

# Giving something back

By Natalie Fergie

*After knitting lots of free patterns, Natalie Fergie wanted to give something back. Here she tells us her experiences and gives suggestions to help you do some good while you knit too.*

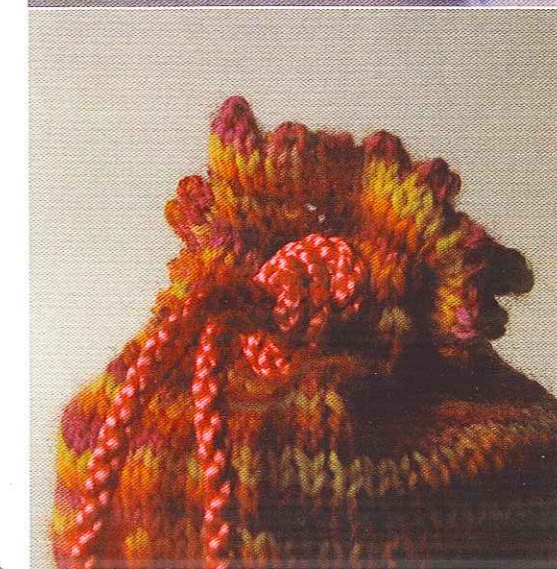
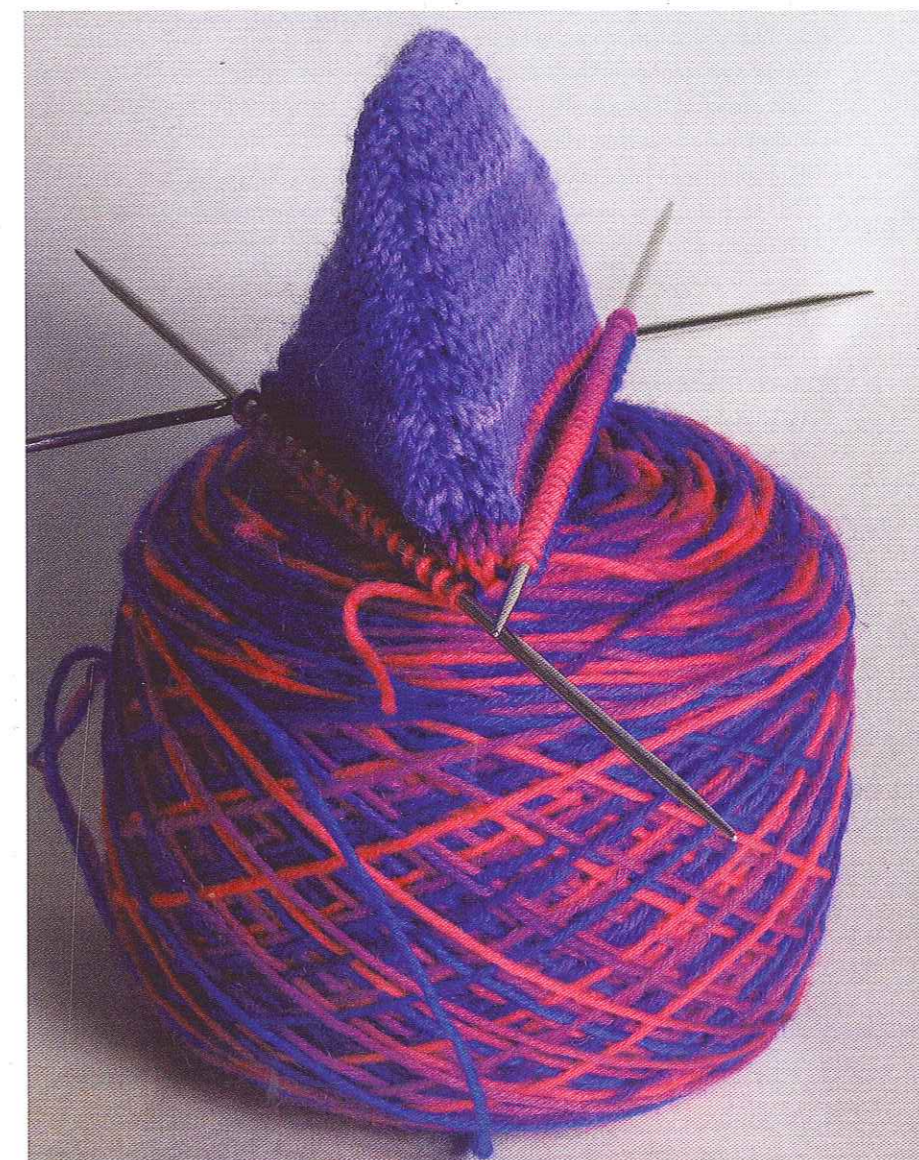
**T**here are many kinds of knitting and I like them all. Plain 'vanilla' socks allow me to switch off for a while, knitting round and round as I mull over the events of the day. It's sometimes called 'mindless knitting' but I prefer to think of it as recharging my batteries. And then there is challenging knitting, the stuff which takes me out of my comfort zone. The sort of knitting where if I dare to think about what's for dinner at the same time as I knit, then tinkering or frogging (or both) will be on the menu.

- I am incredibly fortunate.
- I have a home in which to knit.
- I have the luxury of being able to switch off occasionally.
- I know that there will actually *be* a dinner.

And I know that the people for whom I knit are safe, and usually just a phone call away. I am also fortunate in a knitting sense, with access to the internet, Ravelry, and friends to bounce ideas off. I make good use of the free patterns available on the web. For years I struggled with toe-up socks, for example. I wrapped-and-turned and turned-and-wrapped, and time after time the result was something with so many holes it was barely suitable for catching sticklebacks. Eventually I discovered the free Express Lane pattern by Diane Mulholland. I followed her instructions for the toe, knitted my vanilla round-and-round foot, completed a short row heel, raced up the leg to the cuff – and grinned for about a week.

As Christmas approached last year I went in search of gift-wrap. In our house we adopt the unorthodox tradition of wrapping presents in elderly gardening sweaters (clean ones) and even bath towels (resistant to the most prying of eyes). Smaller items require a little more care so I was delighted to discover that Diane had designed a free gift bag pattern, and I rapidly added this to my must-knit collection.

We now have several of them, all made from leftover sock yarn, and they travel around the family at Christmas and birthdays, the ultimate in eco-wrapping, giving ongoing use and pleasure for a very small outlay of time and materials. The concept of a relationship between the hours we spend on our craft and the pleasure it gives us is not new. Elizabeth Zimmermann suggested that maximum pleasure for minimum cost would be obtained by knitting large ▶



**(Above)** The Express Lane sock pattern by Diane Mulholland.

**(Left)** Natalie makes these bags to 'wrap' presents.