



Susan Crawford Vintage

A Natural Fibre Company case study



Sovereign of the Moors delivers unique yarn

THE ONLY true indigenous sheep to Lancashire is the Lonk, but as a hand knitting yarn it has fallen out of favour in recent years.

Three years ago, taking her small flock of Shetlands, Herdwicks, Zwartbles and Lonks with her, knitwear designer, author and shepherdess Susan Crawford moved to Monkley Ghyll, a small farm on the side of the River Lune in Lancashire.

When she met her neighbouring farmer Jeffrey, who has reared Lonks all his life, Susan was determined to bring this unique breed to the attention of modern hand knitters. Although popular until the 1930s, the yarn is little known today.

Known as the Sovereign of the Moors, this majestic, horned sheep (pictured) has lived on the open moorlands of Lancashire since the 13th century when its thick, long stapled, white fleece was used for everything from monks' habits to the finest knitted hosiery.

All the Lonk sheep that go into Susan's 'Ghyll' yarn come from Jeffrey's farm on the slopes of Clougha Pike in the Forest of Bowland.

Jeffrey bought his first Lonk when he was seven years old and has continued to look after the breed for over 60 years.

Trained to grade fleeces to Wool Board standards, he always aims to produce the best possible fleeces by selectively breeding for wool quality.

From Susan and Jeffrey's first meeting, their shared love of the Lonk sheep and wool sparked a lasting friendship resulting in Jeffrey allowing Susan to use his best shearing fleeces each



year to create Ghyll. The first batch of yarn is fleece from Jeffrey's 2016 clip hand sorted and selected by him for the quality and cleanliness.

Susan sent the first batch of shearing fleeces from the 2016 clip to be spun by the Natural Fibre Company in Cornwall.

On its return she decided the yarn should be used for a personal charity fund raising project to mark the completion of her treatment for stage three breast cancer.

With that in mind, Susan asked four of the UK's best hand dyers to each produce a colourway using the Lonk yarn for its initial launch in October 2017.

Old Maiden Aunt, Countess Ablaze, Skein Queen and Knitting Goddess each agreed to provide a colourway, and dyed approximately 100 skeins. This single breed, single farm yarn is now available from the contact details below.

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