

Knovelty Knitting

Gary Heaven was handed a crochet hook when he was four years old and he's been knitting in one form or another ever since. 'My mother had people drop off fleeces to her which she would card, spin and knit. As a kid, that was just what was happening around me and it was indoctrinated into me.'

Gary includes knitting in his list of important life skills – being able to repair and create. 'To my mind, if you get a tear in your jeans, you sew it back up.'

Gary prefers to knit small, quirky things like his amazing collection of animals. On the table in front of me sits a beautiful green chameleon. Gary reaches into its mouth and pulls it inside out – it has turned from green to orange! 'It does it in the most grotesque way possible so that's pretty cool. Anything that is a bit bizarre appeals to me,' says Gary laughing. His latest project is a beanie with a brain pattern on it.

Gary got started on novelty knitting when he was at school and stumbled across a crochet pattern for woolly sheep. 'It was a way of turning scrap wool into an income and it helped pay for my materials.'

Amongst a range of career paths, Gary is a programmer and I suggest to him that knitting is really just executing a programme with wool and needles. 'It is actually at that level, but when you're making something like the animals, it's also a three-dimensional process.'

While knitting is dominated by women, historically that was not the case. Gary tells me, 'Any self-respecting Scotsman would collect fleeces and spin them into yarn. Then he would sit down at night and knit up his socks and garments.'

Gary suggests that something like knitting can capture children's brains at the right time and keep them from heading off on tangents that might not be best for everyone. 'Saying to young people that it is OK or cool to do things like knitting is really important.'

For those wanting to learn to knit, start with Youtube and books, or enquire at The Knitting Truck ([facebook.com/theknittingtruck](https://www.facebook.com/theknittingtruck)) about lessons.