

THE SUTHERLAND LONGHOUSE PROJECT



WOOL WORKSHOP Part 1



This afternoon accomplished spinners Sally Wild and Anne Coombs joined 8 eager participants at Dornoch Social Club to lead the first of 2 workshops on the use of wool in pre-clearance times. They looked specifically at the processes involved in transforming raw fleece into a colourful woollen yarn ready to be knitted into the type of blue tam or bonnet typically worn by pre-clearance drovers. Today's workshop focused on the first 3 stages: harvesting the fleece, carding, and spinning.

Firstly, Sally & Anne explained how, rather than shearing, pulling the fleece from the sheep as it moulted produced a rooed fleece with no blunt ends and this resulted in a softer yarn for spinning.



Secondly, Anne demonstrated hand-carding: the traditional method of preparing fleeces for spinning using wooden paddles set on one surface with rows of metal teeth.



Wool is placed on the teeth then, by gently brushing the 2 paddles over each other, a soft rolag is produced. Often done by the children, carding detangles the fleece, separating and straightening the wool fibres ready for spinning.

Lastly, Sally and Anne demonstrated two different methods of spinning: using a wheel and a drop spindle. Sally pedalled at the wheel and fed in the carded fleece. By simultaneously pulling out and spinning, yarn was skilfully produced. Spinning by wheel or the great wheel would have been done



outdoors where the light was better. Anne deftly demonstrated the art of the drop spindle whilst explaining that broken spindles are often found on archaeological sites; a remnant of past activities.



Learning to card and spin, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the workshop. We now look forward to using a niddy noddy, washing and dyeing the yarn and knitting the drover's blue hat!

