

Fine Shetland Lace



Winter 2018 issue 2

The designer Ina Irvine

Jamieson's Of Shetland

The Williamson Stole

Aisling M Doonan

A Lace Bauble

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Cynthia Wolfe

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For possible contributions, questions and remarks, please mail to monique@kantwerk.nl

Across the Beach



[Pattern](#) available in the A Passion For Lace... Ravelry Store and on Etsy.



The
Williamson
Stole



After you leave the ferry from Yell, you follow the road to... well, wherever you want to go on Unst. When you look to your left, you will have full view of the "Belmont House". It was purchased for 1 pound and done up for a million. It can be hired for groups and it is the jewel in the crown of Unst.

But even more famous is "Bobby's Bus Stop". It even has its own Wikipage! To be honest, I drove right passed it 2 times, only the third time on Unst I remembered I had to keep my eyes out for it.

Compared to the mainland, there are more 'flat' area's with grassland, rather than heather. There are many historical sites to see: Muness Castle, it "... was burnt down, and may never have been fully repaired. The castle is now roofless and missing its upper storey..." (source: Wikipedia). When you return from Muness and take a right, you can see a Viking Heritage site with the ruins of a Longhouse at the coast. And then... you can drive to Baltasound. With the cute little post office, not the one at the gas station, where I made sure to send a postcard. There, they stamp your card with... a puffin image!

<http://www.unstheritage.com/web/unst-heritage-centre/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Unst-Heritage-Centre-287130644647752/>

Back to the main road, you'll pass the Viking Longboat. With elaborate carvings in the front and back piece, you can get a real feel of the shape and size of the boat, that took the Vikings over the seas to Shetland and England in the 6th century. There are many more pretty and beautiful sites to see on Unst. Norwick Beach, the Boat haven of course the new Tea Room in Haroldswick. They serve home made goods and tea. Don't forget the great view when you have your tea.

My focus was, on every of my 3 visits, [the Unst Heritage Museum](#). The first time we passed it without realising that that was it. A small parking lot, hardly room for a bus but several parking lots for cars and a small entrance to, for me, Lace Walhalla.

You enter the hall with a tiny cash register. Picture postcards, a stand with patterns, a book to register you've been there! There is an exhibit with history of Unst, to be honest, I paid little attention the first time and the second and third time I tried harder but I can't remember a thing. In the second room are the cabinets with lace. An example of a real Shetland home, items on spinning and bleaching the wool to make it whiter.



Looking at the shawls that were on display, it was like reading a book. I recognised (almost) every stitch pattern. It is hard to realise you are looking at a very fine, handspun lace heirloom. We were so happy to be able to see this, learn how the museum stores the shawls that aren't on display. They are kept in a cotton bag and acid free paper. The shawls can only be on display for a short time, so the fibres don't disintegrate due to exposure to (flash-) light.

Now, there is a "No Photography" sign in the cabinets... I might be able to tell a bit on why that is... apart from exposing the shawls to light, exposing them to lace-fans might be a bit 'dangerous' too.



You see, back in 2012, when I knew I was able to go to Shetland Wool Week, I was part of a (select) group of knitters that were heavily focussed on [The Williamson Stole](#). There was a knitter that mentioned the stole for the first time 8 years ago, August 2010. One of the first posts on this shawl was either by Anita or Denise; they both saw the stole on display, while visiting the Unst Heritage Centre (2010).

Anita: "...Sorry, really not expert enough in the yarn or stitches to be able to tell you very much. Jane Thomasina Williamson died in 1958 aged 93, if my maths is correct, so the shawl could be over 100 years old so I would assume it's handspun, but I'm very much a novice at Shetland lace. It looked fairly hairy and untwisted. The lady I spoke to at the heritage centre opened the glass doors for me to get a closer look and take photos, but knew very little about the shawl, so will maybe try emailing them in case someone knows more.

That was a reason to get a whole group in motion to recreate the stole. Anita placed a sketch (not available anymore) on Flickr.com with patterns and repeats, supported with pictures. Denise has some pictures to show you.

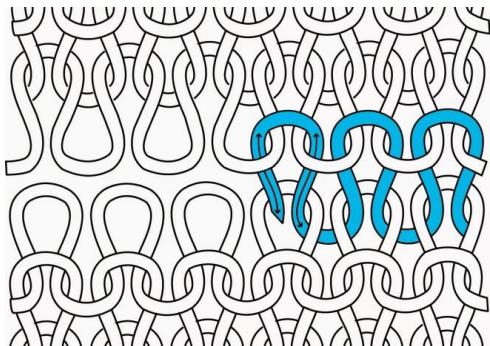
The group made swatches to test the pattern parts and to make sure they matched within the size of the shawl. It ended up to be an amazing collaboration with a stunning result! A beautiful shawl, well written explanations, help with choosing a suitable yarn and needles. This will give you the best tools to make a rectangle shawl in a traditional Shetland way. I do think it will be helpful, when you've chosen to knit this shawl, to make a swatch of a part of the pattern. That way, you make yourself familiar with the pattern, the yarn, the size and the needles.



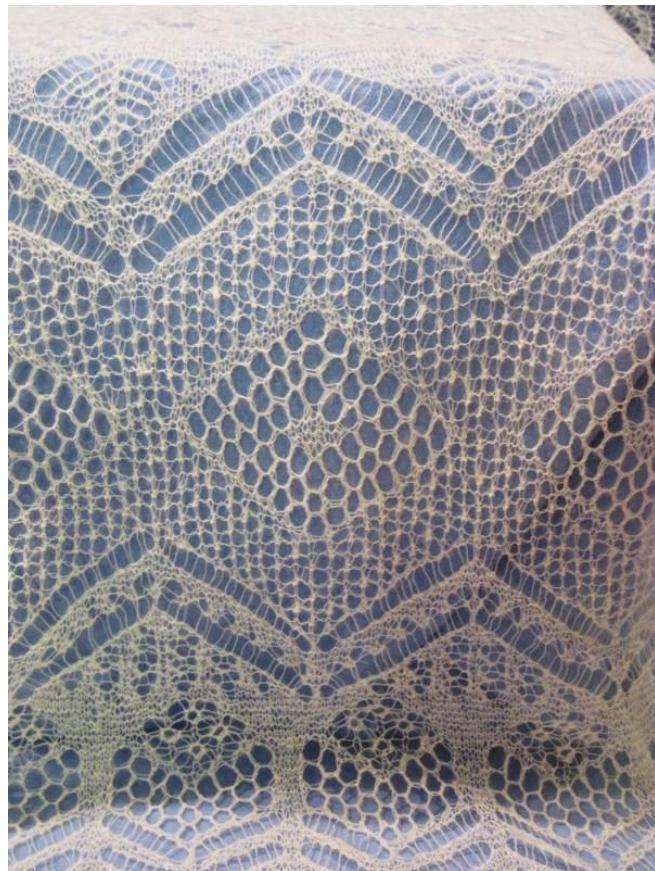
Centre pattern: build up with hexagons, trees and diamonds.

The PDF is made with instructions, per page one good sized chart and a picture of how it needs to look. That makes it easier, little steps to get into it and ending up with a beautiful shawl. There are "flowers", "strawberries", "diamonds" and a centre panel with hexagons. Then, it is decorated with a beautiful edge.

The only thing I thought was missing are visual directions on how to sew the second border to the centre.



There are already 103 projects on Ravelry and it is queued 716 times. The knitters used 26 different types of yarns and the pattern is available in English and Russian. Most versions are in White or Off White / Natural. There is also one in black, some are green and several red versions.



As you can see, this border is build up with very beautiful patterns like the birds eyes, the mesh pattern, a ladder, flowers and an upside down tree.



© for all the pictures of the original shawl: Anita Bruce

Mrs. Williamson



The Designer Ina Irvine

Handspun and handknitted Shawl

by Ina Irvine

©Suzannadarosa picture



Hello Ina! Nice to meet you here!

We met in 2014 during the opening ceremony of the Shetland WoolWeek. Your work and lace made a great impression on me and changed my look on Lace.

Being a Shetlander, it is a wide spread tale that crafting is taught at a very young age, necessary to later provide income. Is that true for you too?

It is true in a way for me as I started very young. My mother knitted every spare moment to supplement the family income. Following her lead, it was natural to join her especially in the dark winter nights with not much to do on our island. We played outside with our friends in the daylight hours with simple games. I started knitting small things like a doll's scarf in garter stitch. My first item to sell was a pair of child's mittens with a Fair isle pattern across the middle. These were sold along with my mother's knitwear for a few shillings.

Would it be an obligation to do so?

In my teens it was more of an obligation as I had seasonal work through the summer as a fish worker and had to earn a little to help my keep. Through the winter there weren't many paying jobs on our small island, of approximately 1000 people.

In my teens, I picked up knitting again, and in my twenties I did sewing. Did you have a time you weren't knitting? Or crafting?

Not really - I think I was born to craft, though sewing was not my favourite. However I did sew a few dresses for my two daughters when they were small. I have also done crochet and basket work, and various types of paper craft.

Who learned you how to knit? And did you learn your children to knit or did they learn at school?

My mother learned me to knit, however it was actually my father who taught me to cast a loop (knit a stitch) while standing at his knee.

When knitting Fair isle or lace, we never followed a pattern - we learned by looking at the picture of work we were doing, and sizing was done by how many stitches you needed for the given size. We then would figure out how many multiples of a certain pattern worked into the number of stitches.

I still work a lot without a written pattern. The black lace shawl was done partly from a photograph and partly from motifs put together where I could fit them in, sometimes with two or three different ones in the same row.

I did learn my two daughters to knit, again more by example of what I was doing. They were also taught knitting at school.

You have quite a wide range of knitting skills; Fair Isle, Lace, Fine Lace and garments. How come knitting lace got more / your attention? What yarns were available to you? Could you buy finer yarn from Shetland wool (in Shetland) or did you have to spin it yourself?

I was previously more of a Fair isle knitter, and for a lot of years took commissions from locals in the shape of fishermen's jumpers knitted in double knitting washable wool - quite bold and brightly patterned. The beginning of my interest in lace started when I acquired my first spinning wheel in the early 1980's.

I was fascinated by the fine Shetland fleeces that I either bought or was given by kindly crofters. I hand spun most of the lace yarn I used myself but also bought 1 ply lace from Jamieson & Smith's (Shetland Woolbrokers) for some items.

The Shetland Museum and Archives has developed a 1ply gossamer / Shetland Supreme yarn. Was that a welcome change? Or have you (also) been using the Cobweb from Jamieson's of Shetland?

When the Shetland Museum developed 1 ply fine lace, I was knitting the miniature shawls from my own hand spun yarn. The museum wanted to buy these for sale in their shop, but asked if I could do them with the new Jamieson & Smith (Shetland Woolbrokers) fine spun yarn which they were promoting. However, I have never knitted anything from Jamieson's of Shetland's fine lace.

On your Ravelry page is says that you learned to spin and got your first wheel in the 80's. You're an accomplished spinner, with a taste for the darker colours. Your "Black Shawl" is truly an Heirloom piece and shows all your skills as a knitter and spinner. Any clue to the spinners in our group how long it takes to spin enough for a hand spun shawl? And is it a 1ply or 2ply yarn that you create?

I have not updated my Ravelry page for a long time. Once I started on Face Book I sort of forgot to look there. I still have the black shawl as I know I will never do another like it. I always spin in 2 ply. I once did a shawl in 1 ply and realised I could achieve a more even thread using 2 ply. I learned a lot by joining the Shetland Guild of Spinners, Weavers, Dyers & Knitters - I became part of the group when it first began in the late 1980's.

I have found some notes from when I spun and knitted the black shawl. I have 350-360 hours quoted for continuous work and planning time. No mention on time for spinning, whether that was counted into the total or not. I know it takes about 6 hours to spin and ply a 100 thread skein.

I learned from you that the finer you work the garter stitch, the better the lace comes out. Was there a learning curve for you in creating finer work?

I agree about the finer needles with garter stitch making the pattern stand out. However, some of the Guild members like it looser as it gives it a more lacy look.

Your lace is on display in the Shetland Museum and Archives, for me that is an ultimate achievement. Does that influence you / your work?

I suppose it makes me feel quite proud to have my lace on display at the museum. In 2007 I was approached by one of the curators at the museum and asked if I would knit a lace stole to present to the Queen of Norway on the opening of the new Shetland museum.



Handspun and handknitted shawl by © Ina Irvine.

Comment by MoniqueB.

Even though I'm a spinner myself, I can't even imagine how dedicated one has to be to spin for so many hours and then plying the delicate 1ply into a balanced yarn. Then winding it into a ball to knit up a very beautiful and original shawl.

The patterns might be familiar for the trained eye, but the composition and the overall look every time is a true display of skills. Skills as a spinner to be so consistent and as a knitter to compose the single techniques in a balanced piece of art. Indeed worthy to gift to royalty and to be on display in the Shetland Museum(s).

Also opening the museum was Prince Charles along with Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwell.

I was quite honoured to have been asked to do this, and thought there were plenty other experienced lace knitters in Shetland who could have done the job. I had to keep the job a secret and was not given much time to do it. At a later date, I was also asked if I would do a smaller lace stole for Camilla too. To crown it all, they asked if I would do the presentation to the Queen of Norway and Camilla at the opening ceremony, inviting one of my family to help. My eldest daughter Linda, though very nervous, obliged. Prince Charles was to be presented with a piece of Shetland silver by Ken Rae of Shetland jewellers J.G. Rae.

I have replicas of both these scarves/stoles, as does the Shetland museum.

My second claim to fame is, I was approached by the Shetland Guild of Spinners, Weavers, Knitters & Dyers to knit a white lace scarf for Queen Elizabeth to send to her on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee. I also have a replica of this.

Do you prefer circular needles or straight needles and why? Do you use a knitting belt for lace (too)?

I don't use a circular needle very often as I much prefer straight double pointed needles which I use with my knitting belt. I feel the tension is better as it keeps a strain on your work.

Do you wear your lace?

I have a lot of lace garments stored in boxes but I don't go to many occasions here I would use fancy stoles and scarves.

Are you a member of the Shetland Guild for Spinners, knitters, weavers and dyers?

Yes, I have been a member since it began in the late 1980's.

In this Issue of Fine Shetland Lace our "The Yarn" company is Jamieson's of Shetland, do you have a lace shawl or garment made with their finer yarns?

I don't have a fine lace shawl knitted from either of the wool shops in Lerwick.

Any tips for the beginners in Shetland Lace?

The only tips I can give to beginners would be to use a slightly thicker wool and start with something small. Once on to fine lace be prepared to take a long time over it and just keep going!

Thank you for telling us about yourself and being an inspiration to us all!

You can find Ina here on Ravelry:

<https://www.ravelry.com/people/TILace>

<https://www.ravelry.com/projects/TILace/black-shawl>



©Ina Irvine Black Shawl



Fine Shetland Lace shopping

Here you can find webshops that have finer yarns suitable for Shetland Lace. I have ordered from every one of them, and can vouch for the quality, correspondence and suitability for making a fine yarn shawl or garment.

<https://www.bart-francis.be/>

Location Belgium. NOT a brick and morter shop, only web and fairs.

https://colourmart.com/yarns/view/in_stock.*.rank.*.show_all

A wide variety of yarns, thickness, content and all prices include P&P (worldwide)

http://habutextiles.com/yarn/by_fiber/?term_id=26&cat=yarn&view=all

Especially the N-75 Merino is very pretty and great colours.

https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/HeirloomKnitting?ref=hdr_shop_menu

Both patterns and yarns.

http://www.shetlandwoolbrokers.co.uk/epages/BT4917.sf/en_GB/?ObjectPath=/Shops/BT4917/Products/%22Yarn%20-%20Supreme%20Lace%22

There are other yarns, but this is their finest. (Jamieson & Smith)

<https://www.jamiesonsofshetland.co.uk/ultra-cobweb-25-c.asp>

The Ultra is available in more colours but not as fine as their Ultra Cobweb (Jamieson's of Shetland)

<https://oldmaidenau.com/collections/yarn-bases/products/shetland-cobweb>

Not as fine as other Shetland wool yarns, but handdyed and great quality.

<https://www.wools.co.uk/index.php?search%5Bkeywords%5D=Silk&a=category>

Very, Very fine silk in MANY colours and excellent quality.

https://www.etsy.com/shop/TheGossamerWeb?ref=search_shop_redirect

Especially the Phoenix yarn is good quality and great colours.

https://www.watercoloursandlace.co.uk/store/c75/Shetland_Cobweb_Lace_%281%2C600m%2F100g%29.html#

Handdyed fine Shetland wool

I'm sure there are others that have fine Yarn. Please mail me and let me know so I can add them to the list.

Make sure they are a SUPPLIER and not a retailer.

Written by Cynthia Wolfe, supported by Theresa Gygi (USA)



Fine Fleece Shetland sheep are Shetlands that adhere to the 1927 Shetland Flock Book Breed Standard. The Standard was put forth to preserve the fineness of the fleece and characteristics of the pure native breed of sheep. This type of sheep was in danger of being lost due to crossbreeding with multiple influxes of non-native sheep and numbers of the pure native type were declining rapidly. Coarsening of the wool was the worst culprit, mainly due to the introduction of the Scottish Blackface. Lengthening of the staple and loss of crimp was also due to this cross. These detrimental effects to the knitting industry of Shetland lead concerned crofters/breeders from Shetland to establish a standard to preserve this native Shetland sheep, thus insuring against the loss of the main source of this world famous fine wool.

The Standard was given a 'clarification' in 2000. A group of respected Shetland Sheep Society Breeders (from mainland U.K.), visited Shetland and spoke

extensively with the Shetland crofters/breeders who had been breeding these sheep for many generations and hundreds of years. Some of the crofters/breeders consulted had participated in or had a direct connection in the creation of the 1927 Standard. The new document was named Appendix A and it explained, with additional details, the ambiguous terms contained within the 1927 Standard.

Documentation for Fine Fleece (1927 Standard, with Appendix A) Shetland Sheep is supported by many sources. The most detailed source is Tulloch's Appendix to Andrew Kerr's Report to Sir John Sinclair. John Tulloch wrote an in-depth memo that detailed fleece characteristics, including structure of the crimp and a drawing of what he meant. Additional details included the different colors and type of the native Shetland sheep. This document was written in 1791, validating that this type of native sheep was well established hundreds of years ago.

Fine Fleece Shetland sheep, therefore, refer to sheep that a) are native to Shetland and b) have been the same 'type' for hundreds of years. Breeders of these sheep are keen on preserving these sheep and select sheep based on the criteria outlined in the 1927 Standard and Appendix A. Shetland sheep are famous for several reasons, but the fine, soft, crimpy wool is one of the biggest.

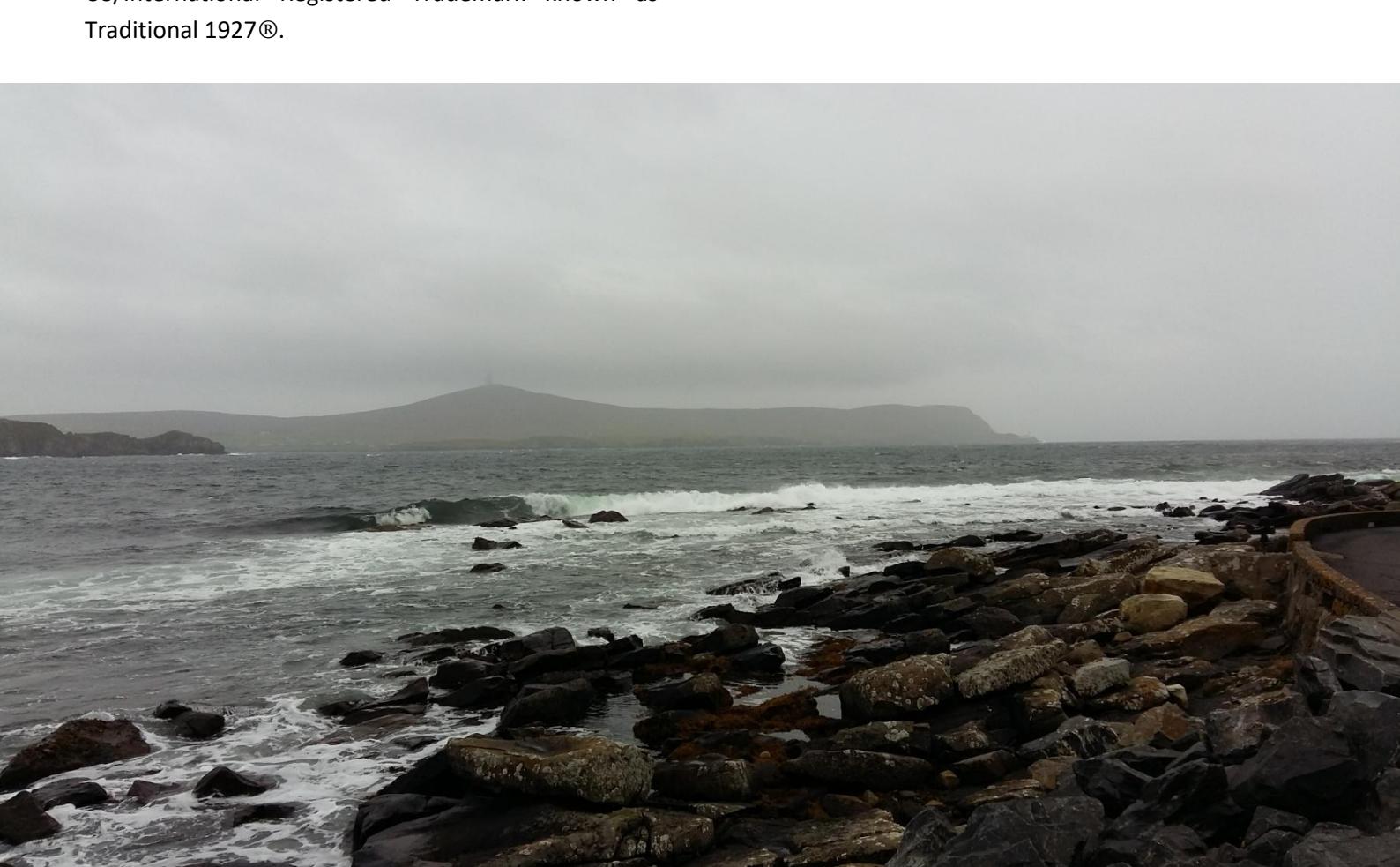
In the recent past, Shetland was successful in acquiring a trademark 'Real Shetland' for their wool and wool products. The purpose of this trademark was to promote, preserve, and insure the quality of their wool and wool products for the public. It also guaranteed the buyer that they are purchasing 100% Shetland wool, raised on the islands from purebred Shetland sheep and not a generic combination of various wool breeds or crosses.

Following this example, the Fine Fleece Shetland Sheep Association is pleased to announce that a similar assurance in breed stock, fleece, and wool products has been awarded in the form of a US/International Registered Trademark known as Traditional 1927®.

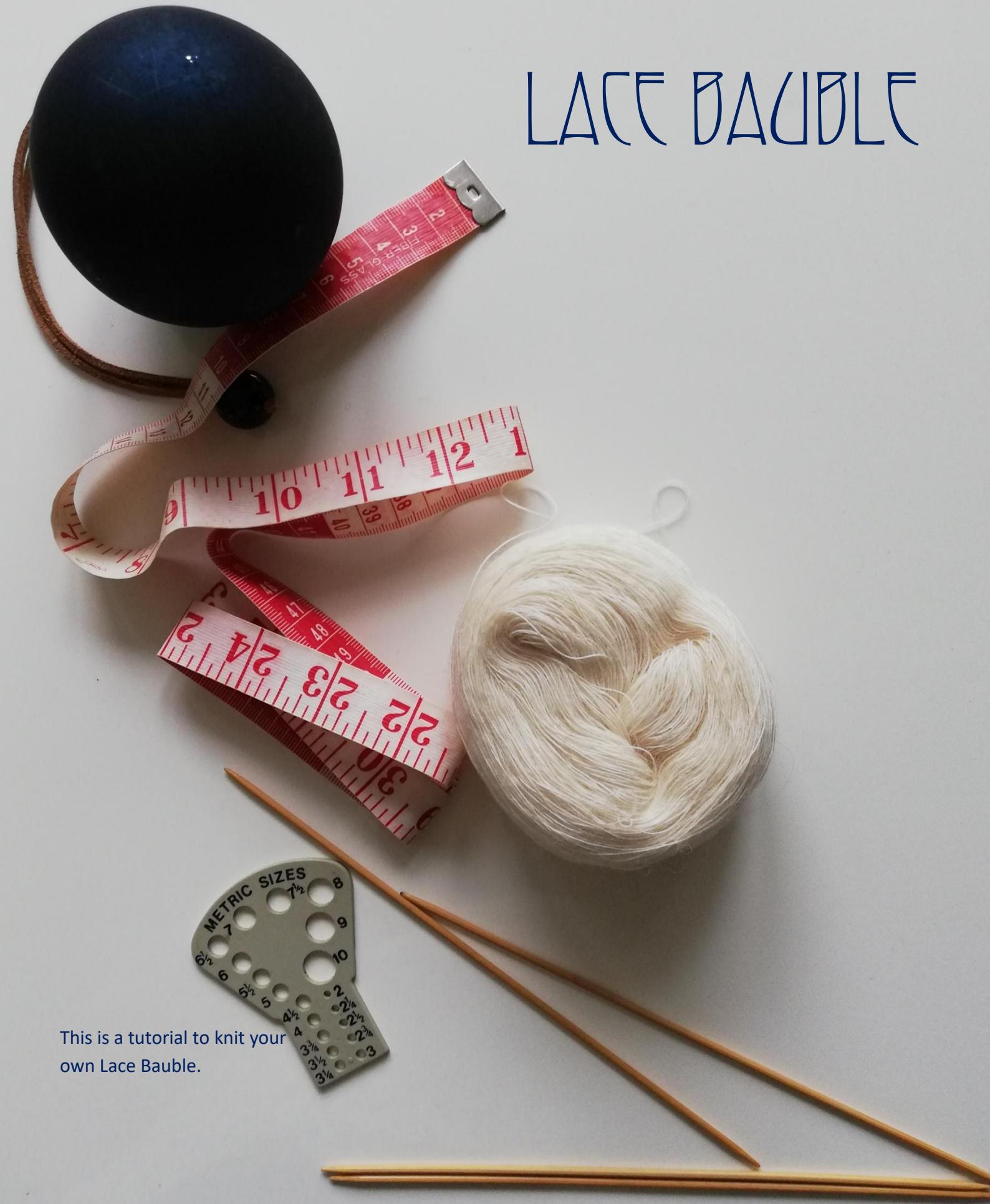
This trademark is exclusive to Fine Fleece Shetland Sheep Association members whose flocks uphold the 1927 Standard and Appendix A and meet the Fleece Grading Chart descriptions developed by the Fine Fleece Shetland Sheep Association from various domestic and international sources. Traditional 1927® sheep and wool products are produced by a limited number of shepherds in the U.S. who are dedicated to bringing the consumer the finest Shetland wool available. This commitment includes annual fleece testing to provide hard data to support the registered trademark. Look for Traditional 1927 to insure you have quality tested, assured products, following in the tradition of Shetland.

If you would like to obtain a complimentary sample of either a raw lock or micro skein of Traditional 1927® Shetland wool, please visit the Fine Fleece Shetland Sheep Association at www.finefleeceshetlandsheep.org to send an email request. This offer is limited to the continental U.S. due to postal restraints.

Lerwick ↓



LACE BAUBLE



This is a tutorial to knit your
own Lace Bauble.

A little project just before the holidays. You can make this in Shetland Wool yarn. For this you can use a single coloured bauble. This pattern is worked in Shetland lace, which means all rows are knit. Because it is worked in the round the end result looks like stockinette.

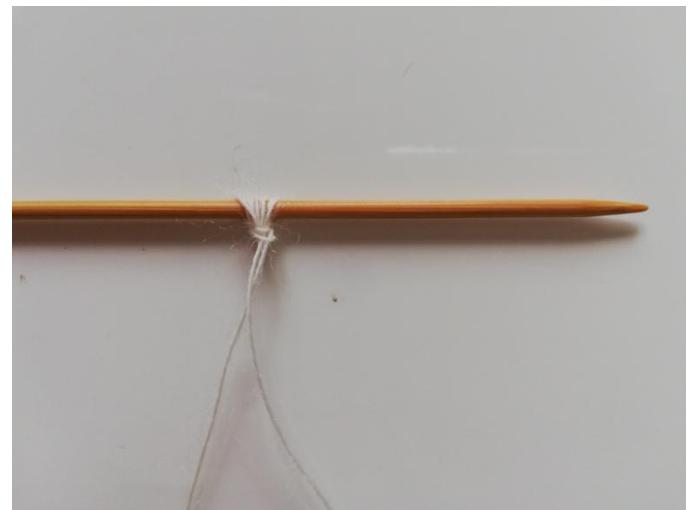
You will need: a tape measure to size the ball. In this example it is a blue one, circumference is 25cm or 10". Height is approx 11,5 cm or 4.5". A set of 5 double point needles size 2,5mm or US1.5. Preferably bamboo, they are light and will not drop out of the stitches as fast as a metal needle. A stitch marker to indicate the beginning of the row. A fine tapestry needle and a left over bit of 1ply yarn. Approx 30m or 33y.



Step 1. Make a double loop around 2 fingers



Step 2. [Knit 1, yarn over] 4 times, knit one. 9 loops on the needle.



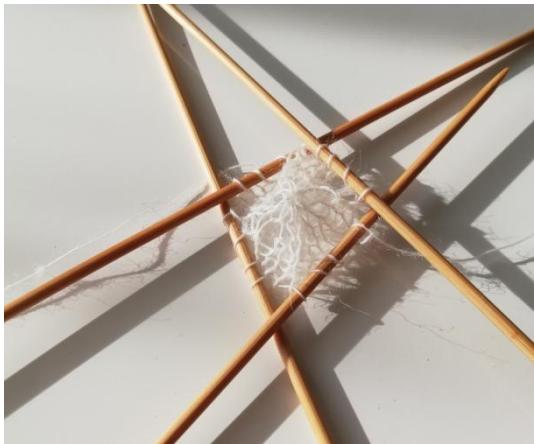
Step 3. Gently pull on the loop that is not the end. Then pull the loop with the cast on end.

You might want to sit at a table for this and perhaps use a pillow. That way, the needles are less likely to fall out.

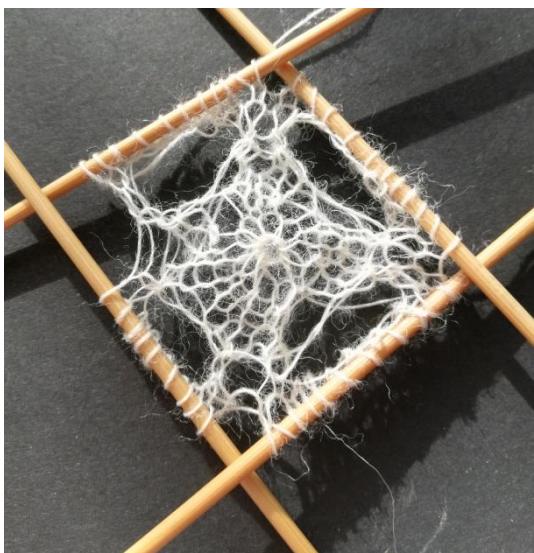
What I do is hold on to all needles with my index finger and thumb and sliding the stitches back to the centre before I turn to start the next row.



Knit one round distributing all the stitches on four needles. Two stitches on 3 of the needles and one needle with 3 stitches.



4. Follow written instructions. Rows 1 - 5



5. Rows 1 – 10



6. Rows 1 – 15

Written instructions.

1. Make a double loop around your fingers.
2. Knit into this loop: [knit 1, yo] 4 times, knit 1.
3. Gently pull on the cast on end. 9 loops on the needle.
4. Knit one round, distribute the stitches over 4 needles. Three needles with 2 stitches and one needle with 3 stitches.
5. [knit 1, yo, knit 1] for 3 needles, knit 3 on last needle. (12 stitches)
6. Instructions that now follow are for ONE needle and you need to repeat it 4 times to complete the row, unless otherwise specified. Insert a stitch marker after each repeat. And a special marker for Beginning of Row.
7. Knit 2 rounds.
8. [knit 1, yo, knit 2] (16 stitches)
9. Knit 1 round
10. [k2tog, 3yo, skp]
11. [k1, (into the 3yo of the previous row: (k1, yo 3 times, k1), k1] (36 stitches)
12. Knit 1 round (36 stitches)
13. [k1, yo, k7, yo, k1] (44 stitches).
14. [k2, yo, skp, k3, k2tog, yo, k2] (44 st)
15. [k3, yo, k5, yo, k3] (52st)
16. [k4, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k4] (52 st)
17. [k5, yo, k3, yo, k5] (60 st)
18. [k6, yo, k3tog, yo, k6] (60 st)
19. [k5, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, skp, k5] (60 st)
20. [k6, yo, k3, yo, k6] (68 st)
21. [k4, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k4] (68 st)
22. [k5, yo, k1, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, skp, k1, yo, k5] (76 st)
23. [k3, k2tog, yo, k1, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, skp, k1, yo, skp, k3] (76 st)
24. [k4, yo, k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, yo, k4] (84 st)
25. [k2, k2tog, yo, k4, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k4, yo, skp, k2] (84 st)
26. [k1, k2tog, yo, k6, yo, k3tog, yo, k6, yo, skp, k1] (84 st)
27. [k2tog, yo, k1, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, skp, k5, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, skp, k1, yo, skp] (84 st)

This pattern has been testknitted by:

Marialli, Gertha and Susan. Thank you.





©SusanGolden ↑



28. Slip 1 stitch, [yo, k1, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, skp, k3, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, skp, yo, MOVE MARKER, skp] In this round: when you use a circular needle, move the marker 1 stitch to the **right**; you need 1 stitch of the next repeat. When you work on dpn's, you need 1 stitch of the next needle to complete the skp. For the last repeat, you need the first slipped stitch of the first needle.
In all cases, leave the SKP **after** the repeat marker [19 st / needle or repeat]. (76 st)

29. K1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, [k2, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1] (88 st)

30. [k1, k2tog, k1, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k1, skp] (80 st)

31. [k4, yo, k3tog, yo, k7, yo, k3tog, yo, k3] (80 st)

32. [k1, yo, skp, k5, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, skp, k5, k2tog, yo] (80 st)

33. [k2, yo, skp, k3, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, skp, k3, k2tog, yo, k1] (80 st)

34. [k3, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, k2tg, yo, k2] (80 st)

35. [k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp] (80 st)

36. Slip 2, [yo, k7, yo, k3tog, yo, k7, yo, MOVE MARKER, k3tog]
In this round: when you use a circular needle, move the marker 2 stitches to the right; you need 2 stitches of the next repeat. When you work on dpn's, you need 2 stitches of the next needle to complete the k3tog. For the last repeat, you need 2 slipped stitches of the first needle. In all cases, leave the k3tog **before** the repeat marker and end of that row [20 st / needle or repeat]. (80 st)

37. [k2, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, skp, k5, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, skp, k3] (80 st)

38. [k1, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, skp, k3, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, skp, k2] (80 st)

39. [k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1] (80 st)

40. [k2, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k5, yo, skp, k1, k2tog, yo, k3] (80 st)

41. [k3, yo, k3tog, yo, k7, yo, k3tog, k4] (80 st)

42. Knit 1 round. Cut yarn at 30cm.

43. With fine needle, pull yarn end through all the loops and if you can go round twice. Pull out needles as you go.

44. Put the ball into your knitted work, GENTLY pull the end of the yarn, while you push the knitting towards the centre of the top of the bauble.

45. When you think the fit is close enough, then weave in the end of the yarn by pulling the needle and end yarn through the loops again. As example: pull through 5 – 8 loops, go back 2 loops and then pull through 5 – 8 loops. Until you think it won't get loose anymore.

46. Cut yarn and admire your work.



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The Knitter

Aisling M Doodan

Hello Aisling! Nice to meet you!
Tell us a bit about yourself. Where do you live?

Hi! My name is Aisling and I live in a small village in County Leitrim, Ireland, called Carrigallen. I live quite close to where three provinces, Leinster, Ulster and Connaught, meet. I am surrounded by lakes and drumlins and lots of open space.

Who learned you how to knit?

My Grandmother and Aunt on my mother's side taught me to knit when I was young. I remember the first jumper I knit was pink and had a very trendy stripe going sideways across the front. I'm not sure I ever wore it.

Crafting hardly 'comes alone', are there any other skills you have?

I was a member of a wonderful library in Tymon in Dublin and they had a fantastic craft section. I must have checked out every single book there and tried

my hand at everything. I taught myself to crochet from these books (there were no YouTube videos back then!) so I don't actually hold my hook correctly or remember the names on any of the stitches as the books were a mixture of UK and US terminology. I also love to sketch and paint, sculpt and sew.

How did you get involved in the knitting community? (BLOG?)

I do have a blog, which I started many years ago, probably around the same time as I discovered twitter. I met a friend who lived locally through Ravelry and she introduced me to the twitter knitters, which is a lovely group of likeminded crafty ladies in Ireland of many different nationalities and skills.

Were you a member of a group/ stitch 'n' bitch or local yarn store?

I was a member of a local knitting group for a while, but there are very few knitting stores locally, so I tend to order most of my supplies online.



2

Looking at your Ravelry notebook, you have quite a wide range of knitting skills; Fair Isle, Lace, Fine Lace and garments. How come knitting lace got more / your attention?

I have been an avid reader of books, especially the classics, since I was old enough to read. I was immersed in children's classics and I fervently believe I was born in the wrong century. I have always been fascinated by Regency, Victorian and Edwardian times, the clothes especially. I would always try and make my own versions with whatever supplies I had, but it was never enough. As I got older and the internet grew,

I was able to source exactly what I was looking for, when I discovered Sharon Miller's Heirloom Knitting. I bought the book, the Princess Shawl pattern and the yarn for it. With absolutely no lace skills I failed immediately and the poor Princess took a long time to get finished. Instead, I tried to make a hap shawl and then a cobweb shawl. Once my confidence increased, I couldn't stop, I had been well and truly hooked by Shetland Lace. I do enjoy fair isle as well. There is something so satisfying in painting a picture with wool.

Did you get any help, or buy books to learn?

I bought Heirloom Knitting to begin with and followed it up with every one of Sharon's beautiful books and patterns. I also have a collection of Elizabeth

Zimmermann and Kate Davies books which are treasured and well used.

Was it a struggle or did it come naturally?

I think I have always been so in love with the craft, that it has never been a chore. I do remember buying talcum powder on Sharon's recommendation when I started the Princess shawl because my hands were getting all sweaty as I tried to cope with the tiny stitches and needles. Once I relaxed though and stopped fretting that I would drop a stitch or make a mess, I loosened up and it was smooth sailing after that.

What yarns were available to you and did the internet help to get more lace specific yarns? (As fine(r) lace yarns are often not readily available in a Local Yarn store).

I had a local yarn shop that stocked acrylic baby yarns and mixed fibres Aran weight yarns, so the internet was the best place for me to shop always. Once I found Jamieson and Smith, Jamieson's of Shetland, Colourmart and Heirloom Knitting, I was perfectly happy. Then I discovered the wealth of hand dyed sock yarns all over Ireland and I was in seventh heaven.



3

There is a Facebook Group called Irish Dye Junkies that holds a themed market every month with beautiful one of a kind colourway's from Ellie and Ada, A Fine Fish Yarns, Dublin Dye Company and Green Elephant yarn. Each skein is a work of art and you can make a beautiful shawlette from just one. They are perfect gifts too.

At what point did you decide to become a designer? Did you want to become a designer right away and worked your way towards that?

I didn't plan it exactly, I have always made things from my head, but using other people's patterns you begin to see how they are put together and I decided I'd like to have a go myself. After that, I just designed the things I wanted to make but couldn't quite find anywhere else.

How do you design your work? Is it a gradual process or planning it all ahead and then execute?

Sometimes, it's like creative writing, you have to sit down and begin for the ideas to come. I design all my lace charts in Intwined Studio, so I like to play about with motifs there and build from that.

I enjoy the methodical aspect of working out the pattern repeats and including mitring for the shawl corners. I can get lost in a design and usually resurface hours later, wide eyed and hungry. Then I just start knitting.

On your Ravelry page you say 'I never swatch'. Why?

Oh dear, ha-ha, I am so lazy! I do preplan with charts and crunch the figures first. I have a vague idea of gauge before I start and I just like to get started! If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. Luckily that doesn't happen too often. It is also because I am still so enthusiastic and addicted to Shetland lace, that I can't wait to get stuck into it and work my way through from beginning to end.

Swatching would just halt that process for me, and I just enjoy it too much!

Are there any favourite designers you look up too? Do you have a goal for the near future you want to reach as a designer?

There are so many beautiful designers out there, for garments and accessories you can't beat Kate Davies. Every item I have knit from her patterns have turned out perfectly, the fit is exceptional. For colour I love Marie Wallin, her signature fair isle pieces use such warm and inviting colours. Kieran Foley is also a master of painting with colour and texture, I often think his designs should be framed in good light for all to see.

The Queen of all designers is of course Elizabeth Zimmermann who encouraged me to think with my hands and just go for it. I love her no nonsense approach and I wish I could have met her.



3a

Do you have any preference for certain fibres?

My first love is humble wool. It is so versatile, blocks beautifully and is crisp and warm. For something more luxurious I love a merino, silk mix. Cashmere and silk are a beautiful combination for gossamer and ethereal yarns. It has a surprising strength and is very easy to work with.

I've noticed you often add very fine delicate beads into an already very delicate shawl, is that your signature feature? Where do you get those and do you design with the beads in mind right away?

I have been mostly using Debbie Abraham Beads in the smaller size. They have a beautiful shine to them and wash well. I enjoy the slight heaviness that a beaded edging can give a gossamer lace shawl, it adds a touch of luxury and can make the shawl feel a little more substantial. Plus, the extra little sparkle always makes me smile.

Do you prefer circular needles or straight needles and why?

I love my Chiaogoo Lace circular needles. I haven't used straight needles in years, even for garments, as I prefer to knit in the round. For socks, I have steel or bamboo dpn's [double pointed needles].

Do you wear your lace?

Yes! I wear lace shawls to formal events and my heavier one's day to day. I enjoy picking or designing a new pattern each Autumn to wear through Winter, for gloves, hats, shawls and cowls. I have more knits than clothes in my wardrobe.

In Ireland there are Fairs and you've won prices with your exquisite fine lace shawls. Tell us a bit about how that works.

For many years I entered the RDS National Craft Competition and each year I was lucky enough to get a place in the exhibition during the RDS Horse Show in August and the Christmas Craft Fair in December. I won several prizes, from 1st prize in the Established Constructed Textiles category and the Guild of Irish Lace maker's award. This year however, they changed their entry process and only graduates or self-employed artists could apply. As I am neither, I was unable to enter, which saddens me deeply. There are no other competitions in Ireland, of the same standard, that allow people who are not working in the industry to apply.



4

In this Issue of Fine Shetland Lace our "The Yarn" company is Jamieson's of Shetland. You've worked with their finer yarns. How's your experience with those?

My first love has always been wool and Shetland wool is the finest I've worked with. It is so crisp and light and it blocks so beautifully. I adore the blocking process and unpinning a fine lace shawl is a breathtaking moment. You are holding something so light and magnificent in your hands. It is truly a magical experience. I have used their Cobweb Ultra for my Solstice shawl and their Lace Ultra for knitting hap shawls. Their colour range for the lace wool is exquisite.

Recently 2 of your designs were published in 'Olann and'... Can you tell us all about that?

Yes! I met Lora and Deirdre through Instagram and they kindly asked me if I would be interested in submitting some designs.

They are a wonderful pair of ladies to work with and I have enjoyed every minute of it. Olann and is a craft and fibre online magazine, podcast and blog that is published quarterly, please check out their website www.olannand.ie as it is full of the most wonderful interviews and patterns, it is a treasure trove for the crafty minded.

You can find Aisling's **designs** here;

<https://www.ravelry.com/people/rubysasha>

<https://www.instagram.com/aislingmdoonan/>

<https://www.facebook.com/rubysashaknits>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/rubysasha>

Pictures:

1: <https://www.ravelry.com/projects/rubysasha/1910-shetland-shawl>

2: <https://www.ravelry.com/projects/rubysasha/lusna>

3 (a):

<https://www.ravelry.com/projects/rubysasha/valentia-shawl>

4(a): <https://www.ravelry.com/projects/rubysasha/solstice-shawl>

5: <https://www.ravelry.com/projects/rubysasha/the-williamson-stole>



5

The Williamson Stole is also featured in another article in this issue.



Thank you for telling us about yourself and being an inspiration to us all!

The Yarn: Jamieson's of Shetland



Sandness, location of the Spinning Mill

When I was on Shetland, I've visited the Mill in Sandness. The trip to the mill, on a winding road, you get a true feel for the remoteness of the islands. It was the first time I heard true silence. Even when you are outside of the mill, there is hardly any sound at all. It isn't the most logical place to put a mill. Can you tell us a bit more why it is there and for how long it has been there?

Simply because this is where our family have lived for generations! Our original business was run from our small general store in Melby, Sandness where during the end of the 19th century Robert Jamieson exchanged handspun, hand knitted garments from the local crofters for goods such as sugar and tea and it has evolved from there (A full company history is available on our website). [LINK](#)

Jamieson's have a rather large range in colours and in weights. With over 200 colours in Spindrift or DK, is it reasonable to state that lace isn't the focus of the mill?

No, we started the factory with an aim to supply the local fair-isle trade, so we concentrated on our 2/21c jumper weight yarn, known as Spindrift now. Our laceweight yarn was developed later after Hunters of Brora closed down. They had been the main supplier of lace yarn into Shetland until that point so the development was driven by a local demand for a replacement.

When you get a tour through the mill, you start with showing the bags with the fleeces, the tweed weaving machines and walking gradually through the building where the wool is transformed into a yarn base. Is there a different process to make a Spindrift compared to a lace /Ultra or even a cobweb?

Not really, the process is exactly the same regardless of the yarn type. At the blending stage we use the different type of wool and at the spinning stage we alter the thickness but it is still processed the same as everything else.

Is there a person, perhaps Garry, who grades the wool or handles the wool-suppliers to ensure the quality? Does he work with crofters to develop a husbandry (keeping sheep) that will give more 'pure' colours?

We have several people who can grade and sort the wool. We sort as we grade, then pack and ship anything lower than Grade 2 to a wool brokerage in Yorkshire. Anything coarser than Grade 2 isn't suitable for our yarns.

We don't work with the crofters on any improvement to their flocks. Sheep are usually 'husbanded' towards finer wool rather than colours. Better wool is a sign of healthier animals, something all crofters want!

In your collection are a Ultra-cobweb and the Ultra yarns available. The Ultra, at 776m/100gr, comes in a wide variety of colours and is also suitable for finer Fair Isle knitwear. The Ultra Cobweb, 1520m/100gr, is available in 3 colours. They are the only blended yarns: 50% Shetland and 50% Lambswool. Isn't the Lambs wool from Shetland?

No, we add lambswool to give us an increased fiber length so our machinery can spin the yarn finer. Shetland wool has a fairly short fiber. It's possible to hand pick parts of a Shetland fleece and spin a lace weight by hand but that isn't feasible on an industrial scale. The lambswool we use is sourced through a broker in Yorkshire and its origin can vary. We try to source both the best quality and as ethically produced as possible.



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There are many patterns that are specifically known and recognized as Shetland Lace. Will you be promoting Fine Lace with a (new) collection of patterns / designs?

We don't have an in-house designer so we tend to support independent designers who approach us with an idea. We're pretty willing so if anyone has ideas?!

Are you in the process of developing more yarn ranges in weight or colours? Will it always be 100% pure Shetland Wool?

With the exception of the lace weight, everything is 100% Pure Shetland wool here, grown within the isles! We are not intending to develop any new weights or colours as we are simply too busy to cope with any more. Six different weights in over 300 colours is almost too much for our factory!

Is it possible to put a larger amount of yarn on a cone, to prevent weaving in ends in an already fine lace shawl or garment?

We do sell cones occasionally to industry. They are only available in 1kg weights, usually considerably more than is required for a single shawl.

Knitting lace, or even better, Fine Shetland Lace, is a small part of the infinite possibilities in knitting as a whole. Since 9 years, there is Shetland Woolweek. Every time there were tours in the Mill, while it was working. People could see and hear the process and shop for yarn and garments. I've bought 2 sweaters myself. I didn't see a lace shawl for sale, only patterns / yarns. Have you seen a increase in interest in Fine Lace?

We only sell shawls made to order, the man hours required make them mean they are extremely expensive to keep in stock. We saw a marked increase a few years back but it has slowed a little again. Like all things, lace knitting was 'in' for a few years!

With Prince Charles as a patron for British Wool and therefore also Shetland wool in the UK, are there new insights on wool, handling of the sheep and fleeces? Have there been any changes in working with the wool in the recent years?

This might affect other breeds/ areas but it hasn't had any effect here that we've been aware of. The climate here dictates the vast majority of our handling of sheep and we handle the fleeces the same way we always have. No offence to Prince Charles but I imagine locals know more about dealing with the sheep and their wool than he does!

There are more and more retailers overseas that are now selling Shetland Wool. Is Fine yarn a part of their range too? (I'm not really sure what you mean by this question. If you mean our yarns then :) Our stockists vary, not all of them stock Ultra.



Do you have any tips on how to handle the wool, how to wash it (before or after knitting), how to dry it, and most important, how to store it?

Carefully!! That's probably the main one! Particularly if you are knitting with Cobweb, I would recommend unwinding the yarn, not pulling it from the centre of the ball as it's very fragile.

Washing is always the critical part of handling Shetland wool. It hates very hot water and will be reduced to carpet-like felt if washed in a washing machine! If you find it itchy try using hair conditioner rather than fabric conditioner. Shetlanders will always wash a new garment to 'set' the knitting before use. If you have a woolly board for your fair isle garments, that's the best for stretching them on. Shawls (haps) are done on a hap board here. (You can find pictures of them on the museums website)

Store it somewhere dry and cool and if there is a cure for moths, can you let us know too??!

Thank you for making great yarn and wonderful colours for us knitters!



Garry Jamieson (2014)

You can find the Ultra Cobweb and Ultra yarns here:

<https://www.jamiesonsofshetland.co.uk/ultra-cobweb-25-c.asp>

<https://www.jamiesonsofshetland.co.uk/ultra-8-c.asp>



Making yarn...



The next issue will probably be published around early April.

This is the tombolo at Burra, Minn.

