



Lost Crafts

Una McGovern

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This charming book is an engaging introduction to a range of traditional crafts and activities. A wide range of skills are described and illustrated, from trout-guddling and lacemaking, to beekeeping and drystone walling.

Lost Crafts Details

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Vicki says

This is a really beautiful book in every way. It looks beautiful, and its goals are beautiful: to highlight the sorts of "crafts" people did out of necessity. Those things that people had to do before there were machines or corporations to do them. There are lovely glossy pictures of craftsmen and women performing these tasks, and it's all laid out really well. There are also suggestions for how to begin the craft and what you'll need, but it's not really a manual for crafts of a bygone era. There's a little bit of advice toward that end, but again: do not buy it for that reason.

Instead, buy it to think about the kinds of things you would have done as a homesteader -- create a mortarless stone fence, for example. Or how to brew your own beer, make your own cheese, or forage in the woods for food. Seriously. And if you think about it, these things were an art -- how to live well on your own. I, for one, often have fantasies about running off and setting up my own little farm. These pages add an element of reality to the fantasy, but it doesn't dampen my enthusiasm. Just gives me something extra to think about. Lots of cool information about lost artforms about living and making your own way. A lovely book.

Andrew says

Entertaining, well-illustrated guide to dozens of old-time crafts and skills as practiced in the UK. Although basic instructions are included for many of the topics, this is more of an encyclopedia than a how-to book. Recommended for anyone interested in handcrafts, social history, and all those references to household and village life in Victorian novels.

Tara says

This is a subject that I have little practical interest in (I read it as research for my novel.) Nonetheless I found it quite riveting. I can understand why some people found it too general but it was about the right level for me, and I suspect that any book can only ever be an introduction. I liked learning more about the skills we have lost, but this kind of nostalgia also makes me slightly uneasy.

Wendy says

If you long to return to a simpler time or have an appreciation for hand-crafted goods, this book is a fun read. It provides an overview of many crafts that no longer exist--from milling, making butter and cheese and candlemaking to building wooden boats and crafting chairs and baskets by hand. Those who lean toward queasy beware--there are also sections on tanning and on skinning rabbits (ick!).

Each chapter gives a brief overview of the craft, the history and uses and tips on how to do the craft yourself.

I'd recommend it if you'd like to take a step back in time--no matter how brief--and to re-gain an appreciation

for sustainable living.

Laura says

The book was about 1/3 too long in my opinion, and crafts that were very similar or not sufficiently obscure should have been edited out. What is sufficiently obscure? I don't know exactly, but some of the items, like quilting, don't seem to be it. Despite being a bit longer than my attention span, this book was a pretty good read. I loved the sections on hedgerows, coppicing, and making jam.

Libby says

Little chapters on all sorts of crafts. A good basic reader to give you some ideas - not a whole lot of detail here on any one craft, but some info on many different things. My biggest complaint is that the text is tiny and hard to read.

Elizabeth says

I enjoyed this book about a bygone age...

It was the perfect, arm-chair read for a rainy and gray spring. It amazes me that it was not long ago that most gifts were handmade and not store bought. "Lost Crafts" catalogs all the different crafts that made perfect gifts: lacemaking, bee keeping (honey), homemade jam and marmalade.

My favorite discovery: tussy mussy. The small, Victorian bouquets were given to loved ones with tiny *love* notes inside. Sigh.

Nicole says

This is such a find. Buy the hardcover edition and put it on your coffee table. You'll learn how to build a stone wall, make your own honey, create a thatched roof, and so many other amazing things that were common in Chaucer's day. The pictures are great, too.

SeaTreasure says

The book is about the lost and dying crafts of the United Kingdom and it fascinating. From spinning wool,

tatting lace to brewing beer, making and repairing wagon wheels, this book is full of tantalizing skills of the past. At the end of each chapter the author provides information for further study of each craft. My interest was so piqued that I am excited to try a few of the lost skills. Hmm maybe I will make some hard cider....

Jo says

Fascinating overview of dozens of crafts from days gone by. Some of them are rather more "lost" than others - I wouldn't classify patchwork as a lost craft, for example! Very short chapters about each craft - good as an overview of lots of things, but not so good for actually finding out how the craft in question is practiced.

Manintheboat says

I asked around and I think I know someone who knows how to do every "lost craft" in this book. My Irish friend has tickled trout, my mom can spin and weave, I can shoot archery.... Not so lost eh? Maybe "making a zine" would be more appropriate.

Natalie says

Bought this eye catching book for our anniversary, simply because it had chapters on catching & preparing eels, and how to thatch a roof! Found it in a little shop in Culver City of all places.

The surprise gift inside was a chapter on how to build a coracle . . . Remember Reepicheep's boat found on Burnt Island in the The Voyage of the Dawn Treader?

I must confess that I have always wanted one of my own since first reading the story as a very young girl. Maybe I'll try to make one this week while I'm on vacation. One about Reepicheep's size may be a good scale to start with . . .

Kristen Neirinck says

A great introduction to various historical crafts, with resources as to where to find more information on each topic, if so desired. Based almost solely on the history of crafts in the UK -differences in technique in other locations were largely unaddressed.

Sarah J says

This is a good book if you want to do research on old crafting techniques. McGovern covers everything from wall-building to plastering to decorative straw weaving. But it's not really an entertaining read, more of a dry,

specialized encyclopedia. Which again, is useful if you need research for a story or essay you're writing.

Una says

I got the impression that the person who wrote this pasted together most of the information from the internet, without going into much depth or putting much passion into it. I was hoping this book would have actual instructions on how to make some of the crafts mentioned, at least at a beginner's level. It has a few, but no more in-depth than stuff I could have found in a basic internet search. Speaking of the internet, they actually include web addresses at the end of chapters. How long are those going to be relevant? There are some interesting photos and some crafts I didn't know about, but I don't think any of the crafts are "lost" and a person is better off just copying down the chapter headings and then googling the stuff.
