



FIVE VINTAGE SOCK PATTERNS

FROM THE 1940's

INTRODUCTION

These patterns and instructions for working socks were first published in Patons and Baldwin's 'Woolcraft' in the 1940's, during the height of the Second World War. Knitting and home dressmaking had been established crafts before this time, but during the war they took on a new importance; without cheap or readily available manufactured clothing, there was a new reliance on the ability of skilled men and women to make their own. This was due in part to a lack of raw materials such as cloth and wool, and in part because a lot of industry had been commandeered for war work, such as producing parachutes and military uniforms.

It became very important for ordinary people, who may have never done it before, to create their own practical and hardwearing garments. Little pamphlets like Woolcraft set out to give people the basics, and then an array of useful patterns. Woolcraft contained patterns for everything from baby clothes to boy's jumpers, from women's gloves to men's underwear, in over thirty plain designs. Alongside leaflets such as 'Clothes for Liberated Europe' and 'Knitting to a Budget' it was possible to go from relative novice to someone who could almost clothe the whole family.

Of course, this wasn't just craft or thrift, but survival during very difficult times. With very little money and all the essentials on ration, it was a hard, difficult struggle to keep everyone warm and fed. A pair of warm socks could keep people's

spirits up as well as their toes warm, and when they were looking tired or became too small, they could be unravelled, the worn parts discarded, and re-knit into something else.

THE PATTERNS

These are a small selection of the sock patterns in the book, which I've picked out in order to give a modern sock knitter a flavour of the time and some interesting new (old!) techniques to try out. You might be surprised how modern some of them are, and how the way we work socks today has evolved. For example, the 'Auto' heel in the Heels section looks mightily like a short-row, which is often used today, but why was the Dutch heel left behind? And you may wish to try socks worked on two straight needles and then seamed along the side – Lady's Bed Socks, the first pattern in this collection. The perfectionist in me wants to knit them as mirror-images with the seam in both insteps, which, I'm sure, could be done with a little working-out.

There seems to be more calf or leg shaping in these patterns than in modern socks, and the cuff is longer in most of the designs. My personal favourite for period charm is the Lady's Ankle Socks, the last pattern in this collection, which has a pretty lace design and is worked in two colours. Of course, this being war-time both colours are brown, but I'm sure you can do something about that!

Some of the patterns are a little tightly-knit by modern standards – anyone out there knitting to 10.5 st to the inch? – but

they're also small-ish sizings – I'm sure that with a bit of swatching, you could knit for example the Man's Ribbed Sock at the more average 7.5 st to the inch to get a larger size.

I do recommend reading through the directions for the heels and the toes at the start to get an idea of construction before starting the patterns. Sometimes the pattern relies on '...and continue in this manner' which, if you've not seen the heel before, can be daunting! These heels may also be useful to add to other projects, depending on your foot shape – I particularly like the Auto Heel, which does short rows without all the fiddly wrapping.

I have transcribed the patterns from the original, if you do find any errors, it may take a time-machine to have them corrected in the original, but I'm always happy to add explanatory notes to this pattern booklet, based on your experience. Just drop me a message in Ravelry if you spot anything – and of course there may be typo's I've not spotted.

If you enjoy knitting these patterns and you're new to vintage knitting, there are some wonderful patterns out there waiting to be brought back to life – full of unexpected shaping, beautiful lace or tailoring, and unusual finishes. I do recommend seeking them out at car-boot sales, in attics and bookshops, and just having a go.



Enjoy your knitting,
and remember – The

Thrifty Housewife Wins the War!

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In Two Colours, with Lace

*This collection is dedicated, with thanks,
to my partner's Auntie Bet, who passed
away in 2011, and to my mum, who
taught me to knit.*



HEELS

“DUTCH” HEEL

With 72 stitches in commencing round, - divide number of st on round by four. Then knit first quarter of total st onto one needle, slip last quarter of round onto the other end of the same needle, these st are for heel; divide two remaining quarters on two needles and leave them for the instep. For heel, always slipping first st throughout, purl and knit a row alternately until depth is half the width of st on the needle, last row being a purl row.

Then to turn the heel;

K22, slip1, K1, pass slipped st over knitted, turn.

*P9, p2tog, turn, K9, slip 1, k1, pass slipped st over knitted, turn, repeat from * until all st are knitted in. The last row will be a purl row.

Knit back half st thus completing the heel. Slip all instep stitches onto one needle.

Taking a spare needle, knit remaining st of heel and knit up 18 st at side of heel; with second needle knit instep st, with third needle knit up 18 st at side of heel and first half of heel st.

Continue knitting in rounds for the remainder of the foot.

“FRENCH” HEEL

With 68 sts in commencing round – divide sts as for DUTCH HEEL. For heel, always slipping first st throughout, purl and knit

a row alternately until depth is half the width of the sts on the needle, last row being a purl row.

Then to turn heel;

k20, k2tog, turn; p7, p2tog, turn;

k8, k2tog, turn; p9, p2tog, turn;

k10, k2tog, turn; continue in this manner until all heel st are worked on to one row again.

Knit back half sts thus completing the heel. Slip all instep sts onto one row again.

Taking a spare needle, knit remaining sts of heel and knit up 17 sts at the side of the heel; with a second needle knit up instep sts; with a third needle knit up 17 sts at other side of heel and first half of heel sts.

Continue knitting in rounds for the remainder of the foot.

“AUTO” HEEL

Divide sts as for DUTCH HEEL. The knit first quarter of total number of sts on the round onto one needle; slip last quarter of round onto other end of same needle, these sts are for heel; divide two remaining quarters on to two needles and leave them for instep.

For heel, always slipping first st, purl back all sts, turn.

*knit all but last st, of previous row, turn; purl all but last st of previous row; turn. Repeat from * until 9 or 10 sts are left at each side of small rows, last row will be a purl row

** then turn, knit all sts of last row, lift up right-hand side of loop just before next st, and knit it together with next st; turn, purl all sts of last row, lift up loop just before next st and purl it together with the next st, repeat from ** until all sts are worked on to one row again.

Knit back half sts. This completes heel.

Slip instep sts on to one needle Taking a spare needle, knit other half of heel sts and knit up 3sts at side of heel; with a second needle knit instep sts; with a third needle, knit up 3 sts at side of heel and first half of heel sts. Continue knitting in rounds for the remainder of the foot.



TOES

FLAT TOE

The sts should be arranged on needles as follows; on first needle, there should be a quarter of total number of sts in round; on second needle these should be instep sts, i.e., half total number of sts in round; on third needle remaining quarter.

To shape toe;

*Knit to last 3 sts of first needle, k2tog, k1;
On second needle k1, k2tog tbl, knit to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1;

On third needle k1, k2tog, knit to end of needle.

Knit 2 rounds without shaping. Repeat from * until about 28 sts remaining in round. Then knit sts from first needle to third needle. Cast off two needles together, or *graft* sts.

ROUND TOE

The sts (which require to be a multiple of 10) should be arranged in the same manner as for FLAT TOE.

1st round; knit together every 9th and 10th st.

Knit two rounds without shaping and also after each of the following rounds;

4th round; knit together every 8th and 9th st.

7th round; knit together every 7th and 8th st.

10th round; knit together every 6th and 7th st.

13th round; knit together every 5th and 6th st.

16th round; knit together every 4th and 5th st.

Run thread through remaining sts and darn in end very securely.



PATTERNS



LADY'S BED SOCKS

Worked **FLAT** on two straight needles.

TENSION; 5 ½ sts to the inch in width.

RECIPE

Cast on 50 sts.

1st row; k2 *p1, k1, repeat from * to end of row.

Repeat this row until work measures 11 ½ inches from commencement. With wrong side of work facing, proceed as follows;

1. K1, purl to last st, K1
2. Knit plain

Repeat these two rows once more.

5. K1, purl to last st, k1.

6. K12, turn. 7. P11, K1

8. K11, turn. 9. P10, K1.

10. K10, turn. 11. P9, K1

12. K9, turn. 13. P8, K1

14. K8, turn. 15. P7, K1

16. K7, turn. 17. P6, K1

18. K6, turn. 19. P5, K1

20. K5, turn. 21. P4, K1

22. K4, turn. 23. P3, K1

24 K4, lift up right-hand side of loop just before 5th st and knit the two together (thereby preventing a hole)

25. P4, knit1

Continue in this manner, knitting one st more in every plain knitted row until 12 st are worked on to needle; turn. Proceed as follows;

1. P11, K1.
2. Knit plain
3. K1, P11, turn
4. K12
5. K1, P10, turn

Continue working to match other side until all sts are worked onto one needle again, ending with a plain knitted row.

Proceed as follows;

1. K1, purl to last st, K1
2. K12, K2tog tbl, knit plain to last 14st, k2tog, K12
3. K1, purl to last st, K1

Repeat 2nd and 3rd rows once more.

Work 5 inches in plain, smooth fabric without shaping, ending with a purl row.

Proceed as follows;

1. K8, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K18, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K8
2. And all alternate rows; K1, purl to last st, K1
3. K7, k2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K16, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K7
4. As 2
5. K6, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K14, K2tog, k2, k2tog tbl, K6
6. As 2
7. K5, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K12, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K 5
8. As 2

9. K4, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K10, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K4
10. As 2
11. K3, K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K8 K2tog, K2, K2tog tbl, K3
12. K1, purl to last st, K1

Cast off.

Work another BED SOCK in this manner. With a damp cloth and a hot iron, press carefully. Sew up leg and foot seams, place seam to centre cast-off sts for toe, sew up toe seam



MAN'S RIBBED SOCKS

French Heel and Flat Toe

Tension; 10st to the inch in width

RECIPE

Cast on 82 stitches, 26 on each first and third needles and 30 on second needle. Work 4 inches in rounds in rib of K1, P1. In next round *K1, P1 six times, increase once in next stitch. P1 K1 six times, P1, increase once in next st. P1 K1 six times increase once in next st, repeat from * once, K1, P1 to end of round. There should now be 88 stitches in the round.

Proceed as follows;

1. K3, P1, repeat from * to end of round. Repeat this round 29 times

**31st round K3, P1, K2Tog, K1, * P1, K3 repeat from * to last 5 sts, P1, K1, K2tog tbl, P1

32nd round K3, P1, K2 *P1, K3, repeat from * to last 4 sts, P1 K2 P1

Repeat 32nd round six times

39th round; K3, P1, K2tog, *P1, K3, repeat from * to last 4 sts, P1, K2tog tbl, P1

40th round K3, P1, K1, *P1, k3, repeat from * to last 3 sts, P1, K1, P1

Repeat 40th round six times

47th round; K3, P1, P2tog, *K3 P1, repeat from * to last 6 sts, K3, P2tog tbl, P1

48th round K3, P2, *K3, P1, repeat from *to last 5 sts, K3, P2.

Repeat 48th round six times

55th round; K3, P2tog *K3, P1, repeat from * to last 5 sts, K3, P2tog tbl,

56th round *K3, P1 repeat from * to end of round. Repeat 56th round six times **

Repeat from ** to ** once

To commence heel increase once in 1st st, knit first 18sts of round on to one needles, slip last 16st of round onto the other end of the same needle (these 36sts are for the heel). Divide remaining sts on to two needles and leave from the instep, Work 35 rows on heel sts, in alternate rows of purl and plain (always slipping the first st and knitting the last st in every row) Turn heel as follows;

1st row; K22, K2tog, turn

2nd row; P9, P2tog, turn

3rd row; K10, K2tog, turn

4th row; P11, P2tog, turn

5th row; K12, K2tog, turn

Continue in this manner until all sts are worked on to one tow again. Knit back 11 sts thus completing the heel. Slip all instep sts on to one needle again. Taking another needle, knit remaining 11 sts of heel and knit up 19 sts from side of heel; with a second needle work in pattern across instep stitches; taking a third needle knit up 19 sts from the other side of the heel, and remaining 11 heel stitches.

Decrease for instep as follows;

1st round; knit plain on first and third needles, work in pattern on second needle

2nd round; Knit plain to last 3 sts of the first needle. K2tog, K1, work in pattern across second needle. On third needle K1 K2tog tbl; knit plain to end of needle.

Repeat these two rounds until 18sts remain on first and third needles and 37sts remain on the second needle. Continue without shaping (keeping continuity of pattern on the second needle) until foot measures (from where sts were knitted up from heel);

6" for a 10" foot

6 ½" for 10 ½" in foot

7" for an 11" foot

Decreasing one st at the start of the second needle in the last round of the foot.

Shape for toe as follows;

1st round; Knit plain to last 3sts of the first needle, K2tog, K1; on second needle, K1, K2tog tbl, knit plain to last 3sts, K2tog K1; on third needle K1, K2tog tbl, knit plain to the end of the needle.

2nd round; Knit plain

Repeat these two rounds until 28sts remain in the round. Knit sts of first needle onto end of the third needle. Cast off sts from two needles together, or graft sts. Work another Sock in same manner. With a hot iron and a damp cloth press carefully.



MAN'S HEAVY SOCKS

Dutch Heel and Flat Toe

Tension; 7sts to the inch
in width

RECIPE; Cast on 60 sts, 20 on each of three needles. Work 4" in rounds in rib of K1 P1. Work 2" of plain knitting. In next round, K1, K2tog, knit plain to last 3 sts of round, K2tog, K1. Work 7 rounds in plain knitting. Repeat last 8 rounds until 52sts remain. Continue in plain knitting until work measures 11" from commencement.

To commence heel, knit first 13 sts of round on to one needle, slip last 13 sts of

round onto the other end of the same needle, (these 26 sts are for the heel.) Divide remaining sts on to two needles and leave for the instep. Work 21 rows on heel sts, in alternate rows of purl and plain, always slipping first and knitting last st in every row. To turn the heel, K16, Slip1, K1, pssso, turn. P7, P2tog, turn, *K7, slip 1, K1, pssso, turn; P7, P2tog, turn; repeat from * until all sts are worked onto one row again. Knit back 4 sts (thus completing the heel)

Slip all instep sts onto one needle. Taking another needle, knit remaining 4 sts of heel and knit up 16 sts from side of heel with a second needle knit plain across instep sts; with a third needle knit up 16sts from side of the heel and remaining 4 sts of heel.

Decrease for instep as follows; ** Knit 2 rounds plain without shaping. In next round, knit plain to last 4 sts of first needle, K2tog, K2; knit plain across second needle, on third needle K2, K2tog tbl, knit plain to end of needle **. Repeat from ** to ** until 13 sts remain on each of the first and third needles.

Continue without shaping until foot measures;

6 ½ " for a 10" foot

7" for a 10 ½ " foot

7 ½ " for a 11" foot

Shape for toe as follows;

Knit plain to last 3 sts for first needle, K2tog, K1; on second needle, K1, K2tog tbl, knit plain to last 3 sts, K2tog K1, on

third needle K1, K2tog tbl, and knit plain to end of needle. Work 1 round without shaping. Repeat these two rounds until 24sts remain. Knit sts of third needle on to the end of the first needle. Cast of sts from two needles together or graft sts. Work another sock in the same manner. With a hot iron and a damp cloth, press carefully.



MAN'S SOCKS

French Heel and Flat Toe

Tension; 8 ½ sts to the inch in width

RECIPE

Cast on 76 stitches, 26 on each of first and third needle, and 24 on second needle. Work 4" in rounds, in rib of K2 P2. Work 2 ½ inches in plain knitting. In next round, K2tog, knit plain to last 2 sts, K2tog tbl.

Work 7 rounds without shaping. Repeat last 8 rounds until 66 sts remain in round. Continue without shaping until work measures 11" from commencement. To commence heel knit first 17sts of round onto one needle, slop last 17 sts of round on to other end of same needle (these 34 sts are for heel) Divide remaining sts on to two needles and leave for the instep. On heel sts, work 29 rows in alternate rows of purl and plain, always slipping the first and knitting the last st in every row.

Turn heel as follows; K22, K2tog, turn.

P11, p2tog, turn. K12, K2tog, turn.

P13, P2tog, turn. K14, K2tog, turn.

Continue in this manner until all heel sts are worked onto one needle. Knit back 11sts, thus completing the heel. Slip all instep sts on to one needle again. Taking another needle, knit remaining 11 sts of heel and knit up 18 sts from side of heel; with a second needle, knit across instep sts; with a third needle knit up 18 sts from side of heel and remaining 11sts. Knit one round without shaping.

Decrease for instep as follows;

1. For the first round, Knit plain to last 4 sts of first needle. K2tog K2; knit second needle without shaping, on third needle K2, K2tog tbl, knit plain to end of needle.
2. Knit plain for the second round

Repeat these two rounds until 18 sts remain on each of the first and third needle. Continue without shaping until foot measures (from where sts were knitted up from heel)

6" for a 10" foot

6 ½" for a 10 ½ "foot

7" for an 11" foot

Slip last st of first needle on to beginning of second needle, and first st of third needle on to the end of the same needle. Shape for toe as follows;

Knit plain to last 3 sts of first needle, K2tog, k1; on second needle K1, K2tog, tbl, knit plain to last 3 sts, K2tog, k1; on third needle, K1, K2tog tbl, knit plain to end of

needle. Knit one round without shaping. Repeat these two rounds until 24 sts remain in round. Knit sts of first needle on to end of third needle. Cast off sts from two needles together, or graft sts. Work another Sock in the same manner. With a damp cloth and a hot iron press carefully.



LADY'S ANKLE SOCKS

French Heel and Flat Toe

In Two Colours

Tension 9 ½ stitches to the inch in width

Worked in 2oz Fawn and 1oz Dark Fawn

RECIPE

Using Dark Fawn, cast on 76 stitches, 28 on first and 24 on each of second and third needles. Work 2 rounds in rib of K1, P1. Proceed as follows; **1st round *K3, P1, repeat from * to end of round. Repeat this round seven times. 9th round; *Slip 1, K2tog, pss0, P1, repeat from * to end of round. 10th round *K1, P1, K1 into front of next st. P1, repeat from * to end of round **

Repeat from ** to ** twice. Work 30 rounds in rib of K1 P, decreasing 2 sts on each needle of last round. Turn work inside out to reverse fabric. Break off Dark Fawn Wool, join in Fawn. Work 1 ¼ incs in plain knitting. To commence heel, K17, slip last 17 sts of round onto other end of same needle (these 34 sts are for heel)

Divide remaining 36 sts in to two needles and leave for instep. Work 27 rows on heel sts in alternate rows of purl and plain (always slipping first and knitting last sts in every row) To turn heel;

K22, K2tog, turn. P11, P2tog, turn.

K12, K2tog, turn

Continue in this manner until all sts are worked on to one row again. Knit back 11 sts, thus completeing the heel. Slip all instep sts onto one needle again Taking another needle, knit remaining 11 heel sts, knit up 17 sts from side of heel; with second needle, knit plain across instep sts; with a third needle knit up 17sts from other side of heel and knit remaining 11 heel sts. Decrease for instep as follows;

1st round; Knit plain

2nd round; Knit plain to last 3 sts of first needle, K2tog, K1; on second needle knit plain, on third needle K1, K2tog tbl, knit plain to end of needle. Repeat these two rounds until 17 sts remain on each of 1st and 3rd needles Continue without shaping until foot measures (from where stitches were knitted up for heel)

5" for a 9" foot

5 ½ " for a 9 ½ " foot

6" for a 10" foot

Slip first st of second needle on to end of first needle.

Shape for toe as follows;

1st round; Knit plain to last 3 sts of first needle, K2tog, K1; on second needle K1,

K2tog tbl, knit plain to last 3 sts, K2tog, K1; on third needle K1, K2tog tbl, knit plain to end of needle.

2nd and 3rd rounds; Knit plain without shaping.

Repeat these three rounds until 30 sts remain in round. Knit sts of first needle on to end of third needle. Cast off sts from two needles together or graft sts. Work another Sock in same manner. With a hot iron and a damp cloth, press carefully.



