



How Lucky Ewe adds value to wool

Kate Schofield of Lucky Ewe Designs buys fleece from farms in Lancashire, which the Natural Fibre Company process for her.

Some she uses for hand spinning while the remainder is spun into yarn. She hand spins, knits and weaves selling her work through farm shops and 'green' outlets in the North West.

'I've been a knitter since I was tiny' she says. 'In the 1980s I learned to spin and became interested in native British sheep and the regional breeds from Cumbria and Lancashire'.

She has one outworker who knits and crochets for her and two friends who help out with spinning if she gets swamped.

'My knitter interprets the designs very well' she says. 'Not everybody could do that when it's usually scribbled in pencil on scrap paper.'

'Some years ago I was given a grant by the Lancashire-based arts charity Littoral to work with hill farmers in the Bowland area adding value to their low-grade wool using craft based initiatives'.

The project became particularly relevant after the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Although the project ended, Kate continued buying fleeces, mainly from the Arnsdale/Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the Lancashire and Cumbria border overlooking Morecambe Bay.

'This area has been special to my family for generations' she adds. 'Conservation grazing is

carried out here because of the rare and unusual flora, so there are many sheep farms.

'Most of them are small with a nice variety of breeds for me to select, such as Whitefaced Woodland, North Country Cheviot, Bluefaced Leicester, Hebridean and Masham.

'The farms are largely on conservation charity land, and because of the wildlife and flora, organic methods or chemical-free farming is usual, and that's important to me'.

Kate encourages people to buy local, natural produce and wear some wool and she would like to see more hand knitting.

'Wool is a wonderful asset, which if we used more could help the environment. The fashion-textile industry is a huge polluter of the planet filling up landfill sites with cheap imported clothing. Save the planet and wear some wool!'

She also spins and weaves cotton as a costumed textile interpreter with the National Trust at Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire demonstrating 18th Century textile skills to education groups and the general public.

'I play with looms and spinning wheels and operate a replica of James Hargreaves 1764 Spinning Jenny - it's the best job in the world'.

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