



First Issue

December 2025

## Your *The Longest Yarn®* updates



# Welcome to our very first newsletter !

We're really excited to finally be sending out the first Longest Yarn® newsletter. It's been talked about for a while, and it's only happened thanks to Aimee's hard work and determination — she's spent a full week getting everything set up so we can keep everyone properly in the loop.

Social media is hit and miss, and important news often gets lost. This newsletter gives us a simple way to share what's happening, what's coming up, and how you can get involved.

It'll be just once a month — no clutter, just the bits that matter.

If you know someone who loves The Longest Yarn®, please feel free to share this newsletter

and encourage them to sign up — it really helps us.

Thank you for being part of it,

Tansy

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## When Knitting Became a Quiet Weapon - Codes, Courage and Craft in WWI & WWII



When we think about knitting during the First and Second World Wars, we usually picture socks, scarves and jumpers — practical comforts made with love and sent to those far from home. But knitting carried another, far quieter role.

In both world wars, knitting sometimes became a way of remembering, observing and quietly resisting.

There was no official “knitting code book” issued by governments, and no spy-movie patterns full of secret instructions. Instead, the power of knitting lay in something much more human: memory.

Knitting is repetitive and rhythmic. For some women — particularly in occupied Europe during WWII — stitches became a way of holding information safely in the mind. A purl stitch might represent danger. A change in a pattern could mark a date. An intentional “mistake” could signal something had changed since yesterday. The meaning lived in the knitter’s head, not on paper.

This was especially effective because knitting was everywhere — and encouraged. Women knitted at home, on trains, in cafés, at stations and in queues. To the outside world, it looked harmless. Yet these same women were watching troop movements, counting wagons, noticing insignia and recording what they saw in the only place no one thought to look.

If questioned, the answer was simple and true:

“It’s just knitting for the soldiers.”

And of course, much of the time it was.

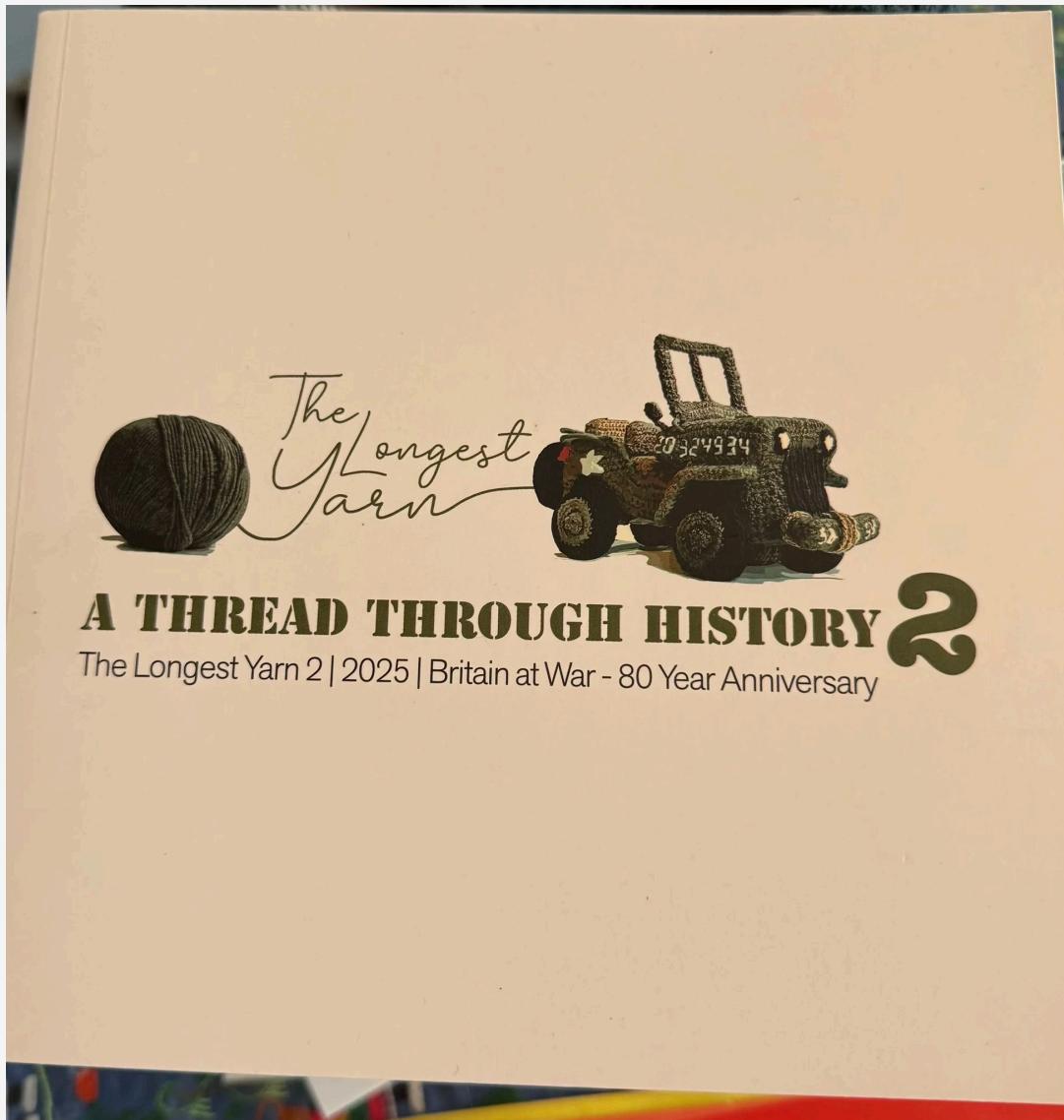
What matters most is not whether every scarf carried a message, but what knitting represented during wartime. It was practical, emotional and quietly powerful. It allowed ordinary people — particularly women — to contribute in ways that were invisible but vital.

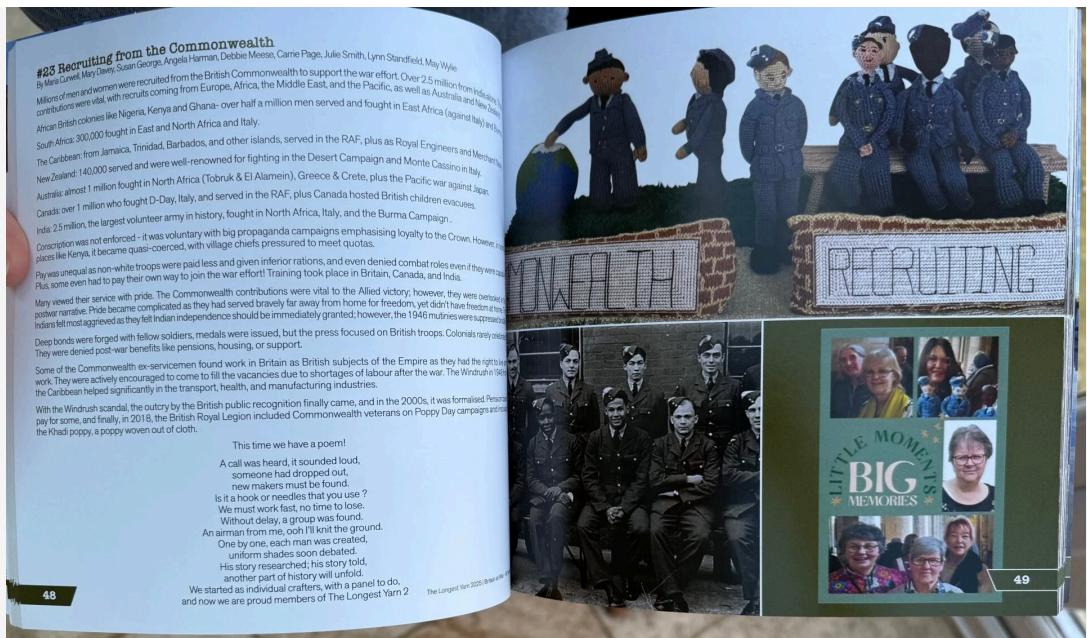
Skills learned at home became tools of endurance, solidarity and, sometimes, resistance.

At The Longest Yarn®, this is one of the reasons knitting carries such deep meaning. Every stitch tells a story — of care, patience, watchfulness and community. What might once have been dismissed as “women’s work” was, in reality, a thread running through survival itself.

In two world wars, knitting wasn't only about keeping soldiers warm — it was also about keeping eyes open.

## Our book - why it matter more than ever





Our book continues to receive wonderful, thoughtful reviews. People tell us it completes the exhibition, deepens the stories, and is being used as a genuine resource — even by those with lived experience of wartime. That matters enormously to us.

Book sales have been quieter than last year, but the enthusiasm and feedback remind us that the book truly resonates once people know it exists. And that's where we all come in.

The book is The Longest Yarn's main revenue stream. It keeps the project moving, supports future exhibitions, and allows us to continue telling these stories with care and integrity. Every recommendation, every mention to a visitor, every shared post makes a real difference.

This is something we can turn around together — by talking about the book, showing it, sharing reviews, and encouraging visitors to take a copy home. When people understand what it is, they want it.

Thank you, as always, for being part of this extraordinary collective effort.

### How you can gently help

If you feel able, there are a few simple, quiet ways to support the book — all of them make a difference.

- When you're at the exhibition, a casual mention that there is a book often sparks interest.
- If you enjoy the book, you might like to share a thought or photo on your own social media — not as a sales post, just as something you've connected with.
- Let people know that the book adds depth to the exhibition and brings the stories together.

Nothing formal, nothing forced — just sharing what matters to you.

#### **A small post you're welcome to use or adapt**

I've been spending time with The Longest Yarn book and it really does add another layer to the exhibition.

The stories, reflections and memories behind the panels are beautifully captured.

If you're visiting the exhibition, it's well worth a look.

Thank you, as always, for being part of this — every quiet act of support helps keep the project moving forward.

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## **The paper chain— a collective effort**



The paper chain was an ambitious project with a clear target: **80 metres**. To keep it on track, we met **once a week on Teams** to check progress, compare numbers and

work out whether the target was realistic.

It quickly became clear this was going to be a push.

In just **six weeks**, **83 people** took part. The original 80-metre target wasn't just met — it was **smashed**, with the final chain measuring **100 metres**. That didn't happen by accident. It required coordination, commitment and a lot of steady effort from everyone involved.

Participation came from places we hadn't anticipated. Since then, I've discovered that even some of my cousins in **Northern Ireland** joined in — people I didn't even realise were aware of *The Longest Yarn*. One particularly striking connection was **Elizabeth, my cousin**, who was a tiny baby in the **1960s** when her mum — my godmother — taught me to knit.

A great deal of the success of this project rests with **Debbie and Vanessa**, who carried a huge load alongside significant personal challenges. Debbie drove the project forward while undergoing cancer treatment, and Vanessa balanced full-time caring for her husband with the practical running of the operation. Every single link was **checked by hand and reinforced with mesh** to ensure the finished chain was strong enough to be installed safely. That level of care was fundamental to the result.

Logistics mattered too, and **George at Big G Logistics** organised collection and transport **at no cost to The Longest Yarn**, removing a major potential barrier.

The paper chain demonstrated what can be achieved in a short space of time when people commit to a shared goal. It was demanding, challenging and successful — and it showed just how far this project now reaches.

## At a glance

Timescale: 6 weeks

People involved: 83

Original target: 80 metres

Final result: 100 metres (target smashed)

How it ran: Weekly Teams check-ins

Quality control: Every link hand-checked and mesh-reinforced

Logistics: Big G Logistics – collection & transport at no cost to TLY

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## **Looking Ahead — and Growing Together**



As The Longest Yarn® continues to grow, one thing is clear: the moments that bring the exhibition to life — such as The Peterborough Drop, Remembrance on November 11th, Easter and Christmas — don't happen by accident. They work best when they're planned calmly and well in advance.

This year has shown us that last-minute scrambles put pressure on everyone and don't support the kind of thoughtful, living exhibition we want to offer. To stay sustainable and, we're shifting towards planning seasons rather than reacting to events. As part of this, we're giving new ideas time to develop properly. One idea we're exploring is a community make using our marching soldiers — small knitted figures made together, displayed as a seasonal feature, and later sold to raise funds.

Nothing is launching yet. This is about looking ahead, sharing ideas, and protecting the magic of The Longest Yarn® as we grow — and seeing who might like to help shape what comes next.

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## Thank you

Before we close, I just want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported The Longest Yarn® this year — whether you've knitted, crocheted, visited, donated, shared a post, bought a book, or quietly encouraged us along the way. None of this happens without you.

I'll be trying to take a little time off over Christmas from Thursday (the word "trying" is doing a lot of work...). Before that, I'll be entertaining our French contingent with some carefully smuggled mince pies and sherry, and on Sunday hosting a full Christmas lunch for our legal and business supporters, as well as those generous donors who have supported the project so significantly this year — all as a heartfelt thank you.

After that, it will be a very quiet period — very little entertaining, lots of dog walks, a bit of knitting, and some much-needed TV.

Whatever you have planned, I wish you a wonderful Christmas and a happy, peaceful New Year.

With gratitude,

Tansy & The Longest Yarn® Team



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### The Longest Yarn

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