

Dee Hardwicke: Two-day Residential Botanical Art, Design and Embroidery Retreat for Knitters

Overview

This two-day residential retreat in the wonderful surroundings of The Angel Hotel, Abergavenny offers a unique opportunity to explore the complete creative journey from botanical drawing to the beginnings of a beautifully embellished hand-knitted scarf.

During this technique-packed workshop guided by artist and knitting designer Dee Hardwicke, you will learn how to create your own botanical motifs in pastel – no prior drawing experience required. You will then discover how to translate your artwork into clear, versatile botanical embroidery charts, before being guided through the process of designing your scarf layout using your charts. Dee will also explain the importance of considering how negative space forms an integral part of the overall composition. Finally, you will embroider your designs onto your pre-prepared knitted scarf (details below) using Swiss darning.

Combining group teaching and one-to-one guidance, Dee will gently lead you through each stage of the design process, sharing techniques that she uses behind-the-scenes in her studio, and helping you take your design skills to the next level.

Based on a project that was originally developed for two hugely successful workshops at London's V&A museum in 2025, this retreat is designed to nurture your creative spirit while offering ample time to unwind, connect with fellow participants, and enjoy the hospitality of a highly regarded family of local businesses.

Opening Evening (Wednesday 18th November)

The retreat will open with a two-course welcome dinner at The Angel. The hotel was awarded *The Times* and *Sunday Times* Best Foodie Hotel in Wales 2025 so you will be in for a treat!

Day One (Thursday 19th November)

After a delicious breakfast, you will head to The Angel's ballroom, a wonderful space with original plasterwork, high ceilings and Italian crystal chandeliers. There you will find tables dressed with still lifes of gorgeous late autumn foliage and flowers. Taking inspiration from these table-top displays, Dee will begin by showing you how to select and combine autumn colours – from ochres and burnt oranges, to faded pinks and complex reddish-browns – to create your own botanical motifs in pastels. As Dee explains 'nature puts colour together so well and in such perfect proportions' so there's endless inspiration to be found in the tabletop displays. Dee, whose work is steeped in the traditions of the Arts & Crafts movement, will then guide you through the process of selecting yarn palettes and yarn weights, and translating your motifs into Swiss darning embroidery and intarsia charts.

There will be regular refreshment breaks – including a bento box lunch – throughout the day (please see below for details), perfect for fuelling creativity and chatting through your progress with Dee and fellow participants. After a busy and fulfilling day, you will then enjoy another two-course dinner at The Angel ... with plenty of time for a nightcap or two.

Day Two (Friday 20th November)

Reconvening in the ballroom after breakfast, you will find everything as you left it the previous day. This is a wonderful opportunity to see your work with fresh creative eyes, just as Dee does when she heads to her studio each day.

Using the charts you made on day one, you will discover how to place and Swiss darn your motifs onto the scarf you have knitted for the workshop, creating a unique and painterly layered effect over the stitches below. This is a lovely technique that Dee has used for several of the stunning scarves in her latest book, *Cultivate*. The scarves – along with some of Dee's original artwork – will be on display throughout the workshop, providing further inspiration and insights into how Swiss darning can be used to embellish your own knits. As Dee will explain, the placing of motifs – and understanding the negative space around them – is a key element of the design process. You will discover how to experiment with positioning to create the desired effect and to bring your unique scarf design to life in this technique-filled workshop.

As a lovely additional element to this special event, everyone will receive a set of the motifs created during the workshop, so you're bound to come away brimming with ideas and inspiration.

Lunch on day two will be held at the Chapel in Abergavenny (this much-loved venue is just a short walk away). Please see below for details.

Day two will conclude with a three-course celebratory dinner at Michelin-starred The Walnut Tree, bringing this very special retreat to a happy and delicious finale.

Day Three (Saturday 21st November)

After a leisurely breakfast, check out will be by midday.

Skill level

There's no need for artistic experience since the workshop is suitable for participants of all artistic abilities, including complete beginners. Experience with basic stocking stitch is essential.

Location

The Angel Hotel, Abergavenny NP7 5EN www.angelabergavenny.com

Dates

Wednesday 18th November (check-in from 3pm) to Saturday 21st November (check-out by midday) 2026

Price

£1,790 per person. This includes:

a two-day masterclass-style workshop with the artist and knitting designer Dee Hardwicke as detailed above

all materials but please see below for details of homework to prepare ahead of the workshop

accommodation: Three nights' accommodation at The Angel Hotel, with breakfast included each morning

two course dinner at The Angel Hotel on the first two nights

three course celebration dinner at The Walnut Tree on the final night

bento box lunch (day one) and refreshments throughout

two course lunch at the Chapel on Market Street on day two

Homework

A scarf pattern from Dee's book *Cultivate: Knitting the Beauty of Nature* will be provided on booking your place. Ideally you'll knit the whole scarf to bring to the workshop since you'll be Swiss darning your botanical motifs onto it. A minimum of half a scarf is required though. If bringing an incomplete scarf, this needs to be put on a long piece of waste yarn and steamed or wet blocked so it can be laid flat to work on.

Further Details

Meals and Social Time

On the first two evenings, everyone will gather for a two-course dinner at The Angel Hotel where you can unwind with fellow participants in a relaxed, cosy and convivial atmosphere – the perfect place to be on a wintry evening.

There will be time following dinner each evening to socialise and work together on unrelated projects, or simply enjoy a nightcap in the cosy surroundings of the hotel's sitting room or Foxhunter Bar, with its open fire.

On the final night, you'll enjoy a three-course celebration dinner at the renowned Michelin-starred Walnut Tree restaurant, with transport to and from the restaurant. This will be a perfect ending to a truly inspiring retreat that's packed with all the loveliness that Dee's workshops are renowned for!

Lunches

A bento box lunch will be provided on the first day of the workshop. This will be delivered directly to the ballroom, allowing you to enjoy your meal in the company of Dee and other participants. On day two, there will be a seasonal two-course lunch at the Chapel on Market Street, a wonderfully curated and inspiring space.

Refreshments

To keep you energised there will be tea, coffee and mineral water provided throughout each day and a selection of irresistible home-made biscuits and cakes mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

Time with Dee

In addition to the workshops, there will be ample opportunity for informal socializing with Dee outside the structured sessions. Whether during meals or casual breaks, you will have time to connect and to discuss your creative journey with Dee, gaining valuable insights and personal feedback.

Exploring Abergavenny

Throughout the retreat, you will have time to explore the delightful market town of Abergavenny. Abergavenny is surrounded by the dramatic landscapes of the spectacular Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons), and it's particularly magical at this time of year, with festive lights twinkling and fires glowing. Enjoy browsing the wonderful independent shops (perfect for festive gift buying), sampling freshly baked treats at The Angel Bakery, and discovering unique artisanal products at the market hall.

Additional Guests

If you would like to bring someone along to share your guest room, they can enjoy the beautiful surroundings of The Angel, the town and the local countryside while you are busy with your projects. Guests will be invited to join the group for the evening dinners at The

Angel and The Walnut Tree, offering a wonderful opportunity to socialize and enjoy the retreat's relaxed atmosphere. The supplementary cost for this is £420 per additional guest.

About the venues

The 'House of Caradog' is a family of independent businesses located in and around Abergavenny. Collectively, the family believe in delivering outstanding service and share a passion for sourcing and providing a range of exceptional products, unique and interesting events and memorable experiences.

The Angel Hotel is a historic, elegant, and beautifully appointed hotel that combines traditional charm with modern amenities. The hotel itself dates back to the 19th century, standing as one of Abergavenny's most iconic buildings. Built in 1829, it has long been a focal point of the town, serving travellers, locals, and visitors seeking rest, hospitality, and warmth.

With 4 silver stars from the AA, two Rosettes for the Oak Room and Foxhunter Bar, a Breakfast Award from the AA, and more recently becoming a member of the prestigious group of PoB Hotels, The Angel is a beacon of hospitality in the region of South Wales. *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* named The Angel the Best Foodie Hotel in Wales 2025.

The Walnut Tree is a Michelin-starred restaurant near Abergavenny, close to the English border. The restaurant has held a Michelin Star since 2010 with legendary chef, Shaun Hill. Its simple, contemporary food is rooted in culinary tradition and celebrates seasonal ingredients.

The Michelin Guide describes The Walnut Tree as "an iconic restaurant with an illustrious past. Its location in the rolling borderlands of Wales makes it a destination kind of a place and its loyal band of regulars is testament to the quality of the cooking. The owners run it with heart and soul and, with its cosy open-fired bar and dining room hung with colourful art, it's hard not to love it too."

The Chapel on Market Street is a carefully restored 19th Century Chapel, sister establishment of the Art Shop on Cross Street. The team pride themselves on their healthy, innovative and seasonal dishes.

About the Artist and Designer Dee Hardwicke

Dee Hardwicke (www.deehardwicke.co.uk/ / @deehardwicke) is an artist, designer, knitter and knitting book author who lives and works in Crickhowell. Dee trained in fine arts, studying painting and sculpture and undertaking an apprenticeship with Quaker potters in the Welsh Marches before establishing her studio. Working in the artisan traditions of the Arts & Crafts movement, Dee is endlessly inspired by the beauty of the British landscape from season to season. Her designs – which begin life in her sketchbooks and have been used in exclusive collaborations with partners including the National Trust and Museums & Galleries – celebrate Dee's passion for colour and for the wonders of the natural world. Dee has become renowned for her knitting design and colour workshops which have been held in prestigious venues worldwide such as the V&A museum, the William Morris Society's museum, Liberty and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Dee's latest book, *Cultivate: Knitting the Beauty of Nature* is available now.

Workshop places are limited to sixteen. To book your place, or for further information, please contact Emily Bannister, Project Manager at The Angel, at emily.bannister@angelabergavenny.com / 01873 857 121.