

## A Merry Christmas

Hello everyone! This is another brief edition of our newsletter – combining November and December. We are sending our very best wishes to you all for a safe and happy ending to this miserable year. And we are hoping that 2021 will prove to be a year of repair – a chance to once again get out and meet you.

## Yarn Clubs



We know many of you enjoy our Yarn Clubs, but recognise that sending three separate monthly packages represents a considerable added expense, especially given the recent increases in international mail costs and the late news that Royal Mail are (once again) increasing UK prices with effect from 1 January 2021!

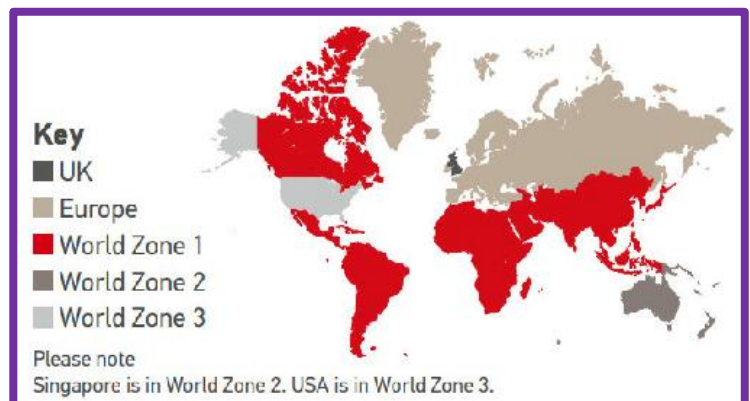
We would therefore like to trial a slightly different approach. For the first club of 2021, we are planning to produce three skeins in the same yarn base (still in a choice of 4-ply or laceweight and all new colourways to our range), all of which would be dyed in a particular theme but featuring three shades/tones that will work together or separately. We know many customers like to make

larger multi-coloured/toned projects, which these would be ideal for. The three skeins will all be shipped at the same time, which will reduce the postage costs by between 30% and 65%, depending on the destination.

Subscriptions for the first new Club, *The Spring Garden in Alpaca Silk* - featuring the soft and subtle pinks and purples you'd find in spring flowers - will be open from now until the end of January in the normal way, and the three skeins will be dyed and shipped together during February. We will then open up subscriptions for the next club throughout April, with shipping during May; and so on. Basically, you will be paying for your three skeins up-front as you do now, but will receive them all during the second month and will pay less for shipping. The cost will be as follows:

**3 skeins of Alpaca Silk Laceweight or 4-ply yarn:  
£55 + shipping by region**

UK	£3.95,
Europe	£7.45,
Zone 1	£11.50,
Zone 2	£13.50,
Zone 3	£15.35



We hope our regulars will be willing to try this new approach, and that it may also encourage others to give the clubs a go. The cost of the yarn itself is always discounted from the normal single skein price by at least 5-10%, so it represents good value. And, if you want to make the shipping cost go even further, you can add extra skeins from the webstore to your parcel too, as a number of our regulars already do. Just add the extras to your shopping cart, or alternatively give us a call or drop us an email, telling us which skein(s) you want to add, and we'll set up a custom listing for you with adjusted or zero shipping as appropriate.

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## – Winter’s Just Desserts

The third skeins for the current Winter’s Just Desserts Club will be despatched next week.

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## Sales and Special Offers

The Rolling Sale continues on our website through December, with several different bases being featured every week. These don’t always change on the same day of the week, so keep checking back to see what’s available. You’ll find all the offers on the Sale Items page here.

We’re also taking part in a special Christmas Market with The Online Wool Show this coming weekend, 5 and 6 December. As part of our listing, we’re offering 10% of all shawl, cowl and hat kits. We’ll have a selection available on The Online Wool Show website but others will also be listed on our own website here. To take advantage of the discount when ordering from our own website, use the coupon code **KITSAVE10** when ordering.

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## New Designs



Julie continues work on the design for her new Fair Isle sweater, which she’s called *Wynter Frost*, and this should be available by the end of December. Following a plea from one of our customers, Julie has decided to add a long-sleeved version as well as the sleeveless option.

The design is perfect as an “entry level” Fair Isle garment for those who don’t feel brave enough to tackle a full “all-over” pattern. Each version can all be worked in three or four colours of 4-ply yarn and Julie is busy dyeing 200-400g packs of several of our yarns suitable for the main colours. Only small quantities of the contrast yarns are needed and our mini-skeins will be ideal for this, so we’ll have plenty

of these ready too.

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## On the Road ... 2021

As we go to press – some more good news and some bad news. Here in the UK, we are nearly all in lock-down again, with only 1% of the population (Cornwall and the Scillies) allowed a ‘normal life’. This may well extend into springtime.

On the other hand, we have recently completed applications for Buxton and Bakewell Wool Gatherings (in May and October 2021 respectively), so keep your fingers crossed. And we are also hoping to take part in the on-line show for Waltham Abbey in January. We hope to “see” you there.

In the meantime, we look forward to seeing some familiar names tomorrow when the ‘OnLine Wool Show’ gets into gear again.

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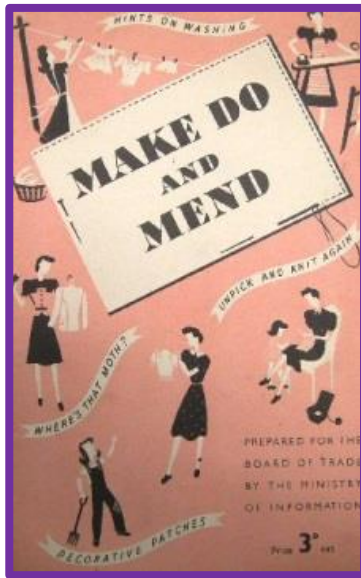
## Did You Know - #69 – History of Knitting – Part Three

*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. Back in October 2018, we covered Crochet and we have also looked at Lace-style knitting in detail (Dec 2015 and Jan 2016). Now we are looking at the history and development in knitting itself.*

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## 1939–1945: Knitting for Victory

“Make do and Mend” was the title of a booklet produced by the British wartime government department, the Ministry of Information. Wool was in very short supply, and the booklet encouraged women to unpick old unwearable woollen items in order to re-use the wool.

Knitting patterns were issued so that people could make items for the Army and Navy to wear in winter, such as balaclavas and gloves. This not only produced the much-needed items, but also gave those on the "home front" a positive sense of contributing to the war effort.

Julie's Mum well remembers knitting socks and gloves – using four needles! - whilst at school for the War effort.

## 1950s and 60s: Haute Couture

After the war years, knitting had a huge boost as more colours and styles of yarn were introduced. Many thousands of patterns fed a market hungry for fashionable designs in bright colours. The twinset was an extremely popular combination for the home knitter. It consisted of a short-sleeved top with a long-sleeved cardigan in the same colour, designed to be worn together.

Girls were taught to knit in school, as it was thought to be a useful skill, not just a hobby. Magazines such as “*Pins and Needles*” in the UK, carried patterns of varying difficulty including not just clothes, but also blankets, toys, bags, lace curtains and other items that could be sold for profit.

## 1980s decline

The popularity of knitting showed a sharp decline during this period in the Western world. Sales of patterns and yarns slumped, as the craft was increasingly seen as old-fashioned and children were rarely taught to knit in school. The increased availability and low cost of machine-knitted items meant that consumers could have a sweater at the same cost of purchasing the wool and pattern themselves, or often for far less.

Alternatives to traditional woollen knitwear gained in popularity, such as tracksuits and sweatshirts, which began to be worn as everyday wear rather than only in a sporting context. Sewn from a micro-knit synthetic fabric and brushed on one side, these were more fashionable at the time, produced more cheaply and quickly and easier for consumers to care for. These fabrics could also easily be printed with fashionable designs. Although made from a kind of knit fabric they are not usually considered knitwear.

These new garments, along with trends away from formality in clothing meant traditional knitwear was no longer seen as sportswear as it had been in the 1920s. Knitwear became more associated with “smart casual” wear.

Technological advances such as computerized knitting machines saw new designs and approaches to knitting. Some artists began to see knitting as a legitimate art form rather than a craft or cottage industry, and more attention was placed on the design possibilities of knitting from an artistic perspective rather than just fashionable or practical approaches.

## 1990s

By the late 1980s, many of the suppliers to the home knitting market had disappeared or been absorbed into other companies, while local wool shops suffered a marked reduction in numbers. However, home knitting still had a strong and loyal following.

The growth of craft fairs, release of well researched books on many aspects of knitting and the continued support among those who had learnt the skill in the heyday of the 60s and 70s kept a considerable amount of interest in knitting alive.

One of the most influential changes was the spread of the internet, which enabled knitters to share advice, patterns and experience, but also it meant that home knitters had direct access to supplies rather than being reliant on local sources. These trends have continued.

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## Early 21st century Revival

The 21st century has seen a resurgence of knitting. This resurgence can be noted in part to coincide with the growth of the internet and internet-based technologies, as well as the general "Handmade Revolution" and interest in DIY crafts.

Natural fibres from other animals, such as alpaca, angora and merino and plant fibres, chiefly cotton, have become easier and less costly to collect and process and therefore more widely available. Exotic fibres, such as silk, bamboo, yak and qiviut are growing in popularity as well. The yarn industry has started to make novelty yarns, which produce stunning results without years of knitting experience. Designers have begun to create patterns which work up quickly on large needles, a phenomenon known as "instant-gratification knitting".

Celebrities including Julia Roberts, Winona Ryder, Dakota Fanning and Cameron Diaz have been seen knitting and have helped to popularize the revival of the craft. There has also been a return by men to the art of knitting — one illustration being the role models in the designer partnership of Arne Nerjordet & Carlos Zachrisson, and another the publication of books aimed at a male readership.



*Critters (clockwise from top left: Alpaca, Yak, Musk Ox (which yields qiviut yarn; goats)*

As time and technologies change, so does the art of knitting. The internet allows knitters to connect, share interests and learn from each other, whether across the street or across the globe. Among the first internet knitting phenomena was the popular KnitList, with thousands of members. In 1998, the first online knitting magazine, "KnitNet", began publishing. (It suspended publication with its 54th edition in 2009.) Blogging later added fuel to the development of an international knitting community.

Patterns from both print and online sources have inspired groups (known as knit-a-long's, or KAL's) centered on knitting a specific pattern. Knitting podcasts have also emerged, with much cross-pollination of ideas from blogs, 'zines, and knitting books. Traditional designs and techniques that had been preserved by a relatively small number of hand-knitters are now finding a wider audience as well – eg Fair Isle, Lace, Ganseys.



In addition, a type of graffiti called yarn bombing, has spread worldwide. Like traditional graffiti, this consists of displaying knitted pieces in public spaces without permission.

On 14 January 2006, influential author and knit-blogger Stephanie Pearl-McPhee, otherwise known as Yarn Harlot, challenged the knitting world to participate in the 2006 Knitting Olympics. To participate, a knitter committed to casting-on a challenging project during the opening ceremonies of the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino, and to have that project finished by the time the Olympic flame was extinguished sixteen days later. By the first day of the Olympics, almost 4,000 knitters had risen to the challenge.

As another sign of the knitting's popularity in the early 21st century, a large international online community and social networking site for knitters and crocheters, Ravelry, was founded by Casey and Jessica Forbes in May 2007. At first available by invitation only, the site connects knitting and crochet enthusiasts around the world and, as of today, has over 9.5 million registered users. Keep spreading the word!

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