

# IMORE

EDITION 2025 — ISSUE 4



*The photo above was taken at The Ranch at Rock Creek in Phillipsburg, Montana. It's a magical place to be, in any season.*

# Warmth and Wonder

Winter is fully on its way. Our fireplace is lit, and I'm sitting with a blanket and a sketch book as my husband relaxes nearby with a glass of bourbon (McTavish Warchief, of course).

THIS is my favorite time of year: the annual turn towards celebration and hibernation also brings contemplation. Warmth and wonder represents the softness of a warm blanket, a hug, nostalgia, the sparkle of baubles and tiny lights. I celebrate the essence of the season in this final issue of the year.

Turn the page and you'll learn about Lilly Marsh, a master wool weaver out of Glenn's Falls, New York who produces timeless blankets and fabrics from the loom. You'll see how Scottish actor Graham McTavish channels his heritage, producing the world's finest bourbon whiskeys, with a Scottish twist. Robert Barham invokes memories and tradition through he and his brother's coveted antiques shop in Notting Hill, UK. And gift wrapper extraordinaire Michelle Hensley creates works of art, enveloping her client's packages with pure joy.

Read these stories wherever you want, but my advice is to grab a blanket and a cocktail, find a cozy spot by the fire, and use this issue to close out the day.

*Kim Duval.*

Founding Principal

# EDITION 2025 Issue 4

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# From Sheep

## *Lilly Marsh Studios Weaves Warmth*

New England and New York, and the Hudson Valley in particular, was the center of textile making at the turn of the twentieth century. Although the large industrial operations have long since relocated to other parts of the globe, where labor is cheaper and regulations are fewer, the idea of textile production never left. The Hudson River Valley is one of the most fertile areas of the country, where grazing, farming, and local wool production remain strong.

This year's New York State Sheep and Wool Festival in Rhinebeck was, for me, proof positive. The two-day event—the largest of its kind in the United States, included tens of thousands of people and animals. There were knitters, weavers, finished goods, farmers, and fans.

Enter Lilly Marsh, a master weaver from Indiana who moved to the Hudson Valley just over than a decade ago. Her stall at the festival brims with incredible woolen products. I ask her why she chose this geography for her studio.

"The Hudson Valley, and New York in general, has two things that Indiana does not have. One of which is a fiber mill, a good spinning mill, in Battenkill Fibers down in Greenwich, New York. And they have a lot of agrotourism." And they have a lot of tourism. Lilly's primary source of wool are local sheep from the valley. She hand-dyes everything, and all her products are custom orders. Ninety percent of her work is wholesale. She has a small retail

line, but she generally weaves for farmers who wish to sell their own wool as finished blankets, wraps, and scarves.

The styles are as varied as a flock of sheep. The Shirt Factory brought Lilly to Glens Falls specifically, although her husband is originally from New England. Within months of settling in, she attended a local maple syrup pancake breakfast, which combined food and community with the tapping of maple trees in the spring. There she found a basket of knitting wool while in a checkout line.

"I leaned forward and I picked up the basket and asked the checkout lady 'Oh, do you have any of this in cones?' And this woman looked at me and she said, 'Are you a weaver?' She practically jumped over the counter, because that was Mary Jean Packer, the owner of Battenkill Fiber Mill, the largest wool spinner in New York State.

I had the chance to tour Lilly's studio with a friend who is collaborating with her on a new project. Within her 1,500-square-foot space, Lilly's studio houses several large looms, and a small team of dedicated weavers. "A surprising amount of young people are now becoming interested in professional weaving. I get inquiries all the time," she says.

Some of Lilly's current looms were purchased from a man in Montana, who was retiring from the business. The looms came flat packed to the studio, and her team, including her husband, painstakingly rebuilt them.



*Wool yarn ready for production.*





*Finished yarn being loomed.*



Lilly's work is both function and art, but it's also something that is quite literally woven into the fabric of the larger community. "What's funny is that I don't hang out much with weavers, mostly because I work with the local wools. I really like the fact that I get to hang out with the farmers and the mill workers, and the people who own the mill, and the dyers, and the people who are in supporting services around what I do," Lilly explains. She sees herself as part of a team of people who are making something, and her work as an extension of agriculture.

Still, Lilly says, working as an artist can be isolating and self-referential, with the artist making a statement about who they are. "By following my material of wool, I get to be not just the person stating all the time, 'This is who I am,' but saying, 'This is what we can do. Look at this wool that *this guy* grew, and *she* sheared, and *they* spun it for me." Lilly's work explores the deeper question of identity, or "how we walk around with these ideas of who we are and who we can't be . . . or who we might be."

Lilly has been interested in the intersection of art and weaving for a very long time. The acclaimed knit designer and writer Elizabeth Zimmerman served as the basis of her PhD dissertation from Purdue University and was a woman who focused on encouraging knitters to think independently, knit without patterns and practicing knitting as a true craft.

To know Lilly's work is to know the source of it: sheep.

Back in Indiana, Lilly had a flock of nearly thirty Corriedale ewes. At the height of lambing season, she had up to seventy baby sheep. Lilly has seen an increased desire by customers to commit fully to a return to natural organic origins in finished goods, instead of petroleum-based synthetic blends pumped out by the thousands of yards by large corporations for global consumption.

Natural materials are diverse and unique. "[The quality of your wool] depends on weather, the makeup of the flock. You have to spend a little time, energy, and a little of the material in sampling, figuring out, 'Oh, can it do this or that, the way it did last year?'" This approach eschews purchasing synthetic yarns in mass quantities as has become popular in fast fashion, and allowed cheap global brands to replicate the same items over and over.

A return to natural materials means a little more care and a little more work—for the maker and the user. This translates to better construction methods, and better quality fabrics.

On the horizon for Lilly is weaving yardage, or wool that can be used in suiting and other fashion garments.

Weaving for yardage is much different from weaving blankets. "When I put something on the loom, I can weave the design, cut it off, and do a simple washing and steam press it," she shares. "So when I'm doing blankets, that's all the finish a blanket needs. For yardage, you have to both wash and relax the wool, and you have to shrink it very evenly across the surface and length of that whole piece of fabric [so it doesn't] felt or fill unevenly."

After the recent purchase of a loom that can produce widths up to six feet, Lilly plans to also add rugs to her repertoire. And she has an interest in creating loom-shaped garments—think: kimonos and other simple shapes without a lot of intervention.

Much of her philosophy goes back to the role these garments and accessories can play in our lives. Lilly vividly recalls a memory of her granddaughter being pulled in a sled, wrapped in one of her woolen blankets. She says, "I love the idea that I can make things that people can wrap up and be warm in."



*A recent visit to Lilly's studio. Not pictured: my mom, who as a master seamstress and quilter, would have loved to have experienced this.*



# A Scotsman's Dream of America

"I like setting myself challenges. There's a duality in my thinking, really. There is this part of me which is like this monkey on my shoulder that is constantly going, "You've got some time on your hands, you need to do something else."

That's Scottish actor, author, and entrepreneur Graham McTavish, sharing his way of thinking, reflecting on an incredible acting career, an eponymous and award-winning Bourbon whiskey company, and an extraordinary life.

Graham has been a successful film, television, and stage actor for many years, known for starring roles in movies like *The Hobbit* series and television shows like *Outlander*, *House of the Dragon*, and *Men in Kilts*. He's also the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Clanlands*, and is currently writing a follow-up. And for the past two years, he's been producing award-winning Bourbon whiskey.

So how, exactly, would a Scotsman end up starting an American Bourbon company?

It began with an air of well-earned Scottish discernment. "I'd grown up with this terrible sort of Scottish prejudice about Bourbon which was that it was essentially just American Scotch."

Then, one night, about twenty years ago, he tried Bourbon for the first time at longtime friend and fellow actor Nolan North's house. Nolan had run out of Scotch, and offered Graham a bit of Angel's Envy Bourbon instead. "I just really liked it. I was quite surprised. From that point on, I became this sort of closet Bourbon drinker."

"Scotch can be hard on the throat. You have to get used to it. Bourbon I've always found to be quite smooth; very easy to drink in comparison with Scotch, which is one of the reasons I like it."

Fast forward to 2023, when an up-and-coming American whiskey tastemaker, Connor Gilbert, came onto Graham's radar. Connor had an uncannily sophisticated nose and palate, and hosted a highly-regarded whiskey podcast.





In his deadpan way, Graham likes to joke that he and Connor met on a dating site. The truth is Connor invited Graham as a guest on his show. It was the beginning of a beautiful partnership.

McTavish Spirits is a two-year old journey for Graham and his CEO Connor Gilbert and COO, Ivy Krueger.

In just two years, they've produced three award-winning whiskeys: The Warchief, The Keeper, and Legacy 1. The latter sold out in an hour.

As a first-time business owner, Graham is unabashed in sharing that he had no idea what they were doing, and that naivety was a key ingredient to their meteoric rise.

"I do seriously think that it is a real advantage to know not a great deal going into [something like this]. Ignorance is bliss. If you knew in advance what it was going to be like [to get into it], you might be a little more hesitant. But it's turned out to be a really, good decision, and the Bourbon is definitely [proof of that]."

Prior to embarking on this shared journey, Graham's CEO, Connor was a college athlete. He became hooked on Bourbon after having been gifted a bottle. His podcast, *Who Gives a Dram*, enabled him to get to know both the players and the business of producing American spirits. After Graham was a guest on his show, Connor approached him to partner on McTavish Spirits.

Ivy Krueger, his Chief Operating Officer, came from a very different place. She previously spent two decades leading US Special Operations

forces around the world, was a decorated vet, and lived everywhere from Qatar to southeast Asia. Over the years, she had become enamored of the flavor profiles and the camaraderie involved with sharing a glass of fine Bourbon. She had also become part of Graham's close-knit team, as photographer and sometimes security for his various US events.

Over lunch one day, Graham and Connor convinced Ivy to join the McTavish Spirits family.

The amount of familial love between them is palpable. Graham speaks proudly of the work they have done together. In this chosen-family business, they have learned and built on each other's experiences to make magic of this whole adventure.

Graham also tapped into the idea of the legacy and the experience he could leave behind for his two daughters, Hope and Honor.

"Going into something like acting is, to any rational person, a ridiculous idea, really. It's completely insecure. It involves enormous amounts of rejection. You develop a sort of rhino-sized skin to be able to cope with it, but that also sets you up for life in a lot of ways. I think when you present yourself with challenges, you adapt and grow and all that sort of thing, and I want that for my children."

For Graham, it was a welcome relief to see the sheer camaraderie in the Bourbon industry. "There's a lot of support. There's a lot of genuine love for the product, a desire to see you succeed."



*Ivy and Connor at a distribution event.*







Graham, Connor, and Ivy were on a roll from day one. Their first batch was awarded the highest honors Bourbon whiskey could obtain. Since then, they've created three series of whiskeys, each with a very different origin story.

Their first release, The War Chief, harks back to Graham's role in the television series *Outlander*. "It was our first, and it was such an amazing process getting that first thing out. And the response that we got—being in the top 100 of Fred Minnick's—number 18, and number one in its price point. I suppose that means that I prefer our eldest 'child,'" Graham says.

The Keeper Batch 1 Rye Whiskey came next, to high accolades. The Keeper is a straight Kentucky rye whiskey, rich and spicy in character.

Legacy 1 is a reference to Graham's daughters, and it's Connor's favorite because "it took a lot of effort to get it done, and it was one of, if not the only, whiskey brands that finishes Bourbon whiskey in peated Scotch casks."

"As a person that does not enjoy peated scotch, I think the Legacy series is an exceptional product that has been proven over and over again," Ivy says. "I was like, 'Man, I hope people appreciate how much work we put in.'"

Everywhere he can, Graham attends a tasting. Recently the brand hosted their biggest tasting—ninety people—to date in Houston. In the celebratory atmosphere, Graham, Connor, and Ivy offered the first toast. "Bourbon is a sharing experience," Graham notes. "Sitting around a fire and getting cozy, talking over a glass. That's part of the whole mythos of Bourbon drinking."

Ivy and Connor are Graham's scouts in the field. Together they work behind the scenes to get the product produced, bring it to market, and get it sold. Like Graham, they like to conduct business the old-fashioned way: by talking to people. In Connor's

home state of Rhode Island, he's made friends with the liquor distributors, the liquor stores, and everyone in between, which is important to him, because whiskey is all about the camaraderie.

The approach, according to Ivy, is key to McTavish Spirits' success. "Something that we're very proud of is our transparency and honesty in terms of where we source our product, and everyone knows exactly what they're getting," she says.

Ivy and Connor test each batch and narrow them down to the best of the best for Graham's ultimate approval. "It's like having a gigantic chemistry set that you can just play around with endlessly," Ivy shares.

The deep love of Bourbon could stem from so many things, from its smell, to the warmth and memories it invokes. For Graham, it is that simple sensation of tasting something that has been cultivated over thousands of years, from raw earth elements like peat or grain.

"When you drink something that you really enjoy, you're bringing with you something that is really familiar to you, like an old friend," Graham says. "It's a little bit like settling down with a book that you've enjoyed many times and you look forward to reading it again, and I think that that's one of the beauties of Bourbon—it's comforting [in so many ways]."







*Alfred Barham, standing outside his shop on Portobello Road, ca. 1955.*

# On Portobello Road

The Story of the Barham's and a Life in Antiques

Alfred Barham was just out of the service of World War II. According to his son Robert, Alfred was working as an insurance agent when, while on a site visit, he went down to a customer's basement full of antiques and he just thought, "That's what I'd like to do."

It was 1955, and Alfred had three British pounds and a cart. He walked door to door in London to see if his neighbors had anything to sell. So strong was his passion that it has continued for eighty years and on to his sons, Robert and Michael Barham, who now own the family shop on Notting Hill's magical Portobello Road.

The antiques world is something of a microcosm of what happens on a global scale. What people are buying often reflects what was fashionable at a point in time, and then years later, those things, if they've endured, end up as antiques.

"It's often better to think you are in the fashion business, and not the antiques business, because over the years trends and styles change, and it is so with antiques," Robert tells me. "At one time everyone wanted Victorian furniture, or Vienna porcelain. Then that trend fades and something else comes back into fashion. You can never predict it, and are usually a bit behind it, but you just must be aware of what's going on. It's possible that's why we're still here selling antiques, and so many other shops have long gone."

Robert and Michael do it well, treading their father's footsteps, now running the business successfully after his handoff for nearly forty years. Robert's dad was a pioneer. He bought his shop on Portobello Road when no one else was buying anything on that street. And it's been a boon.

The shop was three stories at one time. For years, they sold large pieces of furniture, writing desks, tables, you name it.

"Over the years the shop has sold just about every kind of antique there is, be it Victorian, Oriental, European, paintings, porcelain, furniture, bronze, marble, glass, and silver," Robert says. Today the focus is still very much on the Victorian era—1837 to 1901—Robert reports that the most commonly sold items are wood boxes, silver plate, and glass.

The Barham Antiques shop now occupies the first floor of its three-floor building; Michael and Robert have found renting the top two floors quite lucrative, now that Notting Hill is one of the premier real estate locales in the world. In that more compact shop, all the floor space, every wall, and flowing out onto the sidewalk, there's a piece, a memory, something to cherish, something that has been cherished for hundreds of years.

I first met Robert when my husband and I were shopping on Portobello Road in 2024. We saw this incredible dollhouse outside and could see the gleam of silver, brass, and polished wood just beyond. I walked in like a moth to a flame while my husband stood outside and chatted with folks on the street.

I was a kid in a candy shop. Original Baccarat crystal decanters, sets of gold and ruby wine glasses, heavily inlaid boxes, tea caddies, breakfast toast racks. So many relics, and everything completely functional. What I couldn't get over was the *beauty* in the function. It's a uniquely European tradition to create magnificent functional things that will last for hundreds of years.

My eye landed on several decanters and a set of wine glasses, as well as a wooden travel





writing desk with brass hinges engraved with the former owner's name. I walked up to Robert to chat with him about the history and the costs.

Robert was a fount of knowledge. He's a storyteller. He revels in the smallest detail of the objects he brings back to the store because he loves what he buys. "I get a list twice a week of things that I'm interested in, and I'll go through that, I'll leave a bid on some things. Some things I might buy and some things might make ten times what I've left on it, but that's just the madness of this business, you know?"

You're never sure it's going to sell, but over time you just learn that it's just what you do and if you trust the process, the process [works in the end]."

When we followed up later for this story, he told me how hard it is not to just buy everything. In years where business is good, there may not be much great stuff on the market. But in leaner years, everything looks wonderful. He remembers his childhood of going to auctions with his dad, walking right in to Grosvenor Square, sitting in the rows with a paddle, bidding on items they could look at and touch just before they went to auction.

"Growing up, we would go to Sotheby's and Christie's every week," he says. "They'd have fantastic Oriental and European porcelain. You'd go in and you could just pick it up and turn it over and have a look at it. You'd pick up something that would be in today's money twenty, thirty thousand pounds. You'd think, 'Oh, that's nice,' and put it back down again. I never realized at the time, but I learned so much by doing it, just sitting there [in Sotheby's auction] with a catalog. Back then, one of us would go and bid on it and stick our arm up. "

Those days are mostly gone. Everything seems to be online. Auction formats have changed and are primarily digital. But when you step into Barham Antiques, you get a glimpse of that heyday, the joy of the chase. Robert relates a story about a woman who came in and saw a tea set up on one of the high shelves at the front of the store.

"She was looking at this tea set, and I said, 'You've been looking at that for a long time.' She said, 'Yeah, you know what? It reminds me of my grandma.' You could tell she was so moved by seeing this. I think the shop reminds people of their grandmas. When people go into the shop and say, 'My grandma used to have this,' they're connecting with a deep, deep memory."

The woman bought the tea set, because it felt like home. Robert told me that lots of his customers share similar stories. They come in and they want to talk, oftentimes about their childhoods, or about how things were in a simpler, amazing time of their life, about things they cherish.

Robert has sold thousands of objects from the shop, but each time is a new experience. What are his customers seeking? Most often it's the warmth and comfort of old, wherein the objects you surround yourself with become part of living history, of living with you through your history.

Robert continues, "My brother and I are just custodians of [these beautiful things]. We don't own anything. We're just looking after something for that period while it's in the shop, until somebody comes along and gives it its next home."



*Silver napkin rings on display.*







Anne

Anne

# For the Love

## Michelle Hensley on the Art of Wrapping

It's Christmas time, and Michelle Hensley is at Kim Kardashian and Kanye West's home, trial wrapping a series of gifts for their approval. Weeks before, the Kardashians' estate manager had reached out to Michelle to inquire about her services, because she had become almost infamous for her extraordinary wrapping skills. So, she drove to their home, sat with the family, and as Kanye and Kim watched, she wrapped their gifts.

Michelle went through six iterations of beautiful wrapping styles, each very different from the next. But the Kardashians weren't quite settled on a favorite. Michelle knew this was a make-or-break moment for the career she'd worked so hard to build, so she went out to her van and thought for a minute. She recollected a Japanese wrapping style that folds fabric around objects in a unique and structured way.

She came back into the house. She asked one of the Kardashian's assistants for some fabric. No sooner than she'd wrapped the gift that the Kardashians were gushing over her skills and loving what she'd come up with. The style was exactly what they were looking for.

The idea of gift wrapping is a tradition that goes back thousands of years, with packaging used as a sign of respect in many cultures. The style and manner with which we wrap gifts is completely dependent on our own feelings, style and who will be receiving the object.

*Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens..*

*...Brown paper packages tied up with strings*

*...These are a few of my favorite things!*

—“My Favorite Things,” *The Sound of Music*

Wrapping a gift can be as equally magical as *unwrapping* one. There's the famous scene from *Love Actually*, where a nervous adulterer husband, played by Alan Rickman, struggles to stand by patiently as Mr. Bean finds all the flair in wrapping a necklace step by step, adding layers of cellophane, ribbons, lavender, and spices. The gift isn't just wrapped. It's enveloped with a sense of smell and touch and sight. It is something to behold.

Although Michelle started as a one-woman show, she now has a full team, because in addition to building a gift-wrapping business, she's creating an empire.

Before founding Nifty Packaging Co., Michelle was a pastor's wife. Her husband died of cancer in 2014. It was a startling and profoundly sad moment for her and her family. Michelle's three sons, who are now grown, were homeschooled at the time.

For a while, Michelle didn't have a sense of what she should do with her life. She'd been in business successfully before, but it had been years. She had faith, and an idea based on her love of this past, time-tested tradition: something that can be done whenever, wherever, with the utmost creativity and skills.











Modern gift-wrapping can be wasteful and plastic-laden, but historically it was a resourceful, wasteless endeavor. Michelle has never been interested in proliferating the landfills with cheap overseas goods. She specializes in sourcing from vendors who make things in the United States, and who create high-quality, durable and sustainable products that can be reused over and over again. Like American-grown bamboo gift boxes that could double as beautiful little purses, or recycled shredded paper to surround the precious items inside.

“I have a deep respect for American-made products, and that commitment really solidified for me several years ago. I was visiting our giftwrap paper manufacturers, and I noticed how quiet the building was. It was a beautiful facility, but surprisingly empty, however, the machines buzzing in full force,” Michelle recalls.

“I asked what had happened, and they explained that NAFTA had significantly impacted their business—most gift wrap production had moved overseas, where it could be done at a much cheaper cost and it devastated local manufacturing.

“One of the biggest challenges right now is the lack of high-quality American-made ribbon. The last major ribbon manufacturer went bankrupt and shut down in July, and that wasn’t just a loss for us—it left thousands of skilled ribbon loomers and paper manufacturing workers out of jobs. These are artisans in their own right, and their craft deserves to be preserved.”

In addition to sourcing conscious, American-made packaging products, Michelle has developed an app, something like TaskRabbit, called FeteTango, that allows women across the US to plug into an online platform and

accept gift wrapping and other similarly situated assignments for customers, according to their own terms. It’s a way of sharing her plentiful workload with others.

Because Michelle is such a creative, she’s been asked to do more than just gift wrapping. She decorates Christmas trees, porch pumpkin arrangements for Halloween, and seasonal décor for other holidays. Every crafty, elegant thing that adds charm and warmth and seasonal magic to people’s lives, she handles with skill and care.

I love talking to Michelle, because she’s humble, honest, and kind, and she deeply cares about her mission. She now partners with some of this country’s largest corporations for gift-wrapping services, and she revels in it, because she sees it as a stepping stone to greater success.

I asked Michelle about the best gift she’d ever received—and whether it came wrapped.

“Honestly, the best gifts I’ve ever received weren’t wrapped at all—my children. They came into my life unwrapped but full of purpose, and I thank God every day for them. I’d also say the most meaningful gift of all is my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That relationship is the foundation of everything I do, both in life and in business.”

She pauses, and thinks along more traditional gifting lines. “I’d say my engagement ring. It was beautifully gift wrapped, although I don’t remember the paper or the bow. What I remember was the feeling. It was meaningful, thoughtful, and completely unforgettable—and to me, that’s what makes a gift truly special.”

# Until Next Time...

As I close this issue, the last one of 2025, I think about the warmth and wonder that this past three years of producing MORE has brought me.

With over forty incredible collaborators since we launched the first issue, I've had the great fortune of getting to know some very talented craftsmen, artisans, and creatives.

I've loved every one of their stories, and I hope you have too.

Looking forward to sharing much more with you in 2026.



*I couldn't think of a better photo to cap this issue: my husband, Brian, enjoying a glass of McTavish bourbon in an antique Barham tumbler, fireside at his favorite Montana dude ranch, this time, last year.*

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