

Yarn Clubs

– Emerald Isles

Following on from this trial, which proved very successful, we're continuing with the same format of three co-ordinating skeins in a single yarn base and despatched together for the next club. The theme is inspired by the landscapes and colours of Ireland, often called the Emerald Isle. Julie will be dyeing three different colourways which can be used together or separately and featuring greens and neutrals. We're offering this club in a choice of laceweight or 4-ply as before, and this time there is a choice of BFL or Merino Wool as the base. All three skeins will be posted



together as a single package during May, at a price of £44 plus the relevant shipping.

As usual the numbers will be strictly limited, so sign up here now to reserve your place.

- The Spring Garden

Our spring club featured three skeins in our Alpaca Silk blend in laceweight or 4-ply and the colourways were (L to R) Deep Purple Anemone, Primula Profusion and Bleeding Hearts.



Advent Calendars

We know it's far too early to be thinking about the next festive season but a couple of people have asked if we'd consider running a yarn version of an Advent Calendar this year. For those who haven't seen these before, they feature a selection of mini-skeins, sometimes 6 or 12, but often 25 different ones, giving you one to open each day from 1 to 25 December (just like the chocolate versions). The colourways may be random or themed and are ideal for those who like Fair Isle or other multi-coloured projects. The package often includes some free extra goodies like stitch markers, chocolate or vouchers. They are perfect as a gift for someone special, or of course for yourself!



We already supply 4-ply mini-skeins and could offer laceweights as a choice too, if there is sufficient interest in this. 25 of our 20g minis would give a total of 500g of yarn. We're thinking of a nice but eco-friendly box to house tissue-wrapped, numbered skeins, maybe an exclusive hat or cowl pattern plus other goodies, to give you some idea of what could be done.

If you would be interested, please email julie@watercoloursandlace.co.uk with Advent Calendar as the subject, and let us know if you'd prefer 12 or 25 minis, in lace or 4-ply. If we do decide to go ahead with this, we'd aim to have them shipping during November, to allow plenty of time for them to reach any worldwide destinations you may wish to send them on to. Let us know what you think.

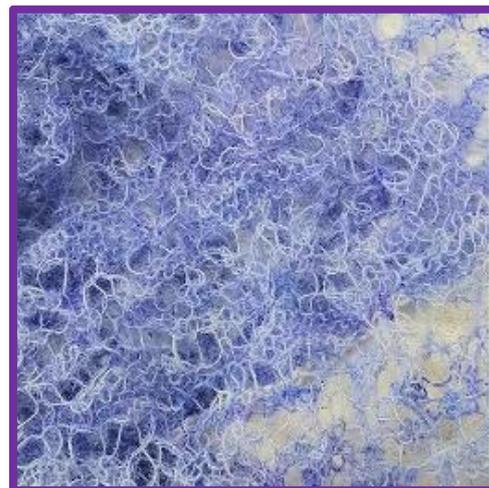
Special Offer

We have a number of yarn bases listed under our Limited Editions and Ends of Line category. They may be the last few skeins we have left of something we won't be restocking, or just an interesting yarn or unusual fibre combination where only a few kilos were available. They are all suitable for knitting and crochet, and also ideal for those who like to experiment with various textile techniques.

In order to clear space for new stock, we're offering 25% off anything listed here until the end of April, using the coupon code **LIMIT21** when you checkout. Many of these yarns are already discounted, so you can grab a real bargain.

Mystery Knitalong

Julie continues work on her Shetland Stole for our next mystery KAL. Here's a little sneak peak of her blue colourway. This is the Shetland Cobweb version but there will also be a standard laceweight option for those who may be a little nervous of using this very fine yarn. More details to follow in a future newsletter.



ChiaoGoo Needles

We've been advised that some resellers on Amazon are supplying counterfeit versions of ChiaoGoo needles - particularly sets of interchangables. The packaging is apparently very similar to the real thing and the logos look correct, but the quality is very much inferior. We would like to reassure our customers that all our ChiaoGoo supplies come direct from the company's authorised distributor in the UK and are therefore guaranteed to be authentic and of premium quality.

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Did You Know #72 – Leicester

We have already seen the Blue Faced Leicester – one of our most popular yarns – but this month we will look at two other kind of Leicester sheep – the Border Leicester and the Leicester Longwool.

Border Leicester

The Border Leicester is a British breed of sheep. It is a polled, long-wool sheep and is considered a dual-purpose breed as it is reared both for meat and for wool. The sheep are large but docile. They have been exported to other sheep-producing regions, including Australia and the United States.

Description

The live weight of a mature Border Leicester ram is in the range of 140–175 kg (309–386 lb) and a mature ewe 90–120 kg (200–260 lb). A yearling ewe is around 64 kg (141 lb). Their white wool tends to be very long and, by Merino standards, broad crimped. In fineness it's about 32 to 38 microns, and is used for medium- to heavy-weight garments. This wool, though, is prized by spinners because of the crimp and lustre. The sheep are normally shorn twice a year when the wool has reached a length of around 100 mm (3.9 in). Lambs yield an average of 1.8 kg (4.0 lb) of wool; yearlings may yield 3.2 kg (7.1 lb) at each shearing. All strains are known for being docile. They produce good milk and are good mothers.



Border Leicester sheep are all white with a distinct long body, well-developed chest, well-sprung ribs and a wide, strong back. The nose should be black and the ears should be large, upright and alert. Feet should also be dark in colour. The head and legs should be free of wool and only covered in short white hair making it easier for shearing. Sheep of this breed should also have a distinct Roman nose.

There are key strengths associated with the Border Leicester making them an excellent breed for farmers. They have good maternal characteristics, meaning that

they make good mothers while producing quality lambs.

History

The Border Leicester was developed in 1767 in Northumberland, England. Their name derives from the fact that their birthplace is near the border of Scotland with their foundation stock being Dishley Leicester rams. The Dishley Leicester was created and bred by Robert Bakewell (1726-1795) by crossing the old Lincolnshire breed with the Leicester type sheep. The Dishley Leicester became very popular with local farmers. George and Mathew Culley bought some of Robert Bakewell's sheep and the breed was soon found on both sides of the border. Around the 1830s, two distinct types of the new breed were developing – one on each side of the border. The Culley brothers were crossing their sheep with Teeswater sheep while other farmers in different areas along the border were crossing with Cheviots. This variation in the breed resulted in the two being nicknamed the "Blue Caps" and the "Red Legs". Many farmers preferred the hardier 'red legs' and around 1850 this variation of the Dishley Leicester became known as the Border Leicester. They were a fairly common breed in the UK by the 19th century.



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Internationally

Registered flocks are now found in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Border Leicester sheep have been exported to British Guiana, Canada, China, Colombia, South Africa, France, Spain, Portugal, United States, India, Japan, Yugoslavia, Iran, Hungary, Russia, Turkey and Switzerland.

Border Leicester sheep were exported to Australia in 1871, where they now have a large number of stud flocks. Border Leicester rams are used for mating with Merino ewes to breed the first-cross mothers that are so valuable for the production of prime lambs. Border Leicester sheep also contribute about 50 percent of the genetics used in the Gromark breed of sheep that were developed in Australia.

The breed was imported into New Zealand in 1859 and, after refrigeration was introduced in the 1880s, the Border Leicester was used as a crossing sire to produce heavyweight lambs and wether mutton. The Border Leicester was later used to develop New Zealand's Border-Romney cross (Coopworth) and the Border-Corriedale (Borderdale) breeds.

The first breed association was formed in 1888 in the United States. Currently, there are two associations:

American Border Leicester Association and the North American Border Leicester Association. Breeders show their sheep at county shows and fairs throughout the year with a National Show being held annually at the North American International Livestock Exposition held in Louisville, Kentucky every November.

Leicester Longwool

The Leicester Longwool is an English breed of sheep. Alternative names for the breed include: Leicester, Bakewell Leicester, Dishley Leicester, English Leicester, Improved Leicester and New Leicester. It is now one of Britain's rarest breeds, categorised as "endangered" by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, since fewer than 500 registered breeding females remain in the United Kingdom.



History

Leicester Longwool sheep date back to the 1700s, and were found in the Midland counties of England, originally developed in Dishley Grange, Leicestershire by Robert Bakewell. Bakewell was the foremost exponent of modern animal-breeding techniques in the selection of livestock. The Leicester Longwool in the 1700s was slow-growing and coarsely boned. They now have been developed to gain weight quickly and are fast-growing. Leicester Longwool was one of the first pure sheep breeds introduced to Australia, in 1826. The Leicester Longwool has been used to improve many sheep breeds because of its meaty carcass and heavy fleece.

Characteristics

The head of a Leicester Longwool should have no signs of horns on the poll (forehead). The face is generally in a wedge shape, covered in white hairs and can appear to have a blue tinge. The lips and nostrils should be black. Having black specks on the face and ears is not objectionable. The neck should be of medium length. The shoulders should be strong and level with the back, which should be flat. The legs should be straight and wide apart and the hooves should be black.

The fleece should be dense (having thick and blocky clumps of wool also known as the staple). It should be lustrous, indicating the shine on the wool, and should have a well-defined crimp or wave from skin to tip. The common fibre diameter for an Leicester Longwool is 32 to 38 micrometres (microns).

The Leicester Longwool should be free, active and well balanced while in movement. It should appear to be alert and robust, showing style and character.

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