



Sensational sewing

With *The Great British Sewing Bee* back later this month, three women share their love of stitching



I love having a needle and thread in my hand. When you make something yourself, it has history and means so much more to you.

One of my best decisions at school was to drop maths A level and take up needlework instead. I sewed clothes for myself at college and university, and later for my children.

In 2013, the first series of *The Great British Sewing Bee* reignited my interest in dressmaking. It also led to me setting up my Instagram account, @sewover50, encouraging people over 50 to connect through sewing and embroidery.

During the first lockdown, I decided to record life through embroidery. I sketched, then stitched things I saw on my daily

walk, such as swans and parks. Around the outside, I added relevant words, such as Zoom, haircuts, scones and clapping. Working on this stopped me from picking up my phone.

Now, it's great to have a record that there were still good

times during a difficult period.

I like embroidering words to leave messages in my clothing, like author George Eliot's line about 'Delicious autumn', which I stitched on to a coat label. Down the zip of a dress, I've also embroidered 'Reused tablecloth', just in case anyone wants to know what it's made of!

* Visit [Instagram.com/judithrosalind](https://www.instagram.com/judithrosalind)

'I like embroidering words'

'Making something yourself means so much more'

Judith Staley, from Edinburgh, helps women over 50 connect through sewing and embroidery.

WORDS: MICHELLE ROWLEY. PHOTOS: RACHEL MANSI



'I stitch love into every project'

Operations manager Rachel Mansi, from Bristol, loves to sew colourful, patterned quilts.

I grew up in the 70s, when psychedelic patterns were very popular. My mum would take me to jumble sales in search



'I forget my worries – sewing really is great therapy'

Executive assistant Sam Sahota, from Buckinghamshire, is a self-taught dressmaker.

Growing up in a small village in India, with no television, I was surrounded by people sewing.

Aged seven, I did embroidery with the other girls around me, and watched my mother making traditional Indian clothing on her manual sewing machine.

My love of sewing, knitting and crocheting stems from that time. These days, I have to be making something while watching the television, otherwise I feel I'm wasting my time. I will sew while the dinner is in the oven, in my lunch break, and I even take my sewing machine outside when the weather is nice.

I have been hugely inspired by *The Great British Sewing Bee*, as well as by other makers on Instagram. I like to share

my work online too, with other dressmakers.

Sewing has been great for connecting with people – Mum visits me every week and loves going through my fabric collection and seeing

'I've made trousers and coats, but I love wearing dresses'

what I'm making. Each year my friend and I go to the Knitting & Stitching Show

together – we're often the last ones to leave!

I've made trousers and coats, but I love wearing dresses, so I mainly sew those. The benefit is that the dress fits me perfectly, which a ready-to-wear dress would not. When I'm sewing, I forget about any worries, so it really is great therapy.

*** Visit [Instagram.com/sams_sew_good](https://www.instagram.com/sams_sew_good)**



'I started collecting vintage fabrics in the boldest colours'

of interesting fabrics.

I was fascinated by how colours and textures combined to create wonderful patterns.

Later, after having my children, I started collecting vintage fabrics in the boldest colours I could find, and sewed patchwork cushion covers. I then taught myself the basics of quilting and made a bright rainbow-coloured baby quilt.

Through Instagram, I

discovered other makers who enjoy 'improv' quilting – basically making it up as you go along. It's exciting – you don't know how it's going to look.

My quilts bring back happy memories of times and people I love. For instance, I have incorporated fabric from my son's trousers and my mum's bright-pink dungarees in a quilt, so I think of them when I see it.

Having a craft that enables you to explore your creativity and self-expression is so powerful for your mental health. When you're thinking about which piece to sew next, you aren't worrying about anything else.

I enjoy giving my finished creations to family and friends. When I'm making a quilt, I'm stitching love into every project.

*** Visit [Instagram.com/playfulquilting](https://www.instagram.com/playfulquilting)**



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