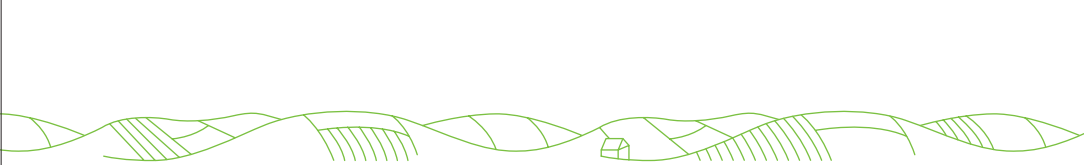


COUNTRY MATTERS



‘To make things pay every farmer needs a little side-hustle’

FROM FARM TO FABRIC
Madelineine Howell meets a designer and farmer’s daughter inspired by Norfolk life, focused on keeping the family firm alive

‘Hello ladies’ Cattle farmer and textile designer Izzi Rainey, 25, greets her fold of resplendent Highland and Lincoln red cattle as she strides out into the mud. Rainey grew up on Bates Moor Farm on the outskirts of Foulsham, near Fakenham in Norfolk, where her father Graham has bred cattle since 1989. At the age of six, she won the young handler’s championships at the Suffolk Show. She and her sisters, Olivia, 24, and Cecily, 20, have been breeding, halter training and showing their prize-winning cattle

‘We were scaling down and reducing numbers, now dad loves to joke about us getting bigger again’

ever since. As a young handler, Cecily wasn’t quite so fortunate: “I got pulled over for the first two years in the rain by my calf. They’re quite naughty, and harder to handle than cows,” she laughs. “They can be quite strong when you’re little because they buck and run around more. Until they’re weaned at eight months, they just want to be with their mums.” These days, she prefers to breed chickens, documenting the trials and tribulations of her Buff Orpingtons on her blog, Chicken Corner. Meanwhile, Olivia went on to train as a nurse. But for all three sisters, the summer is still taken up with agricultural shows: Suffolk, Aylsham, Norfolk and Wayland are quite a social affair for like-minded young farmers, they tell

me, as well as an opportunity to show off their cattle. “It takes days to groom them,” says Izzi Rainey. “When you’re in the rhythm you only have to top them up the day before, but they have to be shampooed and blow-dried, brushed and combed, and they have to have their nails looked after, and have their horns oiled and sanded.” For Rainey, rather unusually, farming has always gone hand in hand with creativity and design; the geometric, abstract textiles and wall hangings of her final year at the Glasgow School of Art were inspired by the shapes and textures of farm machinery. Interiors, rather than

MATERIAL WORLD Izzy in her design studio in a converted cattle shed, top left; a turquoise hen print wash bag, below



fashion, was always her calling. It seemed a natural step for her to set up her own homeware business back at the farm, and from her Janome sewing machine in The Old Dairy at Bates Moor, she has been hand designing bold, contemporary, farm-inspired prints ever since. “I still wanted to be part of it,” she explains. “We were scaling down and reducing numbers, and now my dad loves to joke about the farm getting bigger again. I think he likes to see his hard work bear fruit. “Breeding cattle can be a long process; it’s three years before they have their own calves, and he’s nurtured

and bred these bloodlines himself. It’s a generational thing, and I don’t think he’d ever want to lose it. It’s what he loves doing, and we want to carry it on for him. But it’s important to diversify; to make small scale farming commercially viable, I think you have to have a side-hustle.” Each cow is registered with the Highland Cattle Society and the Lincoln Red Cattle Society, has a passport, and has to be registered with the British Cattle Movement Society every time it leaves the farm. While they have to be turned out and fed, they’re quite low maintenance, as native breeds that suit wet ground and can stay out all year. “They calve easily, and don’t need too much help with their babies,” Rainey adds. Graham has taught his



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CRAFTING A FUTURE

Designer and cattle farmer Izzi Rainey with one of her Highland cattle, left; with Lara Mullis, and sister Cecily, below; Izzy's designs are now sold by John Lewis, top

TONY BLICKINGHAM FOR THE TELEGRAPH

daughters to be relaxed around the animals, and recommends a calm approach in the farmyard. "We treat them kindly, and they're part of the family," Rainey explains. "It's so peaceful here that we even have a radio down there for them - it's good for them to be used to a bit of noise, as it can be too loud at the shows otherwise. They tend to listen to Radio 2."

In order to focus on combining her twin passions, farming and designing, Rainey enlisted her school friend Lara Mullis, also 25, to run the business side of things in 2014. The Izzi Rainey brand was born, and now their wares (oven gloves, plump cushions, oilcloth bags bedecked with pom-poms, and hob covers for the requisite Aga) can be found at John Lewis and Not On The High Street, as well as in independent stockists across the UK. Everything is made in England; mostly under the old milking line on the sewing machine, though the kitchenware is manufactured in Cornwall and the tea towels are made in Suffolk. While the summer is all about the agricultural shows, in winter the girls can be found at Daylesford Christmas Fair in the Cotswolds and the Deepdale Christmas Fair near Burnham Market (better known as Chelsea-on-Sea).

Pottering around the farm, I view their hands-on creativity and passion for farm life with not a little envy. Their hard work of balancing creativity with

farming is paying off; their prize cow Donella Ruadh of April was reserve Highland champion at the Suffolk Show last year.

Meanwhile, a recent collaboration with Holkham Hall, which showcases the work of other Norfolk designers and makers such as jeweller Monica Vinader, has seen Izzi Rainey produce an exclusive Belted Galloway print inspired by the cattle on the estate.

But though the prints depict flora and fauna, compare them to the likes of Cath Kidston at your peril. "They're simple but bright and bold, not fussy and twee," emphasises Rainey. "And they're contemporary enough for either a town house or a country home. We weren't actually sure whether the monochrome Highland cattle print would be so popular, as it's so specific, but people really love it," she grins.

The latest collection includes proud orange foxes, grey and dusky pink pig prints, and a beehive design. The pair are proud to be Norfolk-based, and to champion the county; stockists such as The Handcrafted Company in Blakeney and Nomad and the Bower Bird in Wells specialise in products that are made locally.

With plans to expand both the farming side of things and the accompanying textiles, there's no doubt there'll be further exciting collaborations to come.

Visit izzirainey.com for more information and follow Izzi Rainey on Instagram at @heytherefarmgirl

LADY ALICE MANNERS COUNTRY STYLE

From skirts and trousers to kilts, it's time to go mad with the plaid for a smart tartan turnout, says our fashion guru

TRANSITIONAL TARTAN

Tartan may be one of the best-known patterns on the planet, and it was a staple print (as always) on the autumn-winter runway. From skirts and trousers to kilts, tartan

works in many contexts and makes a great base for fun, colourful, stylish outfits. If opting for a trouser, ensure a good fit, as tartan doesn't favour excess fabric.

This sleeveless Brunello Cucinelli jumper (right) helps tartan make a seamless transition into spring, working well over one of the new Beaufort & Blake shirts.

TARTAN MADE EASY

Kitty Jenks (left), half of ultra-fun party-film producers Jenks & Co, knows how to put tartan to work. Her fearless approach extends to a willingness to wear stripes and tartan together - and don't they dazzle? Her Claudie Pierlot outfit could easily be mistaken for a shirt and skirt, but the brand has made life easy with a throw-it-on-and-go dress (every woman needs a few of those). The thigh-high suede boots make the perfect finishing touch.

Follow Lady Alice on Instagram: @mannersalice



ANDREW CROWLEY FOR THE TELEGRAPH; HEATHCLIFFOMALLEY FOR THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

GET THE LOOK



Puff-sleeve blouse, £20.79 (zalando.co.uk) "This tartan puff-sleeved blouse would make a surprisingly useful addition to any wardrobe."

Burberry clutch, £495 (matches fashion.com) "When can you use a wash bag



as a clutch? When it's covered in Burberry tartan, of course."



Dress, £149 (hobbs.co.uk) "This neat, body-sculpting shift dress features surprising flecks of colour - a perfect piece for work or play."

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