

# A Twisted Yarn

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

The Watercolours and Lace Newsletter

Volume 6

Issue # 11

September 2020

## Special Offer

As Yarndale are unable to run their physical show this year, they will be holding a Yarndale@Home virtual event via their website instead, over this coming weekend, 26-27 September. The list of exhibitors is already available here, and over the weekend you'll find lots of videos, talks, demos and other features to keep you busy and hopefully make up for not being able to squish all that wonderful yarn! As many exhibitors, like us, are having to rely on online rather than face-to-face sales this year, we are all very grateful for any support you can give to help keep our businesses running in these difficult times. In return, we're providing a special offer in our webstore over the weekend of **5% off any order over £10** (use the code **YARNDALE5**) and **10% off any order over £25** (use the code **YARNDALE10**). We hope to see you there!

## Veronica Cardigan

The Veronica cardigan pattern was launched last week and is now available to download direct via our Ravelry store, or as a printed copy or emailed pdf from our webstore. The smallest size takes 300g/1,200m of 4-ply, while the three larger sizes each need 400g/1,600m. Worked from the bottom up with no seams, it's a perfect project to try working in the round, with enough lace patterning to keep you from getting bored. We're still taking custom orders for yarn packs for this design, so pick your favourite yarn base and colourway and make yourself something unique.

Huge thanks to our lovely testers, Emily and Tory, for their help in the development of this design. Emily's was worked in our Alpaca/Silk 4-ply in the Heathered Hills colourway and her cardigan (shown above right) shows her unblocked cardigan.

Tory's picture (lower right) shows a close-up of the front opening. We love the dinosaur buttons - her yarn shop didn't have enough of the bright pink ones in stock, so she found a temporary fix to take the photo!



Julie's smallest size sample (shown left) was worked in our Falklands Merino 4-ply in Brilliant Blues. (The blue was a little snug on her 36 inch frame - she'd recommend working a version with 2-4 inch ease, like her prototype natural coloured BFL wool 4-ply sample which was worked in the second size.)



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## New Fair Isle Sweater

The next design to add to our growing portfolio will be a Fair Isle sweater with options for both sleeveless and short sleeved versions. Julie's playing with some celtic-style colourwork patterns for this and is currently working in two of our newly-added British wools - the violet and pink version is in Cotswold 4-ply and the more subtle colourway is the new Devon Blend 4-ply. The pattern should be ready later this year, and there will also be another Fair Isle hat design too.

Julie has a large stack of other design ideas also clamouring for her attention, so we thought we'd give you the opportunity to vote for what you'd like her to feature next.

For crochet fans, the choice is between another shawl, a cowl, a poncho, a shrug or a top/sweater.

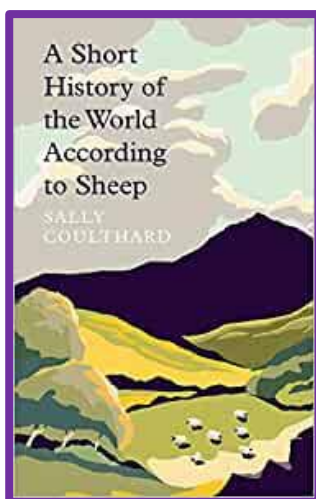
For the knitters, we have a shawl (lace, textured or a combination), a cowl, a poncho, a cable top or a gansey-style sweater.

Email Julie at [julie@watercoloursandlace.co.uk](mailto:julie@watercoloursandlace.co.uk) to let her know what type of design you'd like to see early next year.



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## Book Review



*"A Short History of the World According to Sheep"* by Sally Coulthard, published in 2020 by Apollo. Available from Amazon for £11.71 (Hardback) or £6.02 (Kindle). We may have mentioned that we enjoy reading and books. Our house nominally has three bedrooms and four spacious downstairs rooms. In practice, we have one (double) bed, and the Tibenham branch of the South Norfolk Library.

This latest arrival is fascinating and barely put-down-able. "But what have sheep ever done for us?" I hear you cry. It turns out that, from Neolithic ancestors 11000 years ago, sheep have fed us, clothed us, shaped our language, helped us to win wars, decorated our houses and much else. It is worth quoting the first paragraph of Chapter 5: *"Sheep have changed our language. They've trampled their ways into our sayings and superstitions, appearing in place names and poems. We talk about a person being 'dyed-in-the-wool conservative' or a 'wolf in sheep's clothing', we sing 'Baa,baa Black Sheep' to our children and guard against being 'fleeced' by scammers."* Definitely worth it.

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## 'Lockdown': Knit and Crochet-along

Sadly we've only have three finished entries so far for our prize draw, although I know lots of you are busy with your projects. And because of new restrictions because of the pandemic, we have decided to extend the closing date to the end of December, and you can also include projects you've completed since the UK lockdown started in March, but they can be ones you've started before this.

So, get those needles and hooks working and post your entries now for a chance to win £25 towards your next order! And we know that a number of you are not using Ravelry, so please just email the project details straight to Julie's e-mail account – [julie@watercoloursandlace.com.uk](mailto:julie@watercoloursandlace.com.uk) – with the name of the design and the name and colour of the yarn.

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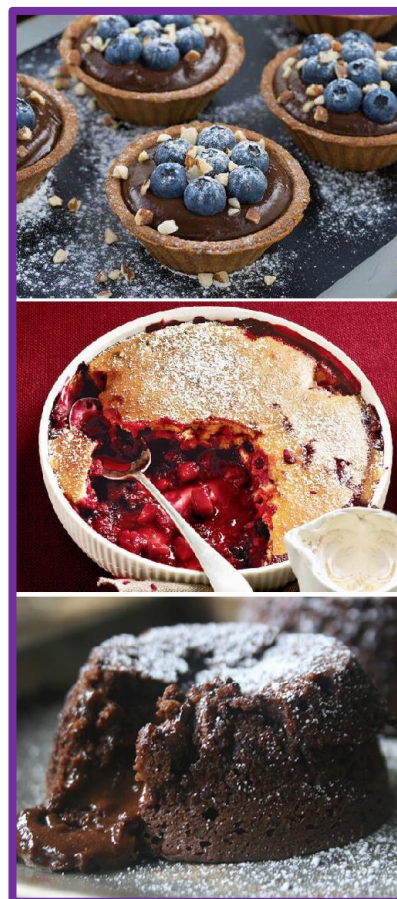
## Next Yarn Club – Winter’s Just Desserts

With the start of autumn and winter now not too far away, our theme for the next club will be Winter’s Just Desserts, featuring colourways inspired by our favourite winter puddings! We’re thinking blackberry and apple pies, rhubarb crumbles, and of course rich Christmas pudding - there should be enough there to get the creative dyeing juices flowing!

Yarns will be available in a choice of 4-ply or laceweights, and in three different yarn bases: Baby Alpaca, Merino Silk and Alpaca/Silk/Cashmere. You can sign up now in the webstore, with the first skein arriving mid-October. Subscriptions will close at the end of October, or earlier if all places are sold out. The cost will be £57.95 per subscription plus shipping, giving full costs per location as follows:

UK	£69.80
Europe	£74.60
Zone 1 (Canada, South America, Africa and Asia)	£80.45
Zone 2 (Australia, New Zealand and Island Territories)	£84.95
Zone 3 (United States and Territories)	£87.95

The final skeins for The Sky’s (Not) The Limit were posted this week, and we hope the subscribers have enjoyed the yarns and colourways - pictures to follow next month.



## Did You Know - #67 – History of Knitting – Part 1 Early Days

*We are taking a very short break from our steady examination of sheep breeds – and other animals that produce usable yarns for knitting and crochet. In the next couple of instalments, we take a closer look at knitting. Back in October 2018, we covered Crochet and we have also looked at Lace-style knitting in detail (Dec 2015 and Jan 2016).*

Knitting is the process of using two or more needles to loop yarn into a series of interconnected loops in order to create a finished garment or some other type of fabric. The word is derived from knot, thought to originate from the Dutch verb *knutten*, which is similar to the Old English *cnyttan*, to knot. Its origins lie in the basic human need for clothing for protection against the elements. More recently, hand knitting has become less a necessary skill and more a hobby.



### Early origins of knitting

Knitting is a technique of producing fabric from a strand of yarn or wool. Unlike weaving, knitting does not require a loom or other large equipment, making it a valuable technique for nomadic and non-agrarian peoples.

The oldest woollen artefacts are socks from Egypt, dating from the 11th century CE. They are a very fine gauge, done with complex colour-work and some have a short row heel, which necessitates the purl stitch. Although these were first thought to be knitted, later research has found that these early examples are created using the naalbinding. In contrast to knitting, which uses two or more needles with long stretches of yarn, naalbinding is produced using a single needle with an eye, similar to a large sewing needle. The first examples of knitting are now thought to have originated in the middle east around 600-900 AD.

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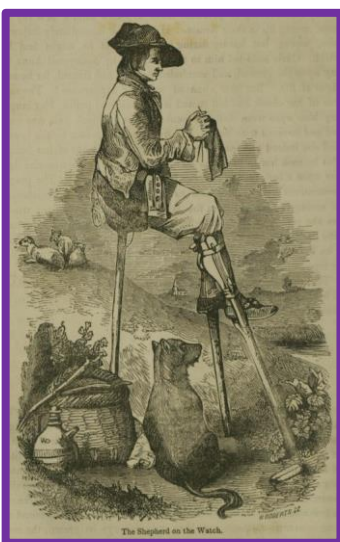
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Most histories of knitting place its origin somewhere in the Middle East, and from there it spread to Europe by Mediterranean trade routes and later to the Americas with European colonization.

## Early European knitting

The earliest known knitted items in Europe were made by Muslim knitters employed by Spanish Christian royal families. Their high level of knitting skill can be seen in several items found in the tombs in the Abbey of Santa María la Real de Las Huelgas, a royal monastery, near Burgos, Spain. Among them are the knitted cushion covers and gloves found in the tomb of Prince Fernando de la Cerda, who died in 1275. The silk cushion cover was knit at approximately 20 stitches per inch. It included knit patterns reflecting the family armory, as well as the Arabic word *baraka* ("blessings") in stylized Kufic script. Numerous other knit garments and accessories, also dating from the mid-13th century, have been found in cathedral treasuries in Spain.

There also is a Votic knit fragment dated to late 13th century excavated in Estonia. This fragment is knit in a stranded pattern in three colors and was likely part of a mitten cuff.



Several paintings from Europe portray the Virgin Mary knitting and date from the 14th century, including *Our Lady Knitting* by Tommaso da Modena (circa 1325-1375) and *Visit of the Angel*, from the right wing of the Buxtehude Altar, 1400–10, by Master Bertram of Minden. These paintings show no knitting pattern; the earliest known knitting pattern was published in 1524.

Archaeological finds from medieval cities all over Europe, such as London, Newcastle, Oslo, Amsterdam, and Lübeck, as well as tax lists, prove the spread of knitted goods for everyday use from the 14th century onward. Like many archaeological textiles, most of the finds are only fragments of knitted items so that in most cases their former appearance and use is unknown. One of the exceptions is a 14th or 15th century woollen child's cap from Lübeck.

Although the purl stitch was used in some of the earliest knitted items in Egypt, its knowledge may have been lost in Europe. The first European purl stitches appear in the mid-16th century, in the red silk stockings in which Eleanora de Toledo, wife of Cosimo de Medici, was buried, and which also include the first lacy patterns made by yarn-overs, but the technique may have been developed slightly earlier. The English Queen Elizabeth I herself favoured silk stockings; [18] these were finer, softer, more decorative and much more expensive than those of wool. Stockings reputed to have belonged to her still exist, demonstrating the high quality of the items specifically knitted for her. During this era the manufacture of stockings was of vast importance to many Britons, who knitted with fine wool and exported their wares. Knitting schools were established as a way of providing an income to the poor. The fashion of the period, requiring men to wear short trunks, made fitted stockings a fashion necessity. Stockings made in England were sent to the Netherlands, Spain, and Germany.

Many elaborate designs were developed, such as the cable stitch used on Aran sweaters, which was developed in the early 20th century in Ireland.

Next time – In Part 2, we will look at developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries.

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