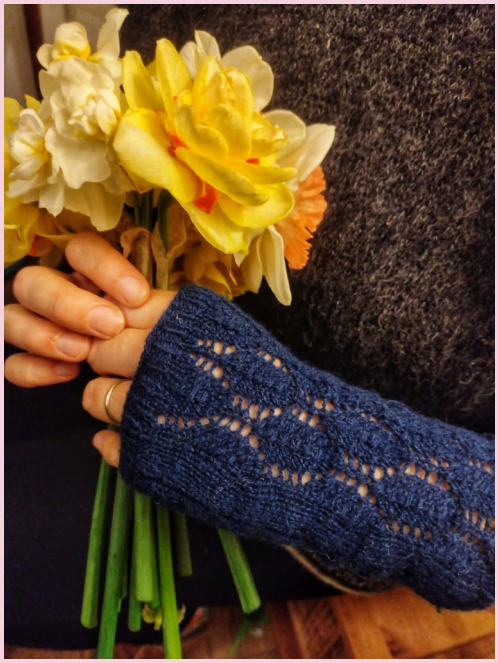
Commissioned to celebrate

SCOTTISH MENTAL HEALTH ARTS FESTIVAL

Gather

A Knitting Pattern for Fingerless Mitts

by Esther Rutter



Materials:

Yarn: Laceweight yarn, 150m.

Sample is shown in Jamieson & Smith Colour L21 laceweight (50% Shetland wool/50% lambswool), using 1 x 25g ball.

Needles: 2.25 and 2.5mm DPNs, or your preferred needles for knitting in the round.

Tapestry needle, waste yarn

Tension: 30 sts and 44 rounds to 10cm over stocking stitch using 2.5mm needles.

Sizes: Adult (S), M, (L). Size shown: adult M.

RIGHT MITT

CUFF: With smaller size needles, cast on (46) 54 (62) stitches in the round being careful not to twist. K1, P1 for 6 rounds to create a ribbed cuff.

Switch to 2.5mm needles and knit for two rounds.

LACE PATTERN: Work from chart as follows, reading each row from right to left, or follow written instructions given below.

R1: Knit (14) 18 (22) sts; K2, yfd, k2; s2, k1, psso; K2, yfd, k1, yfd, k2; s2, k1, psso; k2, yfd, k1; knit (14) 18 (22) sts.

R2 and every alternate (even) row: Knit all stitches.

R3: Knit (14) 18 (22) sts; K3, yfd, k1; s2, k1, psso; K1, yfd, k3, yfd, k1; s2, k1, psso; k1, yfd; K2; knit (14) 18 (22) sts.

R5: Knit (14) 18 (22) sts; K4, yfd; s2, k1, psso; yfd, K5, yfd; ; s2, k1, psso; yfd, K3; knit (14) 18 (22) sts.

Rows 7, 9, 11, 13: Knit (14) 18 (22) sts; K1, K2tog, K2, yfd, k1, yfd, K2; s2, k1, psso; K2, yfd, K1, yfd, K2, skpo; knit (14) 18 (22) sts.

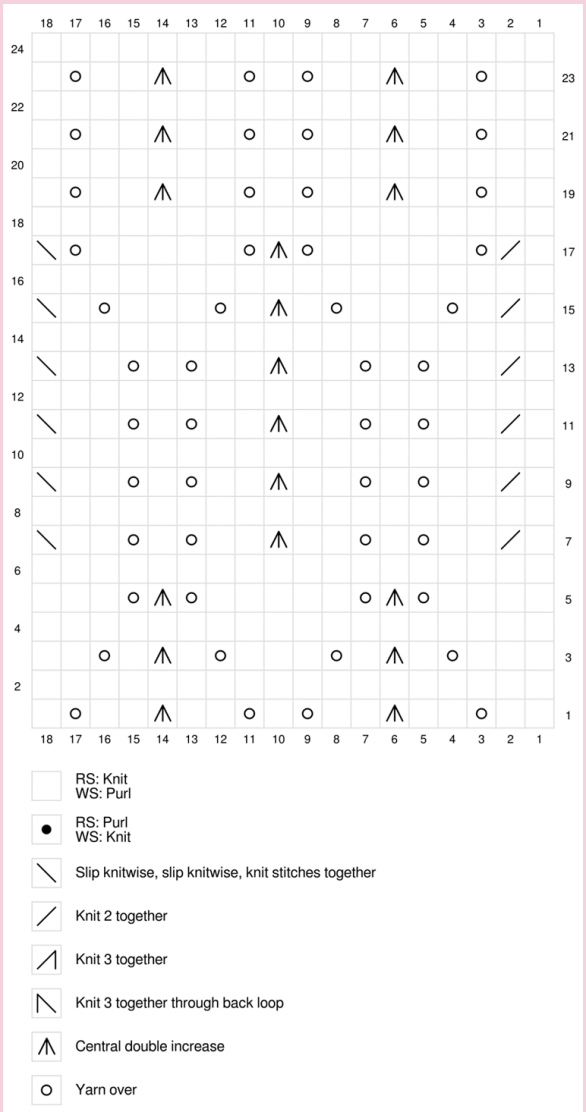
R15: Knit (14) 18 (22) sts; K1, K2tog, K1, yfd, K3, yfd, K1; s2, k1, psso; K1, yfd, K3, yfd, K1, skpo; knit (14) 18 (22) sts.

R17: Knit (14) 18 (22) sts; K1, k2tog, yfd, K5, yfd; s2, k1, psso; yfd, K5, yfd, skpo; knit (14) 18 (22) sts.

Rows 19, 21, 23: Knit (14) 18 (22) sts; k2, yfd, k2; ; s2, k1, psso; k2, yfd, K1, yfd, K2; ; s2, k1, psso; K2, yfd, K2; knit (14) 18 (22) sts.

Row 24: Knit all stches.

Repeat pattern twice plus **rows 1 – 6** once more (54 rounds in pattern). ***



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For thumb stitches: Knit (14) 18 (22) sts; work **row 7** of lace pattern; knit 4 sts. Then using waste yarn knit (9) 10 (11) stitches, slips sts just worked back onto needle, knit to end. Continue in pattern until you have completed **3 repeats** of the lace pattern (72 rounds).

Cuff: Knit 2 rounds in stocking stitch, then switch to smaller size needles. K1, P1 for 6 rounds to create a ribbed cuff. Cast off.

Thumb: Pick up the right side of each stitch in the main yarn directly below the row of waste yarn stitches, leaving you with (9) 10 (11) stitches on your needles. Rotate mitt and pick up the stitches which are now below the waste yarn on the opposite side; (18) 20 (22) stitches.

To close gaps at the sides of the thumb, pick up an extra stitch at the beginning and end of each needle, so you have a total of (22) 24 (26) stitches around the thumb. Knit in the round for 10 rounds, then switch to smaller needles and knit 6 rounds in K1, P1 rib. Cast off.

LEFT MITT: Work as right mitt to ****.

Next round: Knit 4 sts; then using waste yarn knit (9) 10 (11) stitches, slips sts just worked back onto needle; knit 4 sts. Work row 7 of lace pattern; knit (14) 18 (22) sts. Complete as for Right Mitt and Thumb.

Finishing: Weave in ends with tapestry needle and then wash in warm but not hot water. Roll in a towel to dry and then block until the lace pattern pops.

About the design: To knit' means 'to bring together', and as a writer and knitwear designer I am fascinated by the ways knitting not only builds communities, but is an accessible and widely practiced art form that has a two-hundred-year history of being used therapeutically in the treatment of mental illness. My knitwear design is informed by my experience of being mentally unwell – which included being sectioned in a Japanese psychiatric hospital – and therefore reflects both the knitting heritage of Scotland and the unique material culture of Japan.

This design was inspired by deep indigo colours of Japanese *shibori* dyeing. *Shibori* is a traditional textile technique where the fabric is folded before being dipped in indigo dye. The folded or bunched areas retain their original colour, whilst areas exposed to the indigo dye take on that hue. In *shibori* the physical history of the fabric forms an intrinsic part of the finished product, adding to its beauty and unique character. In this way, *shibori* is an analogy for the process by which lived experiences shape our lives. Our history is part of who we are, and when that history is traumatic or difficult it is important to acknowledge that; not to lessen or magnify its importance, but to understand the person fully and appreciate the developing texture of our lives. Because *shibori* works by contrasting the dyed and undyed parts of the fabric, I have sought to recreate that contrast in my Gather Mitts. With lace or open-work knitting, the wearer's body becomes part of the design, and every person who makes a pair of Gather Mitts is free to choose a colour that they thinks works best with their skin tone. The pattern then becomes unique to them, intrinsic to themselves.

About the designer: Esther Rutter is a writer, knitting historian and knitwear designer based in Fife. Her first book , *This Golden Fleece: A Journey Through Britain's Knitted History* was published to popular and critical acclaim by Granta Books in 2019; her second book, due for publication in 2024, explores the connection between language, landscape, literature and mental health. Esther is also an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of St Andrews, and her knitwear designs seek to combine the cultural history of knitting with contemporary design sensibilities to create accessible, wearable garments that anyone can learn to make.