

Yarn Club – ‘Spring into Bloom’

The final skeins for the Spring Into Bloom Club were posted last week. This has been one of our most successful clubs to date, and subscribers have loved the first two colourways.

Lesley, one of our regulars and a particular lover of our yarns and colourways, seemed particularly enamoured of the spring colours:

“❁That’s a wow! ❁ - ❁Beautiful Cherry Blossoms ❁❁”

“Beautiful bluebells, Julie! Thank you. Was hoping for bluebells...”

And Julie in Devon was also happy with her skeins:

“This month’s mystery has arrived and oh what a beautiful colour. My mind is already racing on what to make.”

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Yarn Club – “Sunny Sundaes”

We’re continuing with the seasonal theme for the July to September club, although avoiding the use of the word “Summer” in case it jinxes the beautiful weather we’re having at present! At the suggestion of Heidi from Cornwall, who has been enjoying her first-ever yarn club this spring, the new one will be called Sunny Sundaes and we’ll be dyeing on the theme of ice cream shades. We’re thinking fruity ice cream ripples, berry sorbets and “knickerbocker glories” - with possibly a hint of chocolate! Just as lovely as your favourite dessert but without all the calories - what could be better?

The yarns we’ll feature are Merino Silk, Alpaca Silk and Alpaca Silk Cashmere, and you’ll have a choice of laceweight or 4-ply yarns. Subscriptions are now available from our website [here](http://www.watercoloursandlace.co.uk) - as usual places are strictly limited and will be on sale until the end of July or earlier if sold out before then. Prices are as follows, including shipping for all three skeins:

UK	£72.40
Europe	£75.40
Rest of the World	£80.20





Mona



'A Twisted Yarn' is now well into its fourth year and we want to continue to recognise the many wonderful people that we have met over the years since Watercolours & Lace started exhibiting in 2014. Our latest 'spotlighter' is ... Mona

Mona is from Germany and she says: "Nowadays, I nearly exclusively only knit. But - in our family it was more usual to learn to crochet first. I think I was about five when I started. After a year in kindergarten, I could count well enough for a simple potholder - I don't think it had a single straight edge!"



But, Mona persevered and learned to crochet like everyone else: by practice and repetition until it looked fine. After she had mastered all the crochet stitches, she learned to knit. Again, the learning was fairly traditional: "First the basic stitches and then all the patterns in the classic pattern book that we had at home."

[Left] - A typical piece of tatting, showing the knots and loops that are normally used.

Mona also learned to embroider and to sew as a child, but she stayed with crocheted or knitted doilies until 2005/2006 because standard knitted garments are too warm for her, whilst the only fine yarn she could get was crochet cotton. "But, I also started tatting because we had so many crocheted and knitted doilies that nobody wanted to see any more! At least tatting looked a

little bit different." (See Note 1 below)

Mona found a number of tatting books online, and the personalised advertising from these suggested to her the book "Victorian Lace Today" by Jane Sowerby. "This book showed me that there were lace knitted items that are not doilies - and so I started to knit again!" Mona says.

(Right) Two of the many projects that Mona has posted on Ravelry since discovering laceweight yarn. Left you can see 'Unfurled' by Bunnymuff, Mona Zillah, knitted with our Mohair Lace yarn in 'Twisted Tangerine'. On the right is a fine example of our "Kelly" design, produced in Merino Lace in the 'Silvery Moon' colourway.



This time, she found non-cotton laceweight and cobweb yarns. She remembers: "I found some yarns that I loved in the only yarn shop that carried such yarns. And I was introduced to Ravelry. I found a lot of very gifted dyers including Watercolours&Lace and stopped buying yarn that was not hand-dyed."

Mona first stumbled across Watercolours & Lace in Jan 2015, and has been coming back ever since. She has supported several of our 'Yarn Clubs' and seems to have purchased most of our pattern designs. It is well worth anyone searching for her projects on Ravelry (her Ravelry ident is 'mouna'), although we were a bit puzzled because we expected to see fifty shawls all knitted in different yarns, but in the same colour! It was sometime last year that Julie first noticed that whenever she launched a new yarn in the 'Golden Sunset' colourway, one of the first buyers was Mona. She explains: "For my work, I have to wear clothing in dark colours: black, fifty shades of dark to medium grey and (for the very adventurous) navy blue are acceptable! so, to have a little bit of colour in my life, my shoes are either red or purple and my shawls, that I wear every day, are also brightly coloured. I have found that the yellow-orange (and sometimes apricot) of the Golden Sunset colourway is perfect to combine with my boring clothes without clashing with my red or purple shoes!"

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(Left) Another pair of wonderful shawls in Mona's archives: Far left is 'a Mystery Knit Along with Lace' by Cassie Rosse, knitted in our Fine Botany Lace using 'Iris in a Gothic Romance'. On the right you can see Julie's 'Eilidh' shawl, knitted with our Alpaca Silk Fine yarn in 'Golden Sunset'.

Mona lives with grandmother Elfriede in the commuting area of Cologne and Bonn. Unfortunately, although she can buy yarn for knitting socks in every supermarket, she says that hand-dyed laceweight is much more difficult to find. So, she usually buys online.

Mona has quite a high-profile job which can also be stressful, so she looks forward to knitting as her way to relax after work: "I want to knit with yarn that gives me joy, because I value the talent and the skill that are needed to dye beautiful yarn." She

remains close to her family: "We have three generations in one big house, and all the female members knit on a regular basis. And we all love beautiful yarn."

Mona - Many thanks for supporting us, and thank you for sharing your story.

Note

Tatting is a technique for making a durable lace design from a series of knots and loops. Tatting can be used to make lace edgings as well as doilies, collars, accessories such as earrings and necklaces, and other decorative pieces. The lace is formed by a pattern of rings and chains formed from a series of hitch or half-hitch knots, called double stitches, over a core thread. Gaps can be left between the stitches to form picots, which are used for practical construction as well as decorative effect.

Top of the Pops

This time in TOPS, we are looking at skein sales for the last six months, ending in 31 May 2018.

At first glance, the first table (Fine Lace yarns) looks fairly stable – with nine of the top ten Fine Lace yarns reappearing from the 2017 snapshot. The only yarn to have dropped out of the top ten was KLL Silk Linen Fine, which we were only to obtain a few skeins of – and they have all gone.

The standard lace table reflects the sales that we have enjoyed from the Merino Silk Yak combination. Something similar has happened in the 4-ply sales with Yak Silk (YSS) leaping into the Top 10 for the first time.

The table shows relative skein sales for the Fine Lace and Laceweight yarns from last November to May 2018.

Last 6 Months to May			
2017	2018		Fine Lace
2	1	FBL	Botany Fine
7	2	SAL	Alpaca Silk Cashmere Fine
9	3	AFL	Alpaca Fine
4	4	MSL	Merino Silk Fine
2	5	MLL	Falklands Merino Light
5	6	MFL	Merino Fine
9	7	MAL	Merino Cashmere Fine
1	8	SSL	Shetland Cobweb
8	9	FSL	Fine Silk
(12)	10	ABL	Alpaca Silk Fine
2017	2018		Laceweight
1	1	BFL	Blue Faced Leicester
3	2	APL	Alpaca Silk Cashmere Sparkle
5	3	BAL	Baby Alpaca
9	4	FML	Falklands Merino
4	5	SIL	Mulberry Silk
8	6	TSL	Tussah Silk
5	7	SPL	Merino Silk Sparkle
(25)	8	AKL	British Alpaca Silk
1	9	BCL	Baby Camel Silk
7	10	SOL	50:50 Merino Silk

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The table for 4-ply and Mini-skeins

By contrast, we have three new entries in the 4-ply table, with Merino silk Yak (#3) and Falklands Merino (#5), both climbing well into the top ten. It is probably fair to say that the 4-ply market has been the most disrupted because of the number of new yarns we have tried. And there are two more described in 'New Yarns' below!

The fourth table (left) shows our mini-skeins for the first time. We talked about these in the November issue of 'A Twisted Yarn', and the first sales came at the Waltham Abbey Yarn Show in January 2016. Although they don't represent huge sales, they are fairly popular, especially after Julie launched her Catriona and Lindsay Hat designs which make use of two contrasting mini-skeins. The final item in that table is the Graduated Colour sets. Whereas the first three listings are all 4-ply wound into 20 gram skeins, these

2017	2018		
6	1	SIS	Mulberry Silk
5	2	BAS	Baby Alpaca
(18)	3	MYS	Merino Silk Yak
2	4	ASS	British Alpaca Silk
(12)	5	FMS	Falklands Merino
3	6	ACS	Alpaca Silk Cashmere
8	7	BFS	Blue Faced Leicester
12	8	AAS	Alpaca Fine
10	9	MBS	Merino Baby Camel
7	10	SAS	Alpaca Silk
Last 6 Months to May			
2017	2018		Mini-Skeins
1	1	BSM	Blue Faced Leicester minis
2	2	ASM	British Alpaca Silk minis
-	3	NRM	North Ronaldsay
-	4	GCA	Graduated Colour Set

are five 20gram skeins of British Alpaca Silk Lace yarn which are gradations of a particular colour. .

Show Offer

As usual, the newsletter is tailed with a list of the shows that we are planning to attend during the year. Now, we know that this list is always top heavy, in that the majority of shows are in the north of England. Or, to put it another way, there are very few yarn shows in the south. Which is why we are delighted to be featuring at the very first 'Southern Wool Show' in Newbury at the beginning of September.

Julie is also delighted to be offering a two-hour workshop titled "An Introduction to Knitted Lace Shawls". You can find more details and book your place via our website here. Numbers are strictly limited to ten, so to guarantee your place, book now.

The organisers are hoping for a big turn-out at the racecourse for the new one-day show and have offered us two free tickets to give away.

What you need to do ...

Please just complete the following sentence - in another thirty words or fewer - and send in via e-mail alan@watercoloursandlace.co.uk: Deadline date is Friday, 20 July.

"I would enjoy seeing Watercolours & Lace at the Southern Wool Show in Newbury, because _____

 _____"



Free tickets for..

Southern Wool Show

Sat 1st September 2018
Newbury Racecourse

www.southernwoolshow.co.uk

Visit our website at www.watercoloursandlace.co.uk

Mystery Knit Along - OLWYN



The final clue for the Olwen Shawl Mystery Knitalong was issued at the end of May and several knitters have now posted pictures of their finished projects on Ravelry. Although only a few people worked through the mystery stage, compared to the large number who bought the pattern, the design was well received and comments included:

"I signed up for the MKAL in the Watercolours and Lace group and I am happy I did! This was a joy to knit. The pattern is very well laid out and has easy to follow charts." Crazybaglady in Canada

"I am so pleased with this. Thank you for such a pretty pattern." Funkysheep from the UK

"I did the small to stay within the yarn I had and it, as always, is just a gorgeous design from you Julie! Thanks for such a fun and gorgeous MKAL!" Jeffersonian from the USA

To encourage those of you who haven't yet posted pictures, or even started your project yet, we'll be running a prize draw at the end of July. All finished shawls posted in the Spoiler thread **here** by 31 July will be eligible for the draw, with the prize being a skein of yarn in your choice of laceweight or 4-ply, so get those pics in now!!

Julie's three samples are pictured (from top) in Lambswool Fine Lace, British Alpaca Silk Lace, and Alpaca Wensleydale 4-ply.

The finalised pattern with pictures of all versions will be available by the end of this week.

Loyalty Card Scheme

We have just completed our eleventh group (December to May). Here's how the scheme works:

After you have asked for a Loyalty Card, the 'periods' last for six months, and all the purchases you make will then earn points. At the end of the sixth month we will convert those points back into pounds as vouchers as follows:

50 points earns you	£2.50	100 points earns you	£6
150 points earns you	£11.00	200 points earns you	£16
250 points earns you	£22.50	300 points earns you	£30

But **YOU MUST SIGN UP!** You can do this at one of our shows or on-line at ...

http://www.watercoloursandlace.co.uk/store/c77/Loyalty_Card_Scheme.html

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New Yarns

Julie is continuing her experiments with some new 4-plys and we have two more additions to the website.

First up is a 50:50 blend of Corriedale Wool and British Mohair, softly spun to give a standard 4-ply weight of 400m/100g. It has a beautiful lustre and the mohair is not too hairy or prickly, so it's quite soft and most people should be able to wear it quite comfortably. It also takes dye really well, so Julie is having great fun playing with colours on this one. The first few skeins are on the website **here** at the introductory price of £18 per 100g and would be perfect to create one of our 4-ply shawl patterns, or for a cosy pair of socks.



(Right - Our new COS – Corriedale and Mohair 4-ply. From top: Alluring Evergreens, Silver Linings, Raspberries and Cream)

Our second newcomer is a blend of 75% Blue Faced Leicester and 25% Masham wool (you may recall we discussed the Masham sheep in our Did You Know feature last month) and again a standard weight of 400m/100g. The Masham used for this blend is a mid-brown shade, so the yarn won't produce bright or pastel shades, but Julie is well known for her love of dyeing on non-white yarns and this yarn is giving some lovely colours. It's nearly as soft as our pure BFL wool with a similar twist and would work well for any of our standard 4-ply designs. Again, the first few are available **here** at the introductory price of £16 per 100g.

(Left The new Blue-faced Leicester and Masham blend (from top): Maple Maelstrom, Amethyst After Midnight, Sapphire Shadows)



Did You Know - #45 – Valais Blacknose

Come on – be honest. You thought we must have run out of breeds by now. We certainly did. I cannot remember where or when we first heard the name 'Valais Blacknose', but the internet can be a wonderful thing, whilst you cannot beat a good textbook ...



(Left: These lambs look impossibly cute, although in most close-up photos, one cannot discern any features of the faces- no eyes, or mouth. The image below spoils that as the right-hand animal has its tongue sticking out! Very strange)

There are indications that the Valais black-nose sheep's history goes back as far as to 15th century. The earliest mention of a black-nosed sheep appeared around year 1400. But it wasn't until 1962 that this breed was recognised as a separate one. The blacknose sheep belongs to the Northern Short Tailed group. The Valais black faced sheep are believed to be forefathers of other multi-coloured breeds, which are living on lands along trading routes used by the Norsemen a thousand years ago.

(Left: These lambs look impossibly cute, although in most close-up photos, one cannot discern any features of the faces- no eyes, or mouth. The image below spoils that as the right-hand animal has its tongue sticking out! Very strange)

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Characteristics

As the name itself suggests, the Valais Blacknose is a white sheep with a black nose. Specifically, the black colour covers the centre of their head, going from nose up to the rims of their eyes, which are also black. Their ears are black-coloured all the way up to the head. For that reason, they are sometimes called white sheep with black faces or black-faced sheep – rather than black-nose ones – which is a bit more appropriate, considering the extent of black cover.

Black spots can be found on their ankles and knees, although their hooves are fully black. Females tend to have tail spot, but not too large. This feature, however, is not tolerated among males. The rest of their coat is white and light woolly. The Valais sheep's coat is unique, unmistakable and make up for their amusing look. The breed is horned with both rams and ewes having spiral or helical-shaped horns. The blacknose sheep is a coarse-wooled breed, which means their coat is thick. What is also quite characteristic is the fact that wool covers their body, legs and head fairly evenly.

Appearance

The Swiss Valais Blacknose sheep is a large-sized breed with a robust and symmetrical physique. Mature females, from two years old, weigh between 70 and 90 kilo, whereas males can vary from 80 to 125 kilo. Their average body height is between 75 and 83 cm for rams and between 72 and 78 cm for ewes. They have a short, muscled neck, a wide forehead



and mouth, medium-size ears and a Roman

nose. Horns are separated, growing horizontally and symmetrically. Occasional black patches may appear on horns. Their chests are broad, shoulders close-fitting, withers wide and closed in.

The black-faced sheep has a long, broad and straight back, a wide loin, a medium-sized belly, a well-muscled mace and a good spring of ribs. Their front legs – which are strong and not bowed - are set very wide apart. In

general, the animals are strong, thanks in part to their solid bone structure, and very hardy. In terms of the wool, its staple length is up to 10 cm, growing 5-6 months. Sheep should be shorn twice a year. Without any striking colour differentiation and with both rams and ewes growing horns, it is almost impossible to distinguish males from females.

Climate

The Blacknose sheep feels best in its native climate of Switzerland. It adapted very well to the harsh conditions of living in the high mountains, having an ability to graze even on the stoniest and the steepest slopes. Extreme weather conditions, which are often the case in the Valais alpine pastures, don't faze them. They spend the summertime high up in the mountains and come down off the hill to the lower grounds for the winter months.

Purpose

The Valais blacknosed sheep is a dual-purpose breed, raised for both its wool and meat. However, most breeders raise the Valais mainly with the aim of meat production as it is quite profitable with sheep being large-sized. When it comes to their wool, it is best suited for carpets or felting. The sheep are friendly, easily-tamed and have a peaceful nature. They are totally in for a cuddle and can also be lead-trained without much effort. Such traits, together with their fluffy and original appearance, have gained them popularity as an ideal pet sheep.



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On the Road ... 2018

We are safely back on home soil and can tell you about our wonderful adventure in Ireland. It was the first time that either Julie or Alan had travelled across the sea of green and, despite all the 'unknowns', we had a wonderful weekend. Most of these 'unknowns' were due to our naivety or plain ignorance. For example, because we had never travelled to Ireland, we had never thought about which side of the road they drive on!

We enjoyed both ferry trips and the weather was fine; the hotel was good and so was the venue. The event was great and we hope it will be repeated next year. We would like to go back so we can learn from some of the errors we made that took the 'shine' off the weekend.



On the Road ... in 2018

1	15-17 Feb	Craft 4 Crafters	Westpoint Arena, Exeter
2	11 Mar	Essex Lacemakers' Fair	Chelmer Valley HS, Chelmsford
3	17 Mar	Weald Suppliers Fair	Collyers College, Horsham
4	7-8 April	Spring Into Wool	The Grammar School, Leeds
5	28-29 April	Wonderwool Wales	RWS Showground, Builth Wells
6	12-13 May	Wool @ Junction 13	Lower Drayton Farm, Penkridge
7	25-26 May	Woollin	ASAA Centre, Dublin
8	16 Jun	Wymondham Lace Day	Wymondham College
9	14-15 Jul	Yarningham	Uffculme Centre, Birmingham
10	28-29 Jul	Fibre-East	Redbourne College, Ampthill
11	10-11 Aug	British Wool Show	Auction Mart, York
12	1 Sep	Southern Wool Show	Newbury Racecourse
13	8-9 Sep	Perth Festival of Yarn	Dewars Centre, Glover St, Perth
14	15 Sep	Suffolk Lace Day	Woodbridge Community Hall
15	29-30 Sep	Yarndale	Skipton Auction Mart
16	6 Oct	Fenland Fair	Burgess Hall, St Ives
17	20-21 Oct	Loch Ness Knit Fest	Inverness Leisure Centre
18	10-Nov	Festiwool	The Priory School, Hitchin
19	17-Nov	Southern Counties Lace Fair	Leisure Centre, Havant
20	01-Dec	Lace, Quilt & Needle Xmas Fair	Cranmore Park, Solihull

All shows confirmed

Yarn and Wool Show

Lace and Needlecraft Show

Now, after a relatively quiet few weeks at home – spent in stock-taking and re-organising, as well as more exciting discovery of newer yarns we have spoken about – we can look forward to hard-working month or so, starting with our first trip to Yarningham in a couple of week or so, followed by a sixth visit to Fibre-East at the end of July. By then, though, we will have produced our forty-sixth newsletter (this is number 45).

Which reminds us to ask you to please let us know what you like or dislike about the publication. Although we can usually see whether or not you have opened the newsletter after it has been sent out, this does not give us a mark out of 10!

The table left, now shows all the shows we are attending in the rest of 2018.

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