



Welcome

Last month's Newsletter sparked a lot of debate around the issues of knitting and stitching ethically, so thank you for your views and suggestions. Please keep them coming in.

The Newsletter also resulted in two new areas on our Members' Plus Forum. You can read all about these on page 3. My thanks has to go to Sarah-J for initiating that move!

On a personal front, July has been a hectic time, with lots of important meetings to fit in about the research before the academic world closes down for their summer break. I've also managed to squeeze in a week's holiday in 'sunny' Devon – a week of much needed downtime after such a busy schedule. Enjoy the Newsletter and let me know your comments!

Betsan xxx



Support

News

Those of you who visit the [Forum](#) will know that plans for our Stitchlinks weekend have been taking shape. Sarah-J has been busy investigating different options regarding the where, when and how such a weekend could viably take place. Her main priority has been to keep the cost as low as possible, but at the same time finding somewhere where those with disabilities can feel safe and comfortable. As we have quite a few Scottish members the general consensus is that we meet somewhere in Yorkshire, possibly Leeds. Being on the main rail line and accessible from Scotland and the south of the UK, it seems like a good place to investigate. It also has an airport for those who may wish to join us from Europe or further afield. As for the timing, sometime in late February early March is popular for a number of reasons. February is often a time of year when people feel a bit down so having a weekend to look forward to will help us all. Also, it gives us a bit of time to save up, so perhaps more of you will be able to make it and, dare I say, even those members who live outside the UK – I'd love to see you all there!

We have a huge wealth of talent in Stitchlinks, so we could use this weekend to share our skills, get to know each other better and form even stronger, firmer friendships. If you'd like to attend, why not join in the Forum discussions, because we'd like to hear what you'd like from such a meeting. Or if you have a particular skill you'd like to share, then we could arrange a selection of informal workshops in the company of friends.

Sarah-J visits the Forum on a daily basis so let her know your views and have your say on our weekend away together!

So don't forget to log in regularly to the [website](#) and [Forum](#) to keep up to date!

My Story

"I have MS. Since my diagnosis in the late 90s I got back into knitting. It's portable, stretches my mental abilities when I'm in a bad way cognition wise. It is a hobby that can help you feel productive when you are at your worst physically and/or mentally. It can help you have a single focus when your nerves are all in a jangle. It is meditative in it's rhythmic pattern repeats. It calms the mind but keeps you engaged and entertained when you are feeling less than sociable because of physical or emotional fatigue."

My Story questionnaire – If you haven't already done so, please fill in our [online questionnaire](#). Your stories form the basis of our research!

Our Stitchlinks Shop

I mentioned last time that we were considering the future of our Stitchlinks shop. It was originally set up to support our members, particularly those who had no access to a yarn or craft shop or who just didn't want to spend time searching the internet for provisions. We've received many mails asking us to reinstate it for those very reasons, so the good news is that we aim to have it up and running in September. It will need to start off slowly as we gauge what you'd like to see in it, but essentially it will be a service to you and provide you with an easy way of buying the products you like. However, in order to do this we need to know what you'd like to see there. Perhaps you'd like to see kits, books, yarns, health products, whatever you feel you need. Many of our cross stitching members already have more kits than they can stitch in a lifetime, so in the past we've concentrated on small stitching items and sock yarn. Let me know what you think and I'll check out the viability!

"I had a car accident almost ten years ago and as a result suffered a bout of depression, I cross stitched to stop my self from thinking about everything that had happened. The repetition was soothing and I felt like I was achieving something. The results were instant and only needed my approval. My husband bought me cross stitches during this time and I felt that it was his way of dealing with how I was feeling, it was an acknowledgment of my depression."

Did you know

You burn more calories wearing casual clothes and comfy shoes than if you wear constricting clothing and heels, simply because you move more.

Personal Development

We've added a new article to the [Personal Development](#) page. It's called **Keeping a Thought Diary** and looks at how you can begin the process of changing your thoughts. Thoughts, feelings and behaviours are all closely interlinked, so changing your thoughts can have a profound effect on your life – it can change your whole outlook. At its most basic, if your thoughts are negative you'll feel sad. If they are positive then you'll feel happy. It's possible to change your feelings and behaviour by making a conscious effort to change the way you think.



Friendship

Forum

Our [Stitchlinks Forum](#) members have been discussing the issue of how knitters on low income can knit with ethically produced yarn. One suggestion has been for us to look into starting up a yarn recycling initiative. I think this is a great idea as there must be so much 'spare' yarn lying around, not just in individual stashes but what, for example, happens to end of line balls in the shops? What happens to last year's range? Does anyone know? Does it all get thrown in a landfill site? Why not join in the debate?

As I mentioned previously we now have two new sections on our Members' Plus Forum. They are **Feeling Down** and **Ranting Space**. Last month I mentioned that people felt a bit 'guilty' about using the Forum when they felt down – not wanting to impose their low mood on others. However this is precisely the time when you need to maintain your contacts – the support of friends can make a huge difference at these times and may prevent a further downward slide in mood. So at Sarah-J's suggestion we started up a separate section which will enable you to talk openly. We've placed it on the Members' Plus Forum to enable you to talk more openly as this section is further protected by a small subscription of £5. Let me know if you think it should be moved.

We also thought you might like a **Ranting Space**. Letting off steam can be extremely therapeutic, so now you can enjoy a good rant and perhaps find others with similar views on issues that irritate you.

Forum News

The small subscription of £5 to join our [Members Plus Forum](#) is now a one-off payment, not an annual one!

Join us for coffee!

August's online coffee mornites will take place on **Saturday 2nd August at 10am, UK time** and **Wednesday 20th August at 8pm UK time** on our [Members' Plus Forum](#). Coffee mornites are great fun because we all pile in together and just chat, which means all the topics and chatlines get mixed up. Your first time may be a little confusing, but you'll soon be able to follow the chit chat and jump in and out of the conversation with the rest of us. Don't forget we all had a 'first time' too, so we're there to help and guide you along!

Groups

Stitchlinks member Stephanie is getting together a group near Melbourne in Australia. You can visit her blog to find out more details. Click [here](#) and the magic of the internet will transport you there. Meanwhile if you'd like to set up a group, please let me know as we will be looking for existing and new groups to study as part of the research, which should begin towards the end of this year!



Information

Your Health Matters

Most knitters and stitchers love to knit or stitch for others – many knit for charity. Research has shown that giving to charity stimulates an area of the brain called the reward centre, which, as a result, floods your brain with feelgood chemicals. Put simply – it feels good to help others and it's now official!

In mid July we were contacted by a company called Origins which produces skin care, hair care, bath and body products using 'the best of nature'. The company also do a lot of work for charity and have donated millions of pounds to local, national and international charities. This year they are asking knitters to knit mini scarves for their Ginger Essence range of fragrances. The campaign will link into the health benefits of knitting and we were happy to supply them with the information they needed. Your knitted scarves will keep the Ginger Essence bottles warm and for each one knitted Origins will donate £1 to Shelter – the charity for homeless people. So by keeping the bottles warm you can help to keep the homeless warm this winter.

The suggested pattern for the mini scarves can be found in the column opposite and is suitable for even the most novice knitter. You are however invited to put your own stamp on each scarf by using different stitch combinations or by adding tassels, beads etc, so it's time to let your imagination run riot!

Post your scarf to – Origins Ginger Knits,
73 Grosvenor Street, London, W1K 3BQ

Deadline for scarves is 20th November 2008.

Look out for them in Origin shops in December!

Stop Press!

Watch out for details of Origin's campaign for mini knitted scarves in aid of the charity Shelter!

'Origins' mini scarf

Begin by choosing your favourite Christmas themed yarn (red, green or gold) – the brighter the better.

Use any thickness of yarn but as a guideline for double knitting (DK) yarn using 4mm needles cast on four stitches.

Knit 40 rows or around 25cm before casting off.

Use your imagination to personalise your scarf by adding your own ideas.

Contact us

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