

Southern Wool Show

We are delighted to have the chance to make a third visit to Newbury for the third Southern Wool Show, which is this weekend. Missed in 220 for obvious reasons, SWVS returns in a more limited guise this year as we explore public spaces for the first time in a while.

A reminder to everyone that the show will be by ticket only. You will need to get in touch to buy the ticket and an entry time before the day. We will be in the Grandstand.



New Designs

Julie is busy working on some new knit and crochet patterns for small accessories to include with our Advent Calendars, which will make use of the 20g mini-skeins of 4-ply or laceweight yarns. These will be exclusive to the calendars until the start of 2022 and will then be made available on more general release.

Julie is also planning another crochet shawl design for release next year so watch this space for news of that in due course.

Bamboo Circular Needles

Our supplier of ChiaoGoo needles will be offering bamboo versions of the fixed circulars very shortly. If there is sufficient interest, we'll get some in to stock alongside our red lace needles, so please let us know if you like the bamboo circulars and the sizes and lengths you'd prefer.



Mystery Knitalong - Yvaine

The Yvaine Shetland Stole knitalong pattern has proved very popular, with excellent sales via Ravelry and our website. We'll have the finished samples on show at the Southern Wool Show this coming weekend.

A few works in progress have been posted on our Ravelry and Facebook groups, although

we appreciate lots of our customers don't use either of these sites. If you are joining in with the MKAL, and do use either Ravelry or FB, do please post your work so that everyone can admire it. We will be running a prize draw later in the year for finished stoles, so if you're not online you can email or even post us a picture of your project if you'd like the chance to win a voucher for more of our beautiful yarn!



You can see here in close-up, images from both our laceweight (left) and cobweb examples.

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Customer Projects



Gill Cook - Elinor Hap by Kath Andrews in Falklands Merino Light Lace in Faded Moss. Gill asked for a custom order for 250g of the fine lace yarn for this shawl and we think it's a triumph. She knitted it quite quickly too - the yarn was only dyed in late May this year and Gill sent us the picture in July!! Gill has since had another custom order dyed in the same yarn base, so we expect a second shawl is already in production.

Anne Ward - Saitama Cardigan by Martin Storey using 2 strands of Merino Silk Sparke Lace in Red Velvet Rose. The pattern uses a mohair blend alongside a laceweight but Anne can't wear mohair, so she opted for the wool silk blend instead. We think it's turned out beautifully, Anne! Julie has had this design in her personal queue for a while, so hopefully Anne's example will prompt her to get her own project off the ground.



Top of the Pops

Obviously, the main focus of 'Watercolours & Lace' is yarn. Nevertheless, we do like to complement our yarns with various accessories. This table shows the ranking of our accessory sales over the last few years.

Well over half of our accessory sales are patterns – the obvious link to our yarns.

Another steady performer is "Threads", which are popular with those lacemakers and embroiderers among you. The miscellaneous category includes things like knitting needles, crochet hooks and beads. 'Fabrics' includes our project bags, needle rolls and kits.

When we repeat this info in a few months' time, We are hoping that it will reflect some encouraging salesfigures once we start exhibiting once again. There is no doubt that 2020 was a "no-go area" for accessories on the internet only.

Accessory	Rank17	Rank18	Rank19	Rank20
Patterns	1	1	1	1
Miscellaneous	6	2	3	2
Threads	2	4	2	3
Crochet Kits	3	3	4	4
Fabrics	5	6	5	5
Markers	4	5	6	6

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Yarn Club

The second month's skein for Gold Rush was despatched earlier in August and the final skein will follow in mid-September, when we have a short gap between the Southern Wool Show and Yarnale.

We won't run a Yarn Club from October to December this year, as we'll be concentrating on our new Advent Calendars. There are still just a few places left - we'll take new orders until Wednesday 1 September, after which we'll close the books for these. We're offering 4-ply or laceweight calendars with a choice of 12 or 24 mini-skeins in two colourways: Silent Night and Rudolph's Revenge. Full details on the website here.

Did You Know - #76 Men Who Knit

Traditionally knitting has been seen as predominantly female-centric. However, the popularity of knitting amongst men is seeing a resurgence. This was highlighted by the publicity that Tom Daley attracted during his exploits at the recent Olympic Games in Tokyo, where he was photographed knitting and producing a "Team GB" sweater (below). We have also included a paragraph on Kaffe Fassett, a well-known designer. So, you may not be surprised to hear that men's role in knitting has a long history too.

History of Men's Knitting

The technique of knitting is thought to have originated around 1000 AD in Egypt. Historically people knitted with natural fibres such as cotton or wool, which means many early knitted items have decayed, making it challenging to trace back the exact roots of the craft. It is suggested to have arrived in Europe sometime between 1000 – 1500 AD, perhaps during the Crusades or the Arab Conquests.



About 200 A.D., Arabian men were fishing for food but they had no way to catch several fish at once. They caught one fish. Then a second fish. And it was like, Geeze, this is slow as a camel. Then one day, perhaps down by the dock, one of the guys was messing with yarn, forming loops in it, and bam! Fishing net. (Other cultures likely invented knitting elsewhere around the world.)

They stuck the net in the water and caught a boatload of fish. And someone said, "We just invented the fishing net." And someone else said, "Let's invent sweaters."

This was a very big deal because clothing back then was woven and wearing woven clothes is like wearing a bed sheet. They don't stretch. Try wearing a hat or yoga pants made out of a bed sheet.

Soon, Arabian men were wearing gorgeous, handmade sweaters. When they traded goods with neighboring lands, the neighbours were like, "That is the most amazing piece of clothing. Teach me."

During the Middle Ages in the UK, men's knitting guilds were set up. This was a huge commitment, requiring six years of training. The young men would spend three years in apprenticeship followed by three years travelling to gain experience and find new patterns. Women were strictly not allowed.

Teenage boys who wanted to become knitters would become apprentices and leave their families to live with master knitters. The master knitter's family would say, "We'll give you food and a place to live while you knit jackets, stockings and felted caps". But the masters were also businessmen and so they controlled quality, quantity and pricing of knitted goods. After six years, the young man would take the equivalent of a knitting exam. Part one was a business test and he'd had to prove he knew the trade inside and out. Part two was a skills test. He'd have to knit a really complicated thing and do a fantastic job in order to pass.

The 16th century was a new era on invention and, with it came the end of male domination in knitting. In 1589, an English minister named William Lee invented a knitting frame and then two other people invented knitting machines. These machines cranked at about 7 million stitches per minute! No one could knit as fast by hand.

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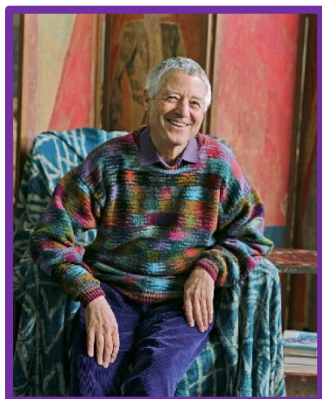
Most men stopped knitting, which was sad. But in pioneer days in America, boys still had to knit by hand because there were no machines or shops and they needed things to wear.

Then came World Wars I and II, and boys in schools started to knit for the troops because both British and American governments asked everyone to knit. Schools would have contests, such as: who could make the most noise with their knitting needles, which of course the boys just loved. Socks, bandages, helmet liners and mittens with no fingers - because soldiers needed their fingers to fire guns and open tins of food. These were some of the things made out of the squares that students knitted. The soldiers would get the handmade items and say, *"Oh, thank you for the handmade socks. I feel loved and cared for even though I'm standing in a trench."*

Today, according to several reports, more men than ever are knitting on both sides of the Atlantic. In the States, the Craft Yarn Council estimates that 2 million boys and men now knit. These are college students, doctors, musicians, stockbrokers, Hollywood stars, inner-city youth, snowboarders — all who are taking up the 1,800-year-old craft not out of necessity but because they find it meditative, restorative, creative, or an avenue to connect with others. And such pastimes, no matter their history, are pure gems.

Benefits of Knitting

Gender aside, knitting has proven mental and physical health benefits. Cardiff University carried out a recent survey of over 3,000 knitters. The results were astounding and affirming. Knitters reported feeling more relaxed, lower levels of stress, higher cognitive functioning as well as improved social contact. The craft has been compared to yoga for its meditative qualities and it can even be beneficial for chronic pain sufferers. The mindful rhythmic nature of knitting provides focus and concentration. The individual's worries are cast aside and it becomes easier to enter a state of flow, totally immersed within the present moment.



Kaffe Fassett

Frank Havrah "Kaffe" Fassett, MBE is an American-born, British-based artist who is best known for his colourful designs in the decorative arts—needlepoint, patchwork, knitting, painting and ceramics. While still a child, Fassett renamed himself after an Egyptian boy character from the book *Boy of the Pyramid* by Ruth Fosdick Jones. His name rhymes with 'safe asset'.

On the Road Again ... 2021

We can hardly believe that we are on the threshold of our yarn first show for months! To be exact: 685 days since our last show – at Inverness in October 2019.

Sadly, that show is no longer going ahead, but we are delighted to be heading to Newbury in a few days. Our new 'normal' is nearly here!

On the Road ... 2021

All shows confirmed, except those marked (TBC)
All shows with a grey background have been cancelled

YarnLace

4-5 Sep	Southern Wool Show	Newbury Racecourse
25-26 Sep	Yarndale	Skipton Auction Mart
2 Oct	Fenland Fair	Burgess Hall, St Ives
9 – 10 Oct	Bakewell Wool Gathering	Agricultural Centre

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