** techniques include cabinet making, marquetry, pyrography, stick making, turning, whittling, woodcarving, etc.
- **Sugarcraft** items such as flower sprays, structures or models may be entered as 'hard craft' but they should not take the form of a decorated cake.
- Other techniques and materials may be incorporated but the basis of your design should be crafted from wood or another hard material other than paper.
- For advice on the judging criteria for specific crafts, please consult *'On with the Show: An NFWI Handbook for Exhibitors, Judges and Show Committees'* or contact the Show Secretary.

One and two piece walking sticks

- One piece and two piece sticks will be considered as two separate craft techniques.
- A **one piece walking stick** should be made from a single piece of wood.
- A **two piece walking stick** should be made from a separate wooden stick shaft and a handle joined together. The handle should be made from wood or other natural material.
- Both shaft and handle should be made entirely by the entrant.
- Spacers are allowed.
- End caps are allowed on thumb sticks.
- Sticks may be entered with or without any type of ferrule.
- The maker's name, or other identifying feature, should not be visible on any part of the stick.
- The choice of wood, and other natural materials, should influence the design. Naturally occurring colours, grain, faults and knots could all become features of the design.
- Care should be taken when finishing the piece to enhance the grain or show the design to best advantage.
- For further advice or inspiration, [The British Stickmakers Guild](#) has an extensive literature list and photo gallery.

Drawing and/ or painting

- A class that **specifically examines drawing and/ or painting skills** - other artwork should be entered in the Artwork class below.
- Art created in a medium such as pencil, charcoal, ink, pencil crayon, pastel, oil paint, gouache, acrylic paint or watercolour paint.
- The judge will consider factors such as focal point, balance and composition, perspective, colour and tonal range, and use of materials.
- Modest mount and/or frame allowed.

Artwork

- A class that examines **artwork which doesn't qualify for the Drawing and Painting class**.
- Created using techniques other than traditional drawing and/ or painting skills. For example, print, collage, mixed-media, cyanotype, encaustic work, or printed digital art.
- **Fabric painting** may be entered as soft-craft or artwork at the exhibitor's discretion. **Note: this is not in accordance with WI advice!**
- You may list the main techniques used on your exhibitor card.
- Where appropriate, the judge may consider factors such as focal point, balance and composition, perspective, colour and tonal range, and creative use of materials.
- Modest mount and/or frame allowed.