

CHRISTMAS

Christmas cracker

IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR, WRITES ISABELLE HOLDEN. WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO DECORATIONS, SPEAKING TO SOME LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR INSPIRATION THIS SEASON.

The festive season is almost upon us and this year is set to be a big one. With restrictions no longer in place, we can finally enjoy Christmas in full force once more.

Traditions vary across the nation, but for many the celebrations begin once the house is trimmed up. Turning up the volume on the cheesy Christmas playlist, munching on mince pies and sipping a warm hot chocolate are all essentials when decorating with the family.

With a while to go before the big day, rest assured, there's still plenty of time to transform your home.

Creating your very own winter wonderland will certainly get the family into the Christmas spirit- but what are the trends set to impress for Christmas 2022?

Following the return of festivals this summer, festival brights are expected to be a big hit this Christmas. Vibrant baubles, garlands and pom-poms will make your home feel merry and bright over the festive season.

Add a splash of colour to your decor with radiant glassware and candles, sure to create the perfect statement and wow guests over the celebrations. Vivid colours will add warmth to your home, something much-needed following the doom and gloom felt over the past couple of years- let's make those dark winter nights brighter!

Being more sustainable will also be a must for many this Christmas too. Protecting the environment, and our planet as a whole, has become a key focus, particularly in recent years. Let's embrace being greener and invest in wooden, long-lasting decorations this

Christmas. Consider using recycled materials and pre-loved decorations too. In terms of wrapping, using fabric as an alternative to wrapping paper is another way we can switch up our usual habits and treat our planet with more kindness.

Perhaps also consider doing some DIY and create your own decorations this Christmas - a great way to get all the family involved in the festivities. Drape homemade paper chains and bunting over the branches of your tree and you'll be sure to create a wonderful display. Add some twinkling lights and that extra wow-factor is guaranteed.

Consider adding gold and purple tones to your decorations this year too and give your home the stylish makeover it truly deserves. Sparkle through the festive season with trees dripping with gold- using a mix of elegant ornaments, tinsel and other decorative pieces to create the look. The luxurious gold accents will complement deep purple tones perfectly, creating a sense of tranquility and light, while the darker shades will add a cosy feeling to your home.

Bring the festivities in and be sure to make your home spectacular this Christmas.



Quirky Metals

Pewter - an attractive metal used since Roman times - has a special place in the heart of metalworker Jim Stringer.

Jim has a vast history in the trade, having been part of the cutlery and metalworking industry in Sheffield for 25 years.

Working alongside his wife Laura at their Valley Road premises, the pair began building their business, Quirky Metals, in 2014. Today, the husband and wife duo design and create unique pieces in their Sheffield workshop, including striking Christmas



decorations.

Where did it all begin?

I didn't really like school much, but

I instantly loved metal-working. When I was around 16/17 I went to Chesterfield College of Art to do metalwork and jewellery. I did that for two years, and then decided that I wanted to take my passion further. In 1986, I came to Sheffield to the Polytechnic, and that's where I met my

wife Laura.

We were on the same course in our first year, and we've been doing metalwork of all variations ever since.

We had children, so I decided I'd get a job and went into the cutlery trade. Relatively soon after that I decided I wanted to do work of my own. So, in 2014 we got this place [at Valley Road]. I was still employed full-time and Laura was looking after the children. We just started doing work in the evenings. It built up from there, and this is where we are now- still doing what we love.

What does Quirky Metals create, and what inspires the designs?

Our creations are very much based around the natural world, woodland and insects in particular. We like to add a bit of depth to things too, so it's not all just flat work, there are cut-outs and textures involved.

Jim Stringer



At this time of year we're making lots of Christmas decorations - galleries love those. At the moment I'm making clocks with a woodland theme, bowls which are hammered with insects and bookmarks too, all which tend to be made with pewter or with copper.

Bookmarks tend to sell very well. They're a nice, affordable gift. A perfect stocking filler in the £12-14 region.

Why did you choose to work with pewter?

I was working in the cutlery industry and I became aware of the Worshipful Pewter Company in London. They do a competition each year, so my wife and I decided to create a design for it. We entered the competition and ended up coming second.



MADE IN SHEFFIELD

CHRISTMAS

We designed a Mad-Hatter's teapot, it had clocks on the side and the hat was a cup with a saucer. We've just recently sold that particular piece in the gallery.

It was around this period that we decided to get our own little workshop. Then, the following year, I think there might be an article up there in The Star, Laura designed a light with a candle in it. She was accepted to go on further to develop the idea. I then made the design into a book. We won the competition and got some more money to invest.

Then it just seemed to continue from there. Pewter just seemed to work.

Where can people get your pieces?

We are in a number of galleries in Sheffield: Millennium Gallery, All Good Stuff, The Famous Sheffield Shop, Gallery 33. Our products are also up and down the country.

You can order direct from us too on our website, www.quirkymetals.com, and we can deliver if you're local, in Sheffield. Our products are also available on Folky and Etsy.



Jim's wife, Laura

CHRISTMAS

Towsure Outdoor Superstore

Towsure might be best known for being a camping and caravanning store but they go all in for Christmas too. You'll find artificial trees, baubles, indoor and outdoor lights, wreaths, figurines, gift wrap and more. Now that their festive section is up and running, we spoke to managing director Andrew Hogg who told us a little bit more about what's in store.

What are this year's decoration trends?

This year, traditional colours are back. Gold, red and greens seem to be the favourites again with woodland festive decorations such as robins, owls, and pheasants. The Rat Pack are also very popular with a new addition to the collective range which will be in store whilst stocks last. Gone are the Gingerbread men from a few years ago!

Do buying habits change year on year?

Not really. Most people start to browse the new collections mid-October onwards with purchasing all the way up until Christmas Eve. The earlier you shop, the best choice you have as many retailers don't re-stock until the following year.

Will current energy prices have an effect on buying habits - will people dial things back?

As we all know, energy this year is a hot topic, however many lighting sets are low wattage LED so the actual consumption is very low. One of our lighting suppliers (Premier) has provided a calculation that the running cost of their 1,000 LED Treebrights lighting set would cost less than 50p to run based on an 8 hour day for 30 days use. This was calculated at the GB's energy cap of £0.34 per kWh.

I personally think people will still turn on a Christmas display but maybe cut down the operational hours a little.

Has sustainability become more apparent - decorations that can be used again and again?

Yes. I think the importance of quality is a factor people have on their minds when purchasing. As the old saying goes, you get what you pay for! Our family are still using decorations from over 25 years ago and keep adding good quality to the collection year on year.

What else are doing at the outdoor store for Christmas?

Lots and lots! We also stock a vast range of outdoor clothing and footwear to keep you warm and dry whilst out and about over the festive season. Our cycle department has a range of electric bicycles along with adult and children's bikes and we also stock Calor Gas, Heaters, Smokeless coal and Kiln dried logs which will be very popular this winter!

This year, we have opened our newly refurbished Basecamp café and coffee bar. We will be serving Luxury styled barista coffees along with festive specials from our daily menu. Why not try a Gingerbread Latte loaded with cream followed by a mince pie!

What are you looking forward to this Christmas?

The Christmas spirit. I think we all need a good cheer up! It's always nice to see customers visiting the store and seeing the new collections for the first time.

Valleyside Garden Centre

Richard Jackson is the managing director of Valleyside Garden Centre and his team work hard every year to deliver a Christmas display that is worth a visit, even if you don't actually buy anything - although you should.

The Crosspool garden centre stocks lights (indoor, outdoor and battery), tree baubles and decorations, ornaments and figurines, plush toys, candles, floristry, real and artificial trees, wreaths and garlands, and village scenes. He echoes a return to tradition this year too as well as moves to be more sustainable.

"Our decorations are good quality and traditional, so hopefully they will be relevant for years," he said. "We sell

over a thousand real and pot grown trees as well as a range of artificial trees. And don't miss the Christmas menu in our coffee shop."

