

A Twisted Yarn

yarn n.
1. a spun thread,
2. a story often having
incredible elements

The Watercolours and Lace Newsletter

Volume 6

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January 2020

Yarn Clubs – Glens and Braes

The first skeins for our new Glens and Braes Yarn Club were despatched last week.

The yarns are on naturally coloured bases of our Alpaca Silk Cashmere, Baby Camel Silk, and Merino Silk Yak blends, which will give a wonderful depth of colour, and all in a choice of laceweight or 4-ply.

There are still a couple of places left if you would like to subscribe - they will be available for a few more days. Prices are as follows and subscriptions – including postage costs - are available on the website [here](#).

UK	£77.00
Europe	£81.00
Rest of the World	£83.00



Norfolk Landscapes

The previous club skeins, Norfolk Landscapes, were well received. The colours and yarns are shown here:

Misty Sunrise Over the Norfolk Broads in Baby Alpaca

Moonlit Dunes at Holkham Bay in Mulberry Silk

Big Norfolk Sky in Blue Faced Leicester Wool



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Designs

Our latest design, the Sorcha shrug, was launched in December and has proved popular. We weren't able to include a picture of the 4-ply version in the previous newsletter, so this is shown here. This version takes 2-3 100g skeins of our British Suri Alpaca Silk 4-ply and can be worked in a single colour as well as the two-colour version shown. The pattern is available on Ravelry and on our website, where kits are also available. Custom orders are now being taken for colourways of your choice - use the contact form on the website here.



The Quentin Gansey Vest has also been quite popular, although sadly we haven't seen many finished versions on Ravelry. As we know some knitters are not so keen on the firm feel of the 5-ply pure gansey wool yarn used for the original sample, Julie has knitted a colour-block version using four colours of a standard 4-ply yarn. She worked the small size, which took 230g/920m in total. For anyone interested in working this version, details of how she worked the vest are shown on her Ravelry page here.

Julie is busy working on a new knitted shawl design which we hope to launch as a mystery knitalong in the spring, so keep an eye out on our Ravelry and Facebook pages for more news of that.

Top of the Pops

This month we are looking at colours. We are often asked at shows – and on e-mails – how many colours we have, and we can tell you definitively that at the time of publication we have 638 colourways in stock, ranging from “A Mediterranean Breeze” to “Zing Goes the Spring”.

Of course, some of those colours may not be available when you are browsing around, but if you can tell us the colour name, or the dyelot, then we will be able to retrieve the recipe and dye a skein for you.

Colour	% 16	% 17	% 18	% 19
Purple	36%	34%	44%	42%
Blue	28%	31%	34%	33%
Grey	12%	19%	21%	23%
Green	24%	23%	21%	22%
Pink	21%	20%	17%	18%
Brown	8%	11%	11%	14%
Orange	8%	8%	9%	13%
Yellow	8%	6%	8%	9%

		% 2017	% 2018	% 2019
1	Summer Garden	16.2%	16.4%	9.3%
2	Precious Metals	7.9%	10.8%	9.0%
3	Bitter Chocolate Truffle	12.7%	7.7%	7.0%
4	Golden Sunset	12.4%	12.6%	6.2%
5=	Chocolate Caramel	3.2%	5.2%	4.9%
5=	Hyacinths in Blue	7.3%	5.6%	4.9%
7	Heathered Hills	6.3%	5.6%	4.4%
8=	Blueberry Pie	7.3%	6.3%	4.1%
8=	Delphinium Daze	11.7%	8.0%	4.1%
10=	Into the Purple Night			3.9%
10=	Red Poppies	3.2%	4.5%	3.9%
12=	Big Norfolk Sky			3.6%
12=	Emerald Peacock	9.2%	8.0%	3.6%
12=	Lazy Lavender Days			3.6%
12=	Misty Sunrise Over the No			3.6%
12=	Moonlit Dunes at Holkham			3.6%
17=	Beautiful Bougainvillea			3.4%
17=	Bitter Cherry	1.9%	3.5%	3.4%
17=	Geranium Glory			3.4%
17=	Moonlight After the Storm			3.4%
17=	Out of the Blue			3.4%
17=	Soft Greens	0.6%	5.6%	3.4%

The tables showing our most popular yarn colours (above right) and the most popular recipe names (left) in the last three years.

Julie gets a lot of fun from inventing the colour names that she uses. And she is always amazed that using the same recipe on two different fibres can yield such different results, leading to a completely new colour name for an Alpaca laceweight compared to a Yak 4-ply for example.

The second table shows our most popular colour “names”. Linking these to the standard colours above will show that ‘*Summer Garden*’, for example, favours Turquoise and Purple, whilst ‘*Precious Metals*’ has a little brown and is mostly Grey, and, of course, ‘*Bitter Chocolate Truffle*’ is predominantly Brown.

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New Yarns

Following the introduction of our new BFL Silk 4-ply last month, we have two new yarns for you to try this month.

First up is our Falklands Merino Alpaca Silk (FAS) 4-ply. This is a blend of 50% Superfine Falkland Islands Merino Wool with 30% Baby Alpaca and 20% Mulberry Silk and is a standard 4-ply at 400m per 100g. It's soft and squishy

with a little sheen from the silk and should be ideal for anything worn next to the skin. Julie is working on a set of mitts and hat in this yarn. We have some 50g skeins at £12.50 listed in the webstore now, for those wishing to test out the yarn, with 100g skeins to come shortly at £21 each.

The second new yarn is a 100% Wensleydale Wool. The Wensleydale is one of the lustre breeds of sheep with long, curly locks, and is an endangered breed. This yarn, made from British fleeces, has a fabulous sheen and the ability to take dye exceptionally well. It is a slightly thicker than standard 4-ply at 350m per 100g and, although not quite as soft as Blue Faced Leicester or Merino, it is perfect for warm outer wear. The first batch is available in the webstore now at £18 per skein.

Shown right (top to bottom) are three skeins in the new Falklands Merino Alpaca Silk: Misty Sunrise Over the Norfolk Broads; Faded Moss; and North Atlantic Swell

On the left (top to bottom) can be seen three skeins of our new Wensleydale yarn: Beautiful Bourgainvillea; Moonlit Sea and Heathered Greens



“A Twisted Yarn”

“A Twisted Yarn” was launched in October 2014, and we are now comfortably into Volume 6. Last time we asked you for some feedback on the sorts of things that you like to read about in these pages. Or, perhaps, to tell us about something that we were missing.

Sadly, despite offering you a £10 voucher, the silence was deafening and we didn't have a single response. so, [perhaps none of you bother to read it. If that is the case, I could write something really cheeky about someone we met in ...

Seriously, though. we assume that 'no news is good news' and that you still enjoy the newsletter. Please let us know that you still want to receive “A Twisted Yarn”.

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Do You Know - #60 - Clun Forest



The **Clun Forest** is another breed of sheep native to the UK. It originates from the area surrounding the Clun Forest in Shropshire, England. Similar to many of the British breeds of upland sheep, Clun Forest are hardy, adaptable, good foragers, and are long-lived. The breed has a short to medium-length wool and dark brown faces. They are a multi-purpose animal, kept for meat, wool, and milk. Like other dark faced sheep, Clun produce quality lamb and mutton. However, in contrast to more common meat breeds such as Suffolks, their wool is free of undesirable black fibres and kemp, and is suitable for hand-spinning. The breed's alert and stylish appearance, together with its reputation for hardiness and fecundity have made it popular with hobby farmers and large commercial flock owners alike.

The breed takes its name from the old town of Clun and the surrounding forests in the southwest corner of Shropshire. One of the first mentions of the breed is in 1803 when the Rev. Joseph Plymley, writing on the agriculture of Shropshire for the Board of Agriculture, quoted from a previous report dealing with these forest sheep. He stated that upon the hills nearer Wales the flocks were without horns and had white faces.

In 1837 Willam Youatt (Note 1) confirms this, stating that the Clun Forest sheep were definitely white-faced and hornless. However, he also mentions that the breed was fast changing their appearance. This was caused by the crossing of other local breeds such as the Longmynd, Radnor & Shropshire, which was resulting in the darker colouring of the head.

In 1892, W J Malden, writing in the Royal Agricultural Journal, stated that, 'A well bred Clun ram, as it now stands, is an imposing animal, one which demands admiration from all those who possess an eye to a sheep'.

In 1925 the Clun Forest Sheep Breeders Society was formed in Great Britain 'to secure the purity of lineage and fixity of type' and also to promote the virtues of the breed throughout the sheep industry. Gradually, flocks began to establish pedigree status and after the hiatus of the Second World War, the Clun entered its Golden Age, a period which extended from the mid-forties to the seventies. It is during this period that the Clun became the third most numerous purebred in Britain. During the mid-1950s at the annual four-day sales at Craven Arms some 75,000 purebred ewes were sold, and there were other sales centres. Some flocks were very large, and it is claimed that several flocks were selling over a thousand purebred sheep a year. The breeders had a number of markets, for not only did they ship large numbers of ewes to the commercial farms of eastern England, but Clun flocks both pedigreed and commercial were being established on grassland in many parts of the country and also in Scotland and Ireland.



The Clun arrived in North America in 1970 when Tony Turner imported two rams and thirty-nine ewes, to be followed by one further ram to Nova Scotia. In 1974 the North American Clun Forest Association was founded in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Following the original 1970 importation, Angus Rouse of Nova Scotia undertook two further importations in the late 1970s and mid-1980s. Since then US and Canadian borders have been closed to live sheep imports, but semen from some of the top Clun rams in the UK and the Netherlands have been imported in the mid-2000s.



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In recent years the Clun Forest sheep has declined in numbers in its native Britain, but interest in the breed has grown steadily in North America and in the Netherlands. Interest has also grown in the Czech Republic after imports from France, The Netherlands and England.

The Clun Forest sheep is a medium-sized dark faced sheep that is known for its hardiness, long life, fertility and good mothering abilities. A Clun ewe will usually produce twins which will grow very quickly due to the high butterfat content of her milk.

The most striking feature of the Clun is the face, which is a rich dark colour, rather narrow, and free from wool except for a woollen top knot. The ears are held upright, giving the sheep a very alert and lively appearance. The sheep's powerful build is emphasized by its strong muscular neck and a long broad back. Legs below the hock should be as free from wool as possible, while the fleece itself should be uniform in staple length, colour and texture from head to tail.

Clun Forest fleeces are of moderate weight (six to eight pounds) and staple (four inches), are very consistent from neck to breech, and free of any black or kempy fibres. Although wool is not the valuable commodity it once was, it still has an important role to play in protecting the animal from the elements and providing extra income to any sheep farmer. It can be relied on to give a consistent and large percentage of bulk fibre when sorted. The Clun fleece has great 'lift' and a fullness and springiness that makes it ideal for all aspects of the woollen industry. The fleece is dense, has a fine texture and is demi-lustrous, which makes it suitable for knitwear, knitting yarns, all types of felting and use in futons.

Note 1 - **William Youatt** (1776–1847) was an English veterinary surgeon.

Spring into Wool

We just have time to give you some exciting news about one of our favourite shows of the year. Coming in 11 weeks is our return trip to Leeds for the first yarn show of 2020 – “Spring into Wool”. And once again – thanks to the generosity of the organisers – we will have two Complementary Tickets to give away. So, make notes in your calendars – our next newsletter will be heading your way in the third week of February. And it will have all the details.



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On the Road ... 2020



We are just enjoying the last few days of gentle and graceful preparation ... before the mad dash starts. We have not been to a show since the beginning of December and – apart from a small number of one day lace shows – we will have to wait until mid-April for the two-day yarn shows to start.

Our full programme is shown on the panel below, which stretches into next December.

We are really looking forward to our two 'Great Escapes' weekends – one for knitting in May and the other (covering Crochet) in November. Places are still available so sign up now!

On the Road ... 2020

All shows confirmed, except those marked (TBC)

YarnLace

1	22 Feb	Ware Lace Day	Sele Farm Community Centre, Hertford
2	14 Mar	Fenland Lace Day	Burgess Hall, St Ives
3	15 Mar	Essex Suppliers' Fair	Chelmer Valley HS, Chelmsford
4	18-19 April	Spring Into Wool	The Grammar School, Leeds
5	25-26 April	Wonderwool Wales	RW Showground, Builtl Wells
6	2-3 May	Knit & Stitch	Rheged Centre, Cumbria
7	9 - 10 May	Cornish Fibre Festival	R Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge
9	6-7 June	Fibre Rocks	Dela Warr Pavilion, Bexhill
10	20-21 Jun	Woolly Weekend	Dilham Village Hall
11	26-27 Jun (TBC)	Woolfest	Mitchell's Auctions, Cockermouth
12	25-26 July	Fibre East	Redbourne College, Ampthill
13	5-6 Sep	Southern Wool Show	Newbury Racecourse
14	26-27 Sep (TBC)	Yarndale	Skipton Auction Mart
15	3 Oct (TBC)	Fenland Fair	Burgess Hall, St Ives
16	10-11 Oct (TBC)	Bakewell Wool Gathering	Agric Centre, Bakewell
17	23-24 Oct	Loch Ness Knit Fest	Inverness College UHI Campus
19	14 Nov	Suffolk Lace Day	Kesgrave Community Centre
20	21 Nov	Aragon Lacemakers' Day	Addison Centre, Kempston
21	5 Dec (TBC)	Lace, N'craft and Quilting Christmas Fair	Cranmore Park, Solihull

Great Escape Weekends

8	15-17 May	Knitting Weekend	Gorse Hill Hotel, Hook Heath Rd, Woking
19	6-8 Nov	Crochet Weekend	Moor Hall, Cookham, Maidenhead

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