

Jan Hicks



Knitting addict turns house into dye factory

Wool Clip is a co-operative comprising 15 women who supply and run a shop in Caldbeck between Kendal and Carlisle in Cumbria.

The co-operative started in 1998 and the Wool Clip shop opened three years later when Britain's farming community was beginning to recover from foot and mouth disease.

It now sells a range of mohair and woollen yarns, mohair socks and dyed fleeces and is a long-standing customer of the Natural Fibre Company. The co-operative also organises the annual Woolfest in nearby Cockermouth.

Jan Hicks is one of the founder members and some of the products she supplies can be seen above drying on her washing line.

She moved to the area from Oxford in 1993, swapping an urban existence and a job in publishing for a rural way of life.

A life-long knitting addict, she acquired a spinning wheel and four Suffolk-cross ewes with whose help she was initiated into the mysteries of farming. Shortly afterwards a bad tempered angora goat and kid arrived along

with three sheep. The Wensleydales have since given way to Manx Loaghtan and Blue-faced Leicester which are easier in that there is less mud and fly strike.

Her angora goats regularly do well at the shows, and she now also has three Golden Guernseys.

'My routine day job has been replaced by a haphazard existence revolving around livestock, wool and mohair, dyeing, knitting and spinning' she says. 'The entire house has become a dye factory and fleece and yarn storehouse'.

As well as studying for a degree in contemporary applied arts at Carlisle, in her spare time Jan teaches woolcrafts, machine embroidery and felt making.

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