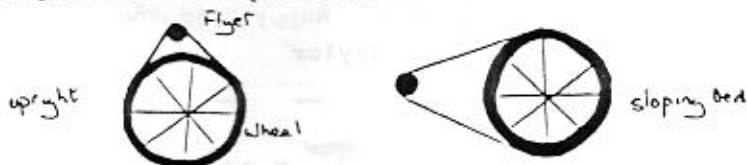
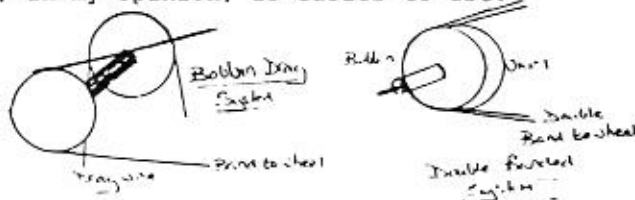


## SPINNING WHEELS

What sort of spinning wheel should I buy? A question I get asked many times, unfortunately, it is not a very easy one to answer. Spinning wheels are very expensive, too expensive to buy just to 'try and see if I like spinning', the cheapest available being around the £100 mark. Before spending large amounts of money on an item of equipment that may only get used once, I suggest that you try and borrow one to ascertain whether or not you actually enjoy the craft of spinning. Once you have established that fact, you can start looking for a suitable wheel. Spinning is an increasingly popular craft and most areas have a Spinners and Weavers Guild within a reasonable travelling distance, the name and address of the secretary can usually be found in the library that welcomes newcomers. Joining such an organisation would give you the opportunity to view and perhaps try a range of wheels. Spinning wheels are very individual items of equipment and what suits one person does not necessarily suit another. So, if possible try as wide a range of wheels as you can before deciding which suits you and your type of spinning best. Upright models, where the flyer is above the wheel rather than beside it (see diagram), has a higher orifice than the traditional flat or sloping bed models and can be better for people with back problems.



Wheels can come with a double or single drive band. The single drive band operates on what is called the bobbin drag system whereby the flyer is turned by a single bobbin connected to the wheel and the twist is controlled by a drag wire on the end of the bobbin. This system requires a fine balance of two tensioners. The double drive band has a single band that is long enough to go twice around the wheel with one loop that goes around the whorl that drives the flyer and one loop that goes around the bobbin to control the twist. This system requires only one tensioner and, in my opinion, is easier to use.



Another thing to consider is the actual size of the wheel, the diameter of which can vary from 15 to 36 inches! It may seem a mute point, until you decide to take your wheel somewhere and it won't fit into the car! Large wheels

can also create storage problems at home if space is at a premium or a small child is around. I have an 18" diameter wheel which I find transports easily. One of the cheapest and most popular wheels available is called the Ashford Traditional, coined by some wit as the 'MFI' of spinning wheels because it comes in kit form and you put it together yourself! It is not the most ascetically pleasing wheels to look at but it is very easy to spin on. From my own personal experience the Ashford (which is the wheel I learnt to spin on) is very good for learning to spin, as it is very controllable and can be treadled very slowly, and spins wool beautifully, but it is not very good for angora. I now have a Williamsons Timbertops 18" sloping bed (one of the range made by James Williamson in the advert opposite, and of all the wheels I have spun on I have found this particular wheel ideally suited to angora. I can get a very fine yarn with a very high twist easily using my wheel. There are many good spinning wheels available from larger firms such as Ashford, Haldane, Frank Herring to individual wheels turned out by craftsmen, it is just a matter of finding the right one to suit you and your needs. One final tip, well oil your new spinning wheel, obvious you may say, but at least two people I know struggled to spin and almost gave up all for want of a drop of oil in the right places. Happy Spinning.

Lesley Taylor

— — — — —