

# Crochet Along\*

by Stylecraft 

## The Fruit Garden CAL

Introduction by Jane Crowfoot

# Crochet Along\*

A 'Crochet Along' or 'CAL' project is a much-liked concept and the impact of them has had a massive effect on the popularity of the craft over the last 5 years. CAL projects usually run over the course of a few weeks or months and offer the (often solitary) home crocheter the chance to work through a project in stages. By working through a CAL project, crocheters are not only given the chance to learn new techniques and increase their skills, but in many cases they can also engage in discussions and form new friendships by working alongside others in virtual or physical groups.

Crochet is recognised as a therapeutic and cerebral activity, encouraging hand-eye coordination and the use of the left side of the brain. With an ageing world population, I believe that creating communities of people and individuals who can pass on their own expanding knowledge and vocalise the benefits and positivity of creativity is really important.

I have been designing Crochet Along projects for almost 10 years. When I released my first one in 2011, the crochet world hadn't really quite got their heads around CAL style projects, but boy what a difference a decade makes - there are so many amazing CALs to choose from these days! I am so excited to be able to finally reveal my third free to download project in collaboration with Stylecraft, one of my favourite yarn companies, who continue to hold their position at the forefront of this incredible crafting movement.

Crochet Along projects take me a long time to design. I am not a prolific designer and I try really hard to come up with crochet motifs that reflect my design inspiration. This might be because of my Art School training where we had to create mood boards, drawings, paintings and yarn swatches to back up our design work. Making mood boards is something I still do for every project.

Following the success of my Climbing Rose CAL, a project that ran within Inside Crochet Magazine in autumn 2019, I knew that I wanted to design another project using the Arts and Crafts movement as the catalyst for my design. The Climbing Rose CAL was based on fabric designs by British textile designer, poet, novelist and social activist William Morris. As part of my research for this project I visited galleries and Arts and Crafts houses and it was during a visit to Kelmscott Manor, the countryside home of the Morris family in Oxfordshire, that I realised I wanted to base a CAL design on the incredible embroideries of William Morris's daughter May.

May was the second of two daughters of William Morris and his wife Jane. May was born in 1862 at The Red House in Bexleyheath and was a clever, talented child who was taught to embroider by her mother and Aunt, both of whom completed many of Morris's famous tapestry commissions.

In 1881 May enrolled at the National Art Training School (later the Royal College of Art) to study embroidery and in 1885, at the age of just 23, she became director of the embroidery department of her father's Morris and Co Company. May was responsible for creating some of the company's most iconic textile and wallpaper designs. She was a skilled artist, basing



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many of her designs on nature, with plants and birds being her favourite design source. May's passion was embroidery and it was her skillful, intricate, innovative and beautiful stitch work that helped elevate the craft of needlework from a domestic craft to a serious art form and her influence extended around the world. In 1907 May founded the Women's Guild of Arts in an attempt to raise the professional status and bargaining power of women and girls working on an independent basis in arts and crafts of all kinds.

As I have already said, after my visit to May's home, Kelmscott Manor, where I saw many of her beautiful embroideries I knew immediately that my next CAL had to be based on her work. After discussing the idea with Stylecraft's Sales and Marketing Director Annabelle Hill I set about creating a mood board for my design and soon realised that my focus for my design was to be The Missetter Hangings, embroideries that were designed by May and stitched by her and her close friend Theodosia Middlemore somewhere between 1890 and 1900. The hangings feature birds, flowers, plants and central fruit trees on an embroidered trellis background.

To help me work out the design of my blanket I started to look at May's intricate draft drawings of her embroidery projects and was particularly drawn to one that had a central square panel with an intricate Acanthus leafed edging. It was this drawing that was to become the focus for the layout of my design. I started work on the design in July 2019 and completed my prototype project in November. The second version of the design, which is made using Stylecraft's new Naturals Bamboo Cotton yarn, was completed by February of this year.

I have designed every block for this project from scratch - I don't use blocks designed by other people or stitch directories and each of the motifs within this project are not available elsewhere. For this CAL I wanted to create a project that would appeal to experienced crocheters who want to create an heirloom piece. As with all my CALs the project starts relatively easy and I hope that the first few motifs will help crocheters with their basic stitches and give them an idea of the way the crochet blocks are built up in layers. I have taken step by step images all the way through the project and have added in measurements to make sure that everything stays on track!

I am really delighted that Stylecraft have once again put their faith in me and supported me with this project.

## **A message from Stylecraft:**

We are delighted to be working with Jane again on this Crochet Along project. Jane is one of the foremost designers in crochet, and her original and intricate designs are exquisitely beautiful and satisfying to make. The detailed photo tutorial patterns will be published on Stylecraft's website every two weeks starting on the 28th April and will be supported by the Official Stylecraft Yarns CAL group. Happy crocheting everyone.



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Photography with thanks to National Trust, Standen House, Sussex <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/standen-house-and-garden>

The colour reproduction in this pattern is matched as closely as possible to the yarn but due to photography and printing restrictions some slight variations may occur.  
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