

The Knitter loves...



ON OUR NEEDLES Knitter's notebook

Our operations editor, Helen Spedding, has been making gifts for friends:

① "I've recently finished my first-ever lace shawl - 'Ishbel' by Ysolda Teague, which I knitted in a lovely shade of Wollmeise merino. I really enjoyed the pattern, and have cast on a second Ishbel in Blue Sky Alpaca Alpaca Silk. It will be a 90th birthday present for my grandmother, and I chose a

butterscotch colour which should suit her perfectly."

② "I love making baby clothes, but my children are too big now for bootees and suchlike. Luckily, I know plenty of people expecting babies at the moment, and I made these sandals for my neighbour, who has just had a little girl. The pattern is from Debbie Bliss's *The Ultimate Book of Baby Knits*."

③ "Gudrun Johnston is one of my favourite designers, and I love her book *The Shetland Trader*. I'm going to make her simple yet elegant Hömin Shawl, but I can't decide which yarn to use from my stash. Should it be the primrose-yellow 2ply laceweight yarn from Jamieson & Smith, or the gorgeous Natural Dye Studio Angel laceweight... Tough decision!"



Elegance from Toft

British alpaca producer Toft is very excited about its brand-new selection of knitting kits. The range has a fresh, fashionable feel and includes a lovely striped jumper (pictured above), a racer-back vest and beautiful scarves, socks and cowls. There's also a pretty baby set that includes a pixie hat, gloves, bootees and legwarmers.

Many of the new kits use Toft's fine-weight baby alpaca yarn, so are ideal for summer.

Prices for the knitting kits start at £11, and they include a pattern and all the yarn you'll need, held in a cotton tote bag.

These kits would make a lovely gift for a knitting friend, or a treat for yourself!

To see the full range, visit www.thetoftalpachop.co.uk or call 01788 810626 for more details



Wonderful wash

We popped into Marmalade Yarns in Frome recently and found among the gorgeous hanks a bottle of Mitchell's Woolly Wash. Mitchell's are renowned for their gentle soap, which they have been making since the 1930s, and this new product is perfect for delicate items. We've tested it on a baby blanket, lingerie and trainer insoles (don't ask!) and all come out smelling lovely. Around £3.75. Ours was from Marmalade Yarns (01373 473557)

Protect your pins

Many double-pointed needles (DPNs) are notoriously fragile and are easily lost, so we think these DPN protectors made by Gina Ellis are a great idea. Made from pretty elasticated fabric, they stretch to fit your pins and will keep them neat and secure in your knitting bag. They're stocked by yarn shop 'A Good Yarn' in Cleethorpes and cost £5.99.

Never lose a pin again!
Call 01472 508707 or visit www.agoodyarn.co.uk for more details





Eye on the prize

Are you brave enough to enter a design contest? Juliet Bernard explains how knitters can learn so much from the experience



Three words for you: knitting design competition. What's your reaction? If you see one in a magazine do you quickly turn the page, or instantly feel inspired? If you are in the former camp, maybe we can persuade you to think again. After all, as a knitter you know you already have a huge amount

of technical skill. If you have ever changed the colours in a Fair Isle to suit you, or slightly amended the shaping of a garment, or simply swatched a stitch that you liked the look of, then you are already dipping your toes into the big pool marked 'design'. Entering a competition may just give you the opportunity to splash around and have some fun.

Design competitions come in various shapes and sizes, from those aimed at the public to those exclusively for students. Each one will have a different brief; you may

be asked to work in a certain yarn, to a given theme or a particular historical or geographical context. What the judges will be looking for is your interpretation of the brief – there is no right or wrong way to be creative. Ultimately any competition must be inspiring, interesting and fun for someone to enter. Although it is quite nice to win a prize...

Something for everyone

Toft Alpaca has a very loyal and passionate customer base, and founder Kerry Lord wanted to reward them with a knitting competition that would be intriguing as well as encouraging them to really explore their innovative side. The brief was very straightforward; simply use 115 metres of any Toft yarn.

"We really wanted to throw open the competition to everybody regardless of their knitting skill – so someone who has just started to knit might choose our chunky yarn

Many competitions require a sketch and a swatch of your idea



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98 Chart: Back
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We recommend

Design competitions



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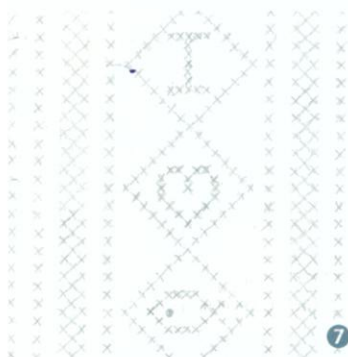
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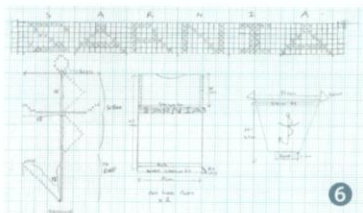


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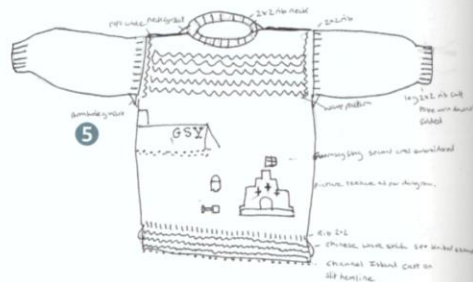


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1+2 Rowan encourages student designers through its Design Award. These entries were from Helen Turner (left) and Ruth Green. Finalists of I Knit's Guernsey competition include 3+4 Suzanne Strachan 5 Rose Polli 6 Jackie Butterfield 7 Janet Andrews



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to design a scarf or cowl, whereas a knitter using our laceweight will create something completely different," explains Kerry. Her advice to anyone planning to run a competition is to make sure that knitters have plenty of time to enter, so that the less confident will still try to have a go. The competition has been a huge success and has helped give Kerry some fantastic feedback on Toft yarns.

Keeping history alive

Gerard Allt is the man behind the I Knit London shop, and he jumped at the chance to run a knitting design competition with tourism body Visit Guernsey to promote the rich heritage of the island. Historically, the design of Guernsey sweaters was passed down through families orally, but the tradition had begun to fade by the time of the second World War. In 1945, the Federation of Guernsey Women's Institutes made a conscious effort to protect their heritage by recording the patterns to give us all the opportunity to learn and share the designs.

I Knit London and Visit Guernsey both wanted the competition to be inclusive and to highlight a remarkable cultural tradition. "The initial submission needed only be a sketch, so I thought this would really attract knitters - whether they had

thought of themselves as designers or not," says Gerard. Being inclusive is very important to him: "It's not just a competition for designers, it's for everyone. But whether people enter or not, a seed will be planted which will hopefully inspire people to knit a Guernsey for themselves, even if they don't design it."

The next generation

Marie Wallin is head designer at Rowan, and has been responsible for creating iconic patterns which have won her fans all over the world. She has a wealth of experience working with universities around the UK and has been instrumental in developing very strong relationships with students.

"We began the Rowan Design Award in 2007, with the aim to work more closely with students and universities, raising awareness of hand knitting and crochet with young design talent," Marie says.

Sadly, teaching hand knitting skills had slipped down the agenda in many universities, but Rowan's determination paid off. "When I first started going into universities, a lot of students could not hand knit, and I had to teach basic knitting before the students began to design," Marie says. "However, this year, about 90% of the undergraduate students at Nottingham Trent University could knit, and all the

postgraduate students at the Royal College of Art could knit, and to a very high standard, too." In 2010 the winners were showcased in Liberty's London store during Wool Week.

What is interesting is that after entering the Rowan competition, a lot of the students go onto to use hand knitting and crochet within their final collections and use it in their future careers as designers.

Marie certainly doesn't rule out Rowan design competitions being open to all of us in the future, but at the moment she believes the brand has a duty to "put something back" into education, to mentor and help students evolve their skills. All her hard work will certainly translate into exciting patterns for us to knit in the future.

One for the diary

Both the I Knit London and Toft Alpaca competitions have now closed for entries, but there is still time for you to enter the Clothes Show Live Creative Awards 2011.

Together with Rowan, *The Knitter* is supporting three categories: the Knitted Textile Designer Award, the Knitter Award, and the Young Knitter Award.

The winner of the Knitwear Designer of the Year in 2010 was Pat Strong, who found our brief - to design for a screen siren - very appealing. "The 1930s were film star

Design competitions



8 This stunning dress by Pat Strong won the Clothes Show Live Knitter of the Year award in 2010, supported by *The Knitter*. Pat (right) joined our editor, Juliet (left), on the catwalk

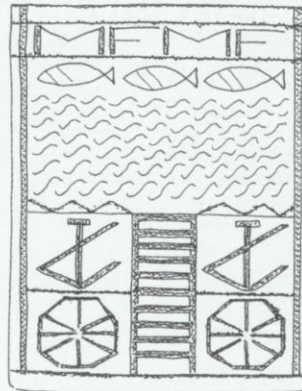
days, and I wanted to design something a bit over-the-top and glamorous," Pat says. Her winning design was a beautiful dress that really stood out when we selected the finalists from sketches and swatches.

Pat hadn't been designing for long when she entered the competition, although she was a good knitter. "I'd started a Fashion Textiles course at Cardonald College Glasgow, and was learning about pattern cutting, so I felt I had a foundation of knowledge to attempt the competition. I needed a challenge to test my emerging design skills." We are so glad she took that first brave step.

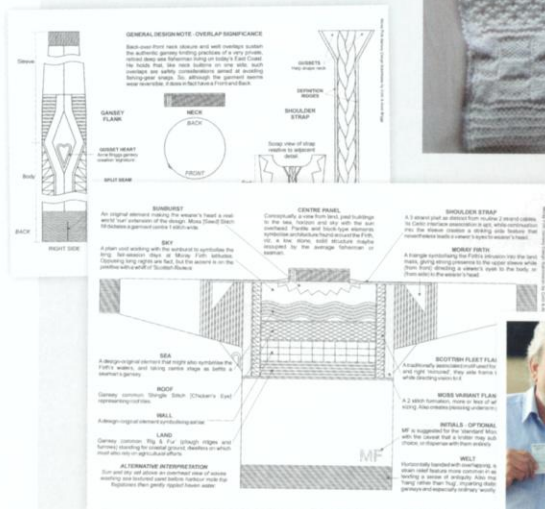
Pat's advice to our readers is that your design has to grab the attention and be knittable - it's one thing drawing and charting, but it's how it comes off the needles that's important. Pat feels it is vital to keep your attention on the brief and not necessarily the prize. "I had a lovely time at the Clothes Show, and I will treasure the whole experience!" We hope Pat's words will motivate you to enter our awards - we'd love you to join us on the catwalk at this year's Clothes Show Live! 4

The closing date for Clothes Show Live Awards is October 14. For details, visit www.clotheshowlive.com/education/designawards

Bitte Karlsson (far right) designed a prize-winning bag, called 'Anchored in Moray', inspired by life in the Moray Firth



Colin and Anne Briggs (below) won first prize for their beautifully intricate jumper



© COLIN BRIGGS

CELEBRATING A RICH HERITAGE

A competition to keep the tradition of gansay knitting alive took place earlier this year. The Moray Firth Gansay Design Competition asked entrants to create a new gansay design for the Moray Firth in the 21st century which reflected aspects of maritime or fishing life around this beautiful and productive Scottish coastline. The two categories were to design a gansay bag or an adult gansay garment. The designs from the winner and runner-up will be featured in a book and DVD in 2012, and the bag pattern will feature in *Simply Knitting* in a future issue.