

Yarn Clubs and Advent Calendars

The three skeins produced for the Gold Rush Yarn Club are shown below. These were Golden Sunflower in Alpaca Silk Cashmere, After the Goldrush in Baby Alpaca and Yellow Ochre in Mulberry Silk.



We are not producing a Yarn Club for October-December this year while we concentrate on the Advent Calendar packs, which Julie is busy dyeing at present. These have proved extremely popular and we hope to start shipping them within the next two weeks. If you missed out on ordering one, there may be one or two spare sets of the 12-skein boxes available, so do please get in touch if you'd like to go on the waiting list for one of these.

Mystery Knitalong - Yvaine

We know lots of people are still working on their Yvaines - we appreciate it's not a quick project to work! However, one or two finished stoles are now appearing on Ravelry and social media and Julie's samples were shown at our recent shows, so here are some pics of her finished versions. The samples were very much admired at the yarn events and our kits sold extremely well. The full pattern is now available on Ravelry and via our webstore and we are, of course, happy to take custom orders for the yarns needed for either the cobweb or the laceweight version if sufficient of the colourway you want is not in stock on the website.

We will be running a prize draw for finished versions of Yvaine. Prizes will be gift vouchers for use on the website to the values of £25 and £15. Please post a picture of your finished stole in our Ravelry group, or on Facebook or Instagram, tagged with #YvaineMKAL, or email to julie@watercoloursandlace.co.uk before the end of December to enter the draw, which will take place early in the New Year. Good luck!



Julie's versions of Yvaine Bluefaced Leicester Purest in "Foxgloves at Dusk" (left) and Shetland Cobweb Lace in "Iris Under a Summer Sky"

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New Yarn - Silky Merino Lace

Julie introduced this new yarn at our Autumn shows and it proved extremely popular. A blend of 60% Merino Wool and 40% Silk, it is soft and smooth with a lovely sheen, perfect to wear next to the skin and ideal for shawls, cowls, scarves and delicate lace tops. A standard laceweight at 800m/100g, it's available in the webstore now at £20 per skein. Julie has dyed a few pairs of this yarn, so for those of you who would like to make the Yvaine Shetland stole but don't want a pure wool, this is ideal.



Silky Merino shown here in four colourways (from left): Winter Storm, Lakeland Glen, Moss Green and Lilac Time

Did You Know - #77 - French Sources

Back in April we covered "British Sheep" in DYK 73. This revealed that there were 72 breeds of sheep bred in Britain. We have covered all of the types that have been kept for their wool and are now exploring other interesting aspects.

For example, we were struck by the number of so-called British breeds which clearly had a French origin. We had already covered 'Bleu du Maine' (back in December 2018), but there are a number of others which are now bred over here: Berrichon du Cher, British Rouge, Charollais, Ile de France and Vendéen. So, we will give you a brief summary of each of these.



Berrichon du Cher

The Berrichon is a large, white-faced, medium-boned, well-fleshed sheep originating from the Cher region of France. Its primary role is that of a terminal sire producing quick growing, easy fleshed lambs capable of being finished at a range of weights to suit varying specifications and demands.

Berrichon du Cher (left) and Charollais

Berrichon breeders have concentrated on breeding sheep which can lamb easily and are active at birth being quickly on to their feet and suckling. The Berrichon has a triangular shaped head and is smooth over the shoulder and hip making it an ideal choice for gimmers, ewe hoggs and all first-time lambers. The Berrichon also has a tight skin and the wool is of a very high standard which has in the past been exported for use in high-class wool products in Japan.

Charollais

The Charollais breed is a terminal sire breed so emphasis on selection should be placed on its excellent fleshing qualities and growth. The purpose of the breed is to breed rams for crossing with commercial ewes to produce quality meat lambs. Easy lambing is an important trait associated with the breed; so skeletal structure to ensure this is essential. Selection and assessment of the breed falls into two categories: structural correctness and breed characteristics.

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The breed was first imported from France in 1976, where it is centred around the town of Charolles in the Saone Loire region of France where it grazes alongside the famous Charolais Cattle. Since then it has grown in popularity and is currently probably the second most numerous terminal sire breed for the UK.

Ile de France

The Ile De France sheep breed was developed in France and introduced into the UK in the 1970's. They are found in small flocks across the UK. A typical Ile De France is a versatile, large sheep. They are popular meat sheep but also have a short fleece.

The Ile de France sheep are large sized and thick set animals. They are white in colour and have white faces and their nostrils and lips are pink. Their lower legs and face are wool-free. Both rams and ewes are naturally polled, which means they have no horns

This sheep is raised mainly for meat production purpose. They are strong and hardy animals. They are mainly used as a terminal sire in the United States, but are also occasionally found as a dairy breed there.

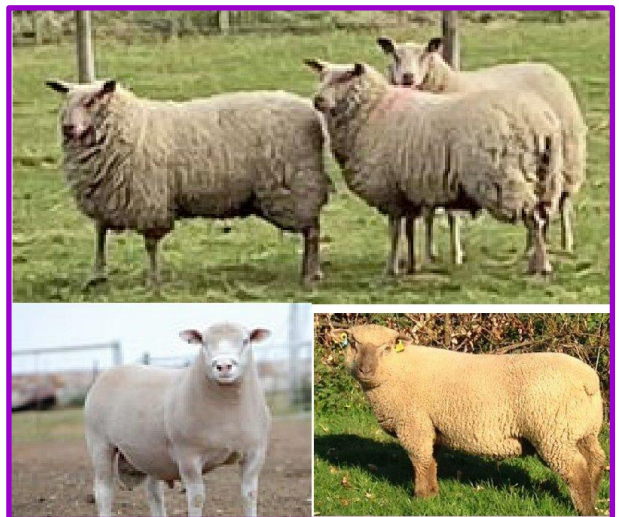
Today, the breed is one of the top meat sheep breeds worldwide, being found in Australia, South Africa, the Americas and as well as in Europe.

(British) Rouge

The Rouge breed originates mainly from the Loire area in France, where it is known as 'Rouge de L'Ouest' (usually shortened to Rouge) which translates as "The Red of the West", describing both the skin colour and origin of the sheep. Renowned for its rich thick milk the Rouge was originally kept as a dairy sheep producing the famous Camembert cheeses.

French breeders, however, concentrated on breeding their animals for superior confirmation, whilst retaining prolificacy and milk production. These attributes, rarely seen together in one animal, were the primary reason for the breed's introduction to the British Isles.

The British Rouge Sheep Society was formed in 1986 with a view to maintaining the breed's purity and promoting its improvement.



British Rouge (top), Ile de France (bottom left) and Vendéen

Vendéen

The breed is easily managed and is suitable for most management systems. The sheep will adapt to extensive systems on poor land, there are several flocks kept at 1,000 feet or they can be more intensively managed on good lowland pasture. Vendéen Sheep are also suitable for indoor rearing. Under some systems it is possible to have three crops of lambs in two years. The ewes and rams are normally docile adding to the ease of management.

Ewes usually lamb easily on their own, lambing problems are uncommon, and the new-born lamb is eager to live, they "get up and grow". The normal birth weight of lambs is 4 to 6kg.

The Vendéen breed has been known in the Vendee region of France for many hundreds of years and is said to owe some of its blood to sheep saved from the wrecks of Spanish galleons at the time of the Armada. More definite links were established with the importation of Southdown sheep to the Vendee a little over a century ago. Recently sheep have been selected to provide lean meat as demanded by the French market. Further selection has been made in recent years for hardiness and prolificacy.

The first importation into Britain was in 1981 (at about which time the British Vendéen Sheep Society was formed) when the first ewe lambs to be imported all produced twins.

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The main purpose of the Vendéen is for the production of high quality lean meat of an excellent flavour from both pure and crossbred sheep.

The head shows much character and presence. The head and cheeks will carry wool. The ears are large and fine. The face is brown and wool-free. The nose is reasonably long and the muzzle broad. The body is long with a broad back. The Vendéen is not a long legged breed, but it should not be too close to the ground.

The fleece is of excellent quality, being of a fine down type and very uniform in fibre length, with no coarse kempy wool on the lower part of the hind quarters. The staple length is 5 to 7 cm and the average UK fleece weighs 3.5kg per sheep.

On the Road Again ... 2022

A huge thank you to everyone who came to see us at the four events we attended in September and October. We felt all were well organised and run very safely, with timed entry slots to avoid an early rush, hand sanitiser available on stands and many people like us wearing masks to protect others, as well as themselves.

Footfall was, as expected, considerably down on previous years, which does of course affect the profitability of such events for us. We do understand that many of you are not yet comfortable attending busy shows and hope you will continue to support us by shopping online until you are able to get out and about. We will be loading as much stock onto the website as possible during the coming weeks, to give you plenty of choice.

We hope to attend a number of events during Spring 2022 (see box right) and these will be posted on the website as they are confirmed.

On the Road ... 2022

All shows confirmed, except those marked (TBC)

YarnLace

All shows with a grey background have been cancelled

Feb	5	Aragon Lace	Lakeview Village Hall, Wixams
	12	Suffolk Lace Day	Village Hall, Wickham Market
Mar	26 – 27 (tbc)	East Anglian Yarn Festival	Holiday Inn, Norwich
Apr	9 – 10	Spring Into Wool	Grammar School, Leeds
	23 – 24 (tbc)	Wonderwool Wales	Welsh Showground, Builth Wells

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