

*How and when did you first start to knit – who taught you?*

When I was a child, I had a book with lots of projects to make that I loved working through. I was always really happy when I was trying out different sewing and crafting techniques, making little dolls and learning various embroidery techniques. My Mum and Grandma did lots of sewing and the knitting that they spent time on was totally fascinating, so I was very excited when Grandma took the time to teach me to knit. Once I got started, all I wanted to do was learn and learn. Having practised on a few scarves I was desperate to make something that I could wear so I was told I could make a waistcoat because it wouldn't need any sleeves. No money was wasted on the yarn as I was given an old jumper that nobody was wearing to unravel! After that I simply carried on trying out different projects found in magazines, learning something new every time & carefully using my pocket money to buy as much yarn as I could. If I was every unsure what to do I could ask Mum, having my own private tutor on hand, I now realise this was a privilege.

*When did you make the move into knitting as a business instead of a hobby – what inspired you to do this?*

I was not encouraged to take up creative subjects at school, so my life did not take that direction although I continued knitting as well as trying out other types of stitching such as tapestry, cross stitch, dressmaking, to name just a few. It was always a bit of a dream to do the things that I love for a job. In 2010 I started to study for a City and Guilds qualification in Hand Knitting and Design and at the same time Mum and I opened a shop in Tadcaster, North Yorkshire selling 'everything that you need for knitting and sewing'. We learnt lots in the six years that we had the shop, and my most absolute favourite times were when we had classes and events and the place was full of people learning, creating and enjoying each other's company.

For me, our shop was more than just materials and haberdashery, it was about inspiring people to knit, sew and crochet and sharing the knowledge and skills needed to get them hooked!

The time came for us to close the shop and now I share my love of and joy in knitting at various workshops in a range of locations and using video tutorials online.

I really see my role as one of inspiring and encouraging others to learn new techniques which they can then explore and build upon, very much enjoying the excitement that this can deliver, enabling people to use their own creativity and develop their personal ideas and stitching aspirations.

*In January 2023 you had a book published called 'Knitting Techniques Brioche' aimed at getting people started with brioche knitting – what was the process involved in getting this your book into print?*

At one of my very first workshops, I was asked if I could teach Brioche knitting and spent time researching. Very quickly, I came across the name of Nancy Marchant, who didn't

invent the technique, but it is obvious that she can be credited with having developed and standardised the terminology and abbreviations that are now widely used. Many knitters create marvellous knitting patterns using Nancy Marchant as their main inspiration and technical source. I just had to learn more, so that is what I set out to do.

Brioche knitting turned out to be something different to any knitting that I had tried before. Apart from having tried out two-Colour Fisherman's Rib for City and Guilds. For the first time in my life I was challenged by a knitting technique, but it was oh so satisfying once it all clicked into place. My obsession continues to grow and I keep finding new things that I have not tried yet.

I was approached by Crowood Press asking if I would be interested in writing a book which was not something that I had imagined myself doing but I simply accepted the challenge and decided to see where it would lead.

I wrote my book in 2021 so there was plenty of opportunity to spend time alone in my office because much of the time I seem to recall we were locked down. Unsure where to start, I approached the process of writing by simply thinking about what a knitter would need to know to learn this technique, considering what challenges they may encounter and experimenting with different ways of overcoming these. Then I wrote up my research in a way that is designed to encourage learning what works for you in at the pace you need to go.

This is a basic 'how to get started' book. Looking at the equipment needed, it covers mastering the technique of plain brioche knitting using one and then two colours.

Moving on to using increase and decrease stitches to create patterns on the surface of your work. Brioche knitting in the round and developing your own designs and ideas.

The book contains a number of step-by-step instructions accompanied by photographs that I took myself. One of the things I learnt during the process was how to take good pictures that clearly show the process. I wrote three patterns for knitters to choose from when they are ready to try out a project using the new knowledge that they have acquired. I had an amazing team of knitters who helped me out immensely by testing out the patterns that I had written, knitting me some beautiful samples which I was able to have professionally photographed, giving me some fantastic images to include with the patterns.

I used Stitchmastery software to produce knitting charts to go alongside the instructions and accompany the patterns so that knitters can learn how to do brioche knitting from a chart rather than written instructions if that is what they prefer to do.

Writing a book was an enormous challenge but a fantastic opportunity to learn and develop my own knowledge. I am immensely proud of the finished product and I truly hope that it will be a helpful tool for intrepid knitters looking for the next adventure.