SPINNING

Spinning starts with the fibre or wool from the sheep.

This can be short fibres as in the sheep below.

Jacobs is a Medium length staple prepared in a similar way to short fibres.

The other end of the scale is the wonderful long curly locks from the Wensleydale sheep below.

These fibres are prepared in quite different ways before spinning.

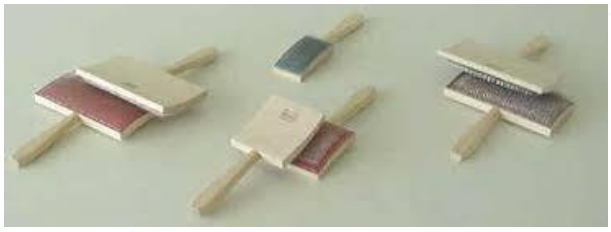
After shearing the fibre is washed to remove some of the grease, which is called Lanolin, from the wool.

The fibres then have to be carded or combed ready to spin.

There are several different tools with which to do this.

1. DRUM carding which produces a long batt of fibres all going in one direction.

2. Hand carding with two hand held carders which produce rolags.



3. The method of carding for long fibres such as the Wensleydale is to comb them with special combs

You can also purchase a long length of fibre, which has been prepared commercially, which is called rovings or tops.

The fibres can be spun in their natural colours or they can be dyed with either natural or acid dyes.

These are some samples of natural and dyed fibres.

Now the fibre is prepared it can be spun, and there are many ways in which to do this.

These are samples of Drop Spindles a very old method of spinning. These are used by nomadic tribes as they are very portable and can be used whilst walking around.

This is the great wheel which is one of the first wheels and is used by the operator standing up and spinning the wheel by hand and walking up and down to wind the yarn onto the bobbin.

This is a more modern single treadle wheel which is used sitting down.

There are also double treadle machines which are generally more upright and both feet are used to treadle.

This is a small spinning wheel called a traveller as it folds down into the bag you see in the background, and can be easily transported.

This is just a small sample of the many variations of spinning wheels available on the market today.

The Spinning Process

We now have the fibre prepared and the spinning can begin.

A thread is attached to the bobbin which is called a leader thread.

The spinner twists this thread and then touches the prepared fibre onto it which starts to twist it.

The fibre is then drafted into the wheel, whilst treadling continues to twist it into what is called a singles thread.

It depends on what thickness of fibre is drafted in as to the thickness of the final yarn.

The fibres can be drafted from the end of the fibre keeping it all in one direction, this is called worsted spinning and is good for weaving but it also makes a cooler less bulky yarn for knitting jumpers.

If the fibres are put over the finger, and the yarn is spun from the fold, this is called a semi woollen yarn as it traps more air between the fibres making it warmer to wear.

Fibres spun from a rolag make a yarn which traps the maximum of air into it and this produces a woollen yarn which is very warm to wear.

When the spinner has spun two bobbins of yarn they are then plied together.

This is done by putting the two bobbins on a lazy kate.

There are lots of different versions of a lazy kate and you can even use a cardboard box and knitting needles.

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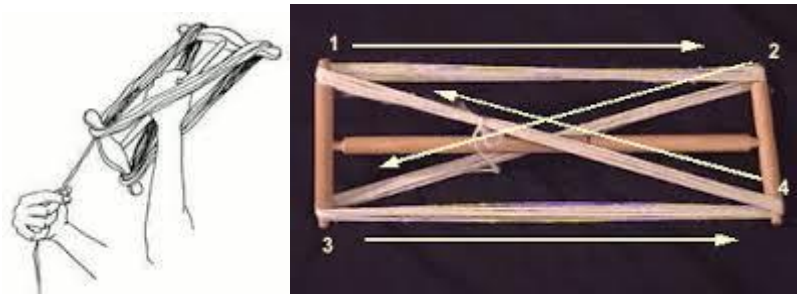
These all do the same job which is to hold two bobins in place whilst the yarn is plied on the wheel.

The ends from the two yarns are attached to the leader thread and they are spun together with the wheel spinning in the opposite direction to which it was going when the singles were being spun.

When the bobbin is full the yarn is wound into a skein on a niddy-noddy or skein winder, ready for washing.



How the niddy noddy is held and the skein is wound on.

A fixed length niddy noddy

An adjustable length niddy noddy.

When the yarn has been wound into a skein it is then left to soak for a short while in warm water then squeezed out and hung to dry. This process straightens the skein and fixes the twist.

It is now ready to be used for knitting, crochet or weaving whatever it was spun for,