

January 2023

Hello everyone

I do hope you all had a pleasant Christmas & are looking forward to the coming year. Despite the cost of living & energy crisis, it's heart-warming to hear that so many teddies & other knitting has been distributed to those in need, both abroad & here in the UK.



### **Tricia Gibb (St Albans)**

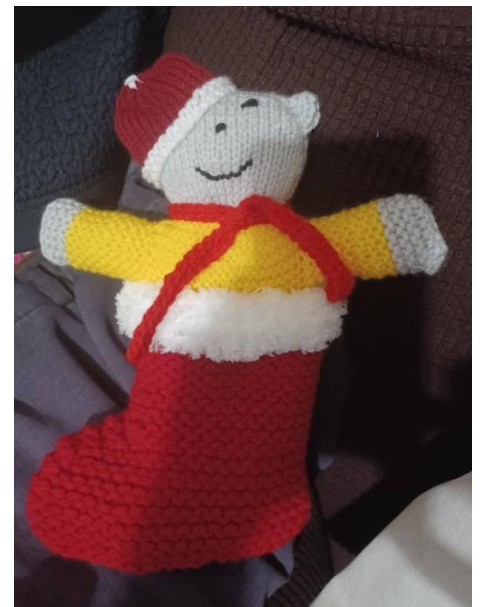
In July, in response to an enquiry from a knitter who lives in that area I was pleased to supply her with 100 Teddies for the Cambridgeshire Police and Ambulance Service to be handed out to comfort children caught up in accidents or other emergencies, etc.

In September I sent some Teddies to the Sailors Society. They are based in Southampton and like to hand one to sailors visiting our ports, especially if they are facing tragedy at home - for example Ukraine - or have been away for months at a time so they will have something to give their children on their return home.

In November a lady who took Teddies a few years ago to the hospital she is supporting in Uganda took another 100 on her latest trip there - her first since before the pandemic.

So.....I have been able to send over 500 Teddies to new homes over the past few months. Some have gone to charities helping Ukrainian refugees, including a welcome centre for them near Edinburgh. Nearer home, the St Albans charity helping refugees has taken a bag of Teddies to distribute among the refugee children accommodated in local hotels. A local food bank has accepted my offer of 200 Teddies to include in their parcels of food for their clients.

I sent two parcels of Teddies to be distributed in time for Christmas among children in hospital in the Midlands as well as the North of England (where some may also go to a food bank). Here's to another year of bringing a little happiness to children affected by the terrible events in the world.



**Edith Roberts (Newark)** Just at present I'm doing "jumpers for Gambia" not Teddies. Some local people here started a school there, and folk from here visit and take stuff. However, our church has just started a drop in for people around in the day, and we have quite a few potential Teddy knitters. I'm going to pass around the pattern and see what happens. We will do what we can.



**Jean Salter (Oxfordshire)**

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, knitters here in Cholsey have been focusing on producing knitted blankets for Hope and Aid Direct. Our group has grown considerably and we now have more than 50 crafters producing squares and blankets and have to date produced 78 large single blankets for Ukraine. In March we established a weekly knit and natter group in our village hall and this is now forming part of the village Warm Hub initiative and provides a

regular meeting place for an increasing number of people.

In addition to making blankets, some ladies continue to make Teddies and these we send to Tricia Gibb in St Albans.

**Susan Mulligan (Yorks)**

I have sent 800 teddies, 150 assorted knitted toys, 30 children's jumpers, 5 children's cardigans, 20 knitted/crocheted blankets and 30 hats. I have also sent 300 sanitary towels, 30 pairs of pants, and 30 sets of soap and face cloths. All these have been sent to Africa. I also took 54 knitted toys to a local collection appealing for toys for Christmas.

**Sue Gorrie (Fylde, Lancs)** The Fleetwood library group, although much reduced in number, continues to enjoy making a variety of items including prem baby and toddler cardigans and jumpers, blankets and toys. These go wherever they are needed, including the prem baby unit at Preston Royal Infirmary and abroad.

**Sue Hoskinson (Bucks)** I have been trying to increase blanket



production for Ukraine and make the whole process more efficient. Until relatively recently Linda & I have joined the vast majority of squares that are sent to us. Some knitters send directly to Chas Storer in Essex. Since the entry on Jo Andrews' wonderful website and podcast [www.hapticandhue.com](http://www.hapticandhue.com) blanket making here for Hope and Aid Direct (HaAD) as gone GLOBAL! I am now receiving interest (and squares and blankets) from the USA, Canada, Europe and Australia! The entry in



Tetyana & her 3 children

the September 2022 issue of Simply Knitting helped too.

I have delivered 87 blankets in the last two months to my nearest HaAD Drop off point (DOP). My list of knitters is growing rapidly; I now have about 160 and most of those head a group! There are now DOP's for HaAD all over the country.



Tetyana 2 with her 2 daughters

(<https://www.hopeandaiddirect.org.uk/drop-off-point>) Many of my knitters are completing their own blankets and delivering to their nearest one, so I don't actually know exactly how many we are sending. (the „star“ being Sandra Melville in London - she has made 35 beautiful blankets entirely on her own - see pic below). This is all wonderful - the system is working and mushrooming! In the meantime I look forward with hope that the war will end and peace restored.

Unfortunately there will always be a need for warm blankets somewhere in the world. Finally we received the following “thank you” note from Ukraine:- *„All these families lost their homes & they don't even find the words to express their gratitude to you for the warmth at their temporary homes. I was really crying when presenting these blankets to them & saw their thankful eyes. With love to all your team, Alla Nalyvaiko“*

**Sue Bearcroft (Cornwall)** I am still keeping a low profile as my husband is still very ill. I am continuing with a few ladies who only produce smaller, more infrequent amounts. I can then



keep adding their baby knits/teddies to a box that will eventually go to Knit for Peace. This is perfect for me as they will take any amount at any time. I also sent a box of teds to the Shoe Box appeal in Oct. The boxes fill slowly but at least I feel I'm still contributing. I also sent another 30 Rafi Refugee Rabbits to OHOB, who put them in their school packs given out during their workshops educating primary children about the plight of

refugee children. So I am just keeping my hand in for now.

**Carole Thorn (Spain)** The knit and natter group is flourishing here on the Costa Blanca. We are meeting in one another's houses regularly and have made and donated about 50 blankets to a local children's home. We had a stall at the U3A just before Christmas and sold toys and wreaths we had made, raising 200 euros for the children's charity. Other hats, jumpers etc. were donated to another children's home.

We continue with our projects and I'm sure will be giving much more in 2023.

**Anne Jones (Northampton)** During the past six months teddies and knitted blankets and knitted tops have been taken to: the food bank, Rumania, Armenia and to refugees newly arrived in our country.

**Alison McCrindle (Ontario, Canada)** The Annual Teddy Bear Tea took place on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>. A small group of people attended the tea but the guest speaker was unable to make it due to having Covid. We are hopeful that she will be able to join us at the next tea in Oct. 2023. 496 teddies and 354 bags were collected at the tea.

In the second half of 2022, 25 teddies travelled to Tahiti in October with Melody Wren, a travel journalist. In November, 75 teddies travelled with MMI to Peru, 70 teddies left for the Dominican Republic with Servants Heart Ministries and 20 were taken to Nicaragua by a woman that was on holiday there.



Children & their teddies in Nicaragua

**Greta Collier (South Africa)'KnitWits 4 the Needy' Crochet/Knitting Group**

As the New Year 2023 rolls in and all the celebrations are behind us, I would like to express my gratitude to all the KnitWits in our Group for their enthusiasm and forever keeping on with all their hard work. Through the dreaded Covid, the girls showed their true colours, by continuously knitting or crocheting for those less fortunate brothers & sisters of ours.

After completing and then displaying the „Rainbow Nation Blanket“ at Steyn City School - the Blanket being made up of approx. 4500 blankets by all the “67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela Day” groups around the world, they were then distributed by „Gift of the Givers“ to all the many needy organisations as well as flood victims. To date we have supplied our woolly items,



all made with love, to many, many beneficiaries, and of course our  
Teddies and Cot

Blankets are always donated to „The Baby Box“ who give new mums in the rural hospitals an assortment of woolly garments, plus many other items for their new babies. Our new “67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela Day” Project, (which includes all the knitting/ crocheting groups in Johannesburg), is to lay out all our many-coloured blankets at an event at Jeppe Girls High School - where our beloved Founder Mrs Carolyn Steyn was a pupil. This event will also include musicians, an assortment of food



stalls, cappuccinos etc. on Saturday 3 June 2023, after which our blankets will be donated to all our needy

institutions for the upcoming winter. Our blankets are now all being stockpiled for this occasion, and to date we have collected well over 60. We wish you all a joy-filled New Year with excellent health!

**Lesley Hunt (Wilts)** Most of our teddies have gone to children in Ukraine or to Ukrainian children living in the UK. We also sent some to Diane Johnson in the north east for her Christmas trauma teddy appeal and to a children’s councillor local to one of my contributors near Chippenham.

**Mary Leech (Guildford)** Over the past 12 months teddies have been sent to me by sixteen

knitters, including a friend in the next village who is 95 years old and who "wanted some knitting to do". This list really should include those who are part of knitting circles. The village of Betchworth in Surrey has taken T4T to heart: the Christmas Tree in their church was constructed of 140 teddies; when the tree was dismantled, these bears were then delivered to me - quite a car full! Several knitters keep on knitting until they have amassed 15 or even 20 bears before sending them my way. So since the last newsletter, my grateful thanks to Angela, Pamela, Linda, Jacki, Beryl at the Billingshurst Knitting Circle, Helen, Jenny in Surrey, Annette in Dorset, Mary at the West End Bowls Club knitting group, and Kay in Surrey for all the lovely bears. Keep on knitting!

Sometimes there are stitchers too, but even so it seems there are never enough bags to go round. I do have just one regular willing bag maker who fits in the making of bags around a busy job.

Team Hope is a charity based in Dublin that sends "Christmas Shoeboxes" to vulnerable children across Eastern Europe and

Africa. In July they were delighted to anticipate the arrival of 100 bears - but, oh, what a hassle with customs ...the forms were filled in, the courier collected the sacks of bears from my home, and off they went ... A few days later the courier contacted me to say the customs declarations were not sufficient and the bears could not be sent to Ireland: it seemed that each and every bear in each sack had to be detailed with its value, all materials in its construction, weight, etc, etc. The simply stated "hand knitted bears for children" was NOT adequate and they were returning them all to me. After about a month they had not come back and I had begun to despair - when one day I received an excited email from Dublin, "Mary, guess what has just arrived ...!!!" Somebody along the way must have taken pity (or seen sense).

Otherwise distribution has been very straightforward.

100 bears went to a Leeds based company which every Christmas liaises with their local Social Services donating Christmas gifts to underprivileged children. 60 bears went to a Surrey based charity working with vulnerable children. (These bears are really therapy bears for children who find talking to a bear much easier than talking to an adult; the bear then gets given to the child to keep.) Just in time for Christmas another 50 went off to the Lungi children's hospital in Sierra Leone.

During this year, 505 teddies have been sent on their way together with uncounted glove puppets and mittens.



**Patricia Peck (Reading, Berks)** In the last few months I have sent 4 blankets and 78 teddies all of which travelled on a van to Ukrainian refugees. I now have another 10 blankets and 40+ teddies which I am hoping will be travelling to more Ukrainians later this month.



**Diane Johnson (Co. Durham) Helping Hands Knitting Group** Teddies have been sent to Dryburn Hospital in County Durham and also to local food banks over Christmas. All have sent their thanks to everyone for making Christmas special for the local children.



**Suzanne Brewer (Essex)** Essex knitters have been extremely busy and I have collected some absolutely beautiful teddies and other knitted items from a variety of knitting groups and individuals. It has been wonderful to see old friends and to also meet new knitters who are keen to contribute. We have donated teddies, blankets and baby clothes to St. Peter's Hospital in Maldon and Broomfield



Hospital in Chelmsford. We have also developed links with the local emergency services and donated several teddies and worry worms to support emergency staff who are dealing with children in very anxious situations. As always, it was a pleasure to send knitted gifts to Nayla Tabet at Weave at Heart in the Lebanon. In addition, we have given many lovely items to Ukrainian refugees, care homes and schools. I continue to be amazed at the high standard of creative skills I see regularly and also delighted to be able to offer comfort to both vulnerable children and adults in need.

**Sally Despenser (Headington, Oxford) Shared Knitting and Crochet Group** We are happily continuing with our knitting and crochet group. Last year, one of our members set up a monthly sewing up group to piece together blankets, from 30 to 99 squares. Many of our members cannot get to the monthly group, but they still feel connected. This is as important as our output.

Last summer we wrote that some of our usual local outlets no longer wanted our woolly goods. We have found new outlets, many of them short term, so this is a bit of a problem. We try to meet local needs, for example Oxford Baby Bank, the Oxford Winter Night Shelter (which operates all the year round), as well as UK needs further field through Helping Hands Co Durham, and Knit for Peace. And through a local Refugee Group we have provided stuff

for Romania, Ukraine (via Poland) and Bosnia Herzegovina. We have also been able to support Craft Groups which are part of the Afghan Resettlement Programme.

We always look forward to hearing about other groups and send everyone best wishes.

**Elaine Jones (Shrops) Knit for Life group.** Pam and I have taken the difficult decision to wind down Knit for Life over the next year or so. Pam is struggling to cope with her husband's increasing dementia and the issues that causes, and I wouldn't be able to manage the charity in its present form alone. We have had a good run - our charity has been going for 10 years now and we were active for 3 years prior to that. We are going to try and keep collecting and distributing baby clothes which go to a local contact of Pam's in Oswestry. We can also deal with lap blankets, octopuses (!) and small knitted bags which go to the Dementia Unit at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. Most of our donated knitting goes to Knit-a-Square in South Africa. They take blankets, blanket squares, hats, hand warmers and toys. We also support Hope and Aid Direct with blankets and blanket squares. Our main problem is the vast quantity of assorted sizes of knitted squares, rectangles, triangles and other undefined shapes that we have been storing for some years now. I am hoping to send most of them to South Africa where they have a group known as the "misfits" who sew these weird creations into blankets. They have my undying admiration!! We will be sending a couple of shipments next year - 20 removal boxes in all.

From me in **Kidderminster (Worcs)** Another 226 Fish „n Chip jumpers & hats were taken to Uganda in August by a midwife working for the UN.

In August 2 student midwives from Keele University went to a small village in Uganda. They took 25 knitted baby sets: cardigans, hats and booties (pic right). They handed these out to the mums in the hospital unit, who were thrilled with them and very grateful. Teddies & puppets were given to the „Happy Baby Community“ in London.

In October I sent a large box to Lebanon full of jumpers, cardigans, hat/scarf/mittens sets, knitted socks, 22 teddies, 19 puppets, big knitted dolls, 2 flamingos(!) & some soft toys. The charity „Crafting for Communities“ takes many different items several times a year to donate on my behalf. Hundreds of teddies have gone to the children's wards of several local hospitals over the last 6 months, as well as lots of angel capes & pouches for stillborn babies.

Beautiful crocheted 1m square blankets have been sent to Care Homes, along with 32 octopus & knitted balls (used in sitting room activities.)

Worry Monsters are much in demand. They are used in hospices, by the bereavement team at Birmingham's Children's Hospital, for abused &/or trafficked children or those who are very ill, anxious or in need. 20 have gone out to help so far.





150 Teddies have gone to Sailors' Society port chaplains in Southampton, Montrose &



Invergordon who give them "in particular to Ukrainian seafarers who can try to pass them on to their children and families to let them know they are thinking about them in these extremely difficult times. I'm sure your gesture will put a smile on their faces." Others have gone to Filipino & Turkish seamen My local Baby Bank has had teddies, cardigans with hats, knitted balls, quilts, baby blankets, donated small soft toys & several bags of baby & toddler clothes & shoes. I sent jumpers to the Rainbow Baby Bank in Yorkshire. They support children up to

the age of 6. "Our referrals for vulnerable families are increasing month on month and I anticipate demand is going to increase even more during November, December & January. The weather is going to become much colder and families will be feeling the pinch with Christmas looming and beyond. The baby bank has seen a 63% increase in October 22 compared to October 21, which is staggering. In October we gave out nearly 70 clothing referrals for both babies and children."

A local hospital asked for hats, scarves & blankets to give to elderly folk being sent home to cold houses.



A new charity [www.projectgambia.org.uk/](http://www.projectgambia.org.uk/) encourages schools & colleges here to visit & support those in Gambia. It sends out containers of aid so I have sent:- fabric school bags, teddies, drawstring bags for sanitary towels, blankets, cardigans, knitted dresses, socks & hats. Hundreds of donated pencils, crayons, rulers, etc. with fabric pencil cases, notebooks, plus lots of 1m square blankets also went for a nursery & clinic in Janjanbureh (Georgetown).

Mothers who give birth at the clinic are now given a baby pack. The doctor says they are making a real difference and encouraging women to come to the clinic. This baby born at Jjb clinic was given lots of lovely knitwear.

Donations to Ukraine -

110 teddies in bags, 150 puppets, 2 sacks of jumpers, 2 of cardigans, 4 of jumpers with hats, 5 of hat, scarf & mitten sets, a box of baby clothes sets, 4 sacks of donated children's & adults' clothes & a box of adults' boots & shoes via The Yorkshire Aid Convoy.

160 teddies, 165 puppets, 136 hat/mitten sets, 40 hat/scarf/ mitten sets, 50 jumpers & cardigans with hats, lots of tiny knitted dolls, hairbands, pencils, crayons, erasers, etc. plus a bag of delightful small knitted mice via the Xmas shoebox charity „Teams4U“.



175 puppets, 75 hat/scarf/mitten sets, 35 hat/mitten sets, 10 knitted toys, plus 9 Ukrainian teddies via a local giftbox project.

100 teddies, 30 puppets, 50 jumpers (some with hats) & lots of hat, scarf & mitten sets went to a Welcome Centre for Ukrainian refugees in Edinburgh.

The coordinator said *"Thank you so much! We've already been distributing the teddies at the Welcome Centre and I've been told we have had feedback from staff there about the huge difference these are making. Originally we had planned to distribute these to the younger children only, but the Council staff manning the centre have said they've had older children asking for them too, and have explained how useful these are in helping teenagers cope with the trauma they've experienced."*

Best wishes,  
Chris

PS. „tricia Smith in Cumbria has kindly offered to make teddy bags for anyone who needs them. Let me know if you'd like some & I'll put you in touch.

Sally's group in Headington also sent this. I'm sure many of our „suppliers“ feel the same!!  
We asked our members: Why do we knit?

"I do like to come and meet new people."

"I do like to come and meet people I already know."

"Even though I can't attend the meetings, I like having someone to knit for, and it helps me to feel connected."

(And this popped up in Michelle Obama's book "Becoming": "Something in that tiny and precise motion on repeat, the gentle rhythm of those clicking needles, moved my brain in a new direction.")

We also asked: When do you knit or crochet?

"Watching the telly"

"Waiting for an important phone call, trying not to get anxious or impatient"

"Waiting for family/visitors/work people to arrive"

"Sitting at the hospital"

"Waiting 30 minutes for my medication to take effect"

"On the train"

"Resting after lunch"

"When I can't sleep"

"When I feel anxious or unsettled"

"After getting bad news"

"Instead of doing things I'm putting off (like cleaning the windows)"

"When I'm in a hurry to see how a new pattern is going, or to finish a piece"

Also - "Where do people knit?" ----->



Knitting beside the highway, Himachal Pradesh, India