

## **SPINNING FOR THE BEGINNER: LEARN TO SPIN**

This is the exciting part. Sit comfortably in front of your "CROFTER" wheel with your right foot on the treadle. Remember for best results "make haste slowly". Start the wheel turning in a clockwise direction, and practice treadling. Treadle slowly and develop a steady rhythm. Practice stopping and starting. Only after you can competently treadle, stop and start, should you advance to the flyer. Tie a 15 inch piece of spun wool or soft string firmly to the bobbin centre and pass over the nearest flyer hook, this is called the leader. Insert the threading hook from the front of the orifice and draw the leader through the spindle towards you. Start the wheel turning in a clockwise direction and adjust the driving tension. You should be able to hold back on the yarn quite easily, but as soon as you release your hold, the bobbin should immediately wind in the leader yarn. Practice these movements until you can feed in smoothly and evenly, or until your hands and feet work in harmony. Feet and hands should work at approximately the same pace. You are now ready to spin your first yarn.

## **SPINNING YOUR FIRST YARN**

Remember that the single yarn that you are about to spin determines the thickness and the quality of the plied yarn when it becomes two ply, or three ply. Place the empty bobbin on the spindle and thread the leader through the spindle orifice. Take a rolag of carded wool and place it in your left hand with the leader lying on top about 250 mm from the spindle. Begin to treadle slowly. Watch the leader as it begins to turn and latches onto the loose fibres allowing a little to be drawn through the orifice. If the yarn does not pull in, but keeps twisting, supply a little more tension to the belt by winding up the rear maiden. Too much tension causes the yarn to pull in very quickly, with the result that the beginner spinner is constantly rethreading. Grip the yarn about 200 mm from the spindle orifice with the right thumb and forefinger and hold firmly. Do not allow the yarn to be taken up, the flyer will now give the twist to the yarn between your fingers and the orifice hole. Treadling slowly but constantly whilst your right hand is held steady, begin to draw the rolag in your left hand back towards your body, by grasping the yarn between the thumb and forefinger being careful to ease and manipulate the wool to the required number of fibres to be spun. Release your right hand grip (i.e. the fingers closest to the spindle) and watch the twist run along the yarn. Pinch the forefinger and thumb of the left hand to stop the twist entering the rolag. The right finger and thumb renew their clamping action in front of the left fingers. Now move both hands towards the spindle approximately 150 mm or so allowing the bobbin to take up the spun yarn. Continuous spinning is achieved by repeating the foregoing steps. The right hand is in position to hold the yarn clamped while the left is ready to make the next movement. Keep moving the yarn along the flyer hooks for even distribution on the bobbin. To start a new rolag or repair a break place the tail end of the yarn extending from the orifice into the centre of the rolag and spin as before, making sure to allow plenty of overlay for a strong easy join. **Never** tie knots. Most learners tend to work the treadle much too fast and it is interesting to note how slowly and deliberately the expert spinner works the wheel. Naturally a great deal will depend on whether you are spinning for knitting or weaving. Remember a good yarn is soft and even but should have some of the textured look which gives homespun wool its special look.

**PLYING THE YARN:** The single spun yarn is unsuitable for most purposes. To overcome this, two yarns are twisted together in the opposite direction. Once you have spun two bobbins of yarn, you are ready to ply them together. Plying is carried out to give the yarn added strength and texture. As a general rule yarns used are 1. Single yarn — often used for weaving. 2. Two ply yarn — most commonly used for knitting and crocheting. 3. Three ply upwards — rarely used.

Plying is a simpler task than spinning but care nevertheless is required. Place the full bobbins of single yarn on the built-in bobbin rack or on the "CARNABY" Lazy Kate. Fit an empty bobbin onto the flyer spindle. Tie the free end of each yarn off each bobbin onto the leader of the fresh bobbin in the flyer. Hold the yarns in your left hand approximately 450 mm out from the orifice. Start the wheel spinning in an anti-clockwise direction. Separate the yarns with your fingers. With your right hand grasp the yarns approximately 250 mm out until sufficiently twisted. Assist to feed twisted yarn into the flyer orifice (do not over spin). Generally, plying requires faster treadling and more tension to the drive belt. Further tensioning will be required as the bobbins fill. Slacken off tension when plying is finished, ready for spinning again.

**SKEINING:** This is necessary to prevent tangling of the yarn when washing or dyeing. We advise you purchase a Carnaby Niddy Noddy for this. Do not wind too tightly, the best method is to leave the full bobbin on the flyer spindle then release the double drive band and connect the scotch brake applying a minimum tension to the brake to prevent back winding when winding the yarn onto the niddy noddy. You are now ready to skein directly off your "CROFTER" wheel without removing the bobbin at all. Wind yarn onto the niddy noddy in a figure 8 motion. Your niddy noddy has been so constructed, that one full wind equals one metre, so by counting the winds, you can determine the length of yarn in a full hank. Before removing the yarn from the niddy noddy, tie the skein loosely in four places. Tight knots prevent even washing and dyeing.

**FINALLY:** We strongly recommend that you join your local area spinners and weavers group, as the steps we have suggested in learning to spin, and to ply are very fundamental. Often there are alternative methods which may suit you better. You will only find such methods by mixing with other spinners and weavers in your area. I know you will enjoy your "CROFTER" spinning wheel for many years and will derive a great deal of "back to nature" pleasure, and spinning satisfaction.