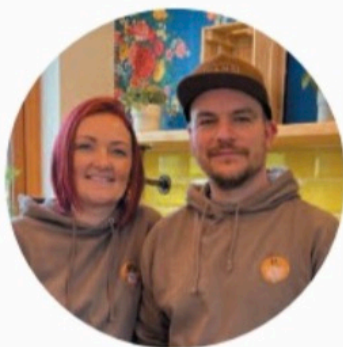




The CAFÉ in the COMBE

CATHERINE WELTON was champing at the bit to discover a hidden gem in Somerset's Quantock Hills that you can ride your horse (or bike) to...



above left: The café was opened by Amie and Dan in June last year, with the designated horse tie-up area being an important part of the business

above: The river is a popular spot for cyclists to rest whilst out exploring the Quantocks' trails

left: With its babbling brook for children and dogs to paddle in, an all-weather seating area and a paddock with plentiful grass for equine visitors, it's the perfect spot for a rest



With stunning views and varied terrain, the Quantock Hills attract ramblers, dog walkers and cyclists. With miles of bridleways and endless off-road riding opportunities, it's heavenly for horse-riders too.

Equestrians in the know make their way to the Great Wood, for a scenic hack that includes a stop off for coffee and cake, and nestled into thecombe, at the entrance to the woods in converted farm buildings, is the Street Bean Café.

Here riders and their horses can join a sociable crowd of families, hikers, muddy mountain bikers and equally muddy dogs.

With its babbling brook for children and dogs to paddle in, an all-weather seating area and a paddock with plentiful grass

for equine visitors, it's the perfect spot for a rest, a drink, and a bite to eat before continuing the day's adventures.

The café was opened by Amie and Dan in June 2024, after a previous venture there closed. 'We had been to the former café and loved the spot. When we saw it had closed, we just knew we had to open our first shop there,' says Amie. At the time, the couple were running a coffee van, hence the name Street Bean. 'After serving from the back of a van for four years, this was the natural progression. We get to stay dry while making coffee, literally living the dream!'

The designated horse tie-up area is an important part of the business for Amie and Dan, and the café has equine visitors at least four or five times a week. 'I absolutely

love horses so getting to see them regularly is amazing. I used to ride when I was a child and would love to get back into it at some point but for now, I can live vicariously through them and hear about their journeys to get to us,' says Amie. 'I love when they come during the week as means I get to speak to them, weekends are typically very busy, so I don't get my horsey fix as often then.'

Amie was born in Somerset, while Dan moved here aged 11. The couple are childhood sweethearts, and are now married with three boys, Douglas, Eli and Woody. Their Street Bean journey began in 2020, with a joke about running their own coffee van. 'Dan worked in a garage, and we noticed that the food vans didn't offer coffee. One day he sent me a photo of >

STREET BEAN CAFÉ

a van with the words 'coffee van?' In three weeks, we went from having a joke about it, to literally having all the gear and no idea.'

Amie's grateful for the support they received as a new business. 'Everyone we met along the way was so kind and complimentary about what we'd done. We still have the van now and do a few events during the year, but the dream was always to have our very own bricks and mortar coffee shop.'

Last year, the couple achieved that dream.

Their café serves a wide range of delicious cakes, including vegan and gluten-free options. Savoury items include paninis and the café's famous sausage rolls which come in a variety of inventive flavours. 'I'd say our most popular cake is the carrot cake or the brownie. The pork and Seville orange marmalade is my absolute favourite sausage roll, it flies out the door,' says Amie.

Not surprisingly, the coffee takes equal billing on the menu with the food, and Amie's keen to expand the range they offer. 'We would like to introduce some single origin coffees for people to try and I would love to offer flight boards of coffee where you can try different ones for a set price to see what you like. It's so easy to come in and ask for a latte because that's what you normally get so I'd love for people to step outside of their comfort zone and give some of my favourites a try.'

As well as attracting visitors to the area, the café is also a favourite place for locals to catch up with neighbours and friends. The café supports local artists too, and recent craft fairs and a glass-making workshop where people could make their own glass bird have proved popular.

above: The café has equine visitors at least four or five times a week

below left: The café serves a wide range of delicious cakes, including the popular carrot cake, as well as vegan and gluten free options.

below right: 'The pork and Seville orange marmalade is my absolute favourite sausage roll, it flies out the door,' says Amie



The couple are quick to recognise that teamwork has been a big part of their success. 'We're very lucky to have amazing staff, we couldn't do it without them. When we opened, we had the wonderful Maddie by our side. Nicole and Rose started a week later and then our oldest son, Doug, and his best mate Max joined us too.'

Come rain or shine, the Street Bean Café is open Wednesday through to Sunday. And there's nowhere Amie would rather be. 'We just absolutely love our little shop. It doesn't really feel like work, I feel like I get to go and have coffee with different friends every day, it doesn't really get much better than that does it?' ●

Street Bean Café, Adscombe Lane, Over Stowey, TA5 1HN

GREAT WOOD FACT FILE

There are 600 hectares of ancient oaks and conifers, including the impressive Douglas Fir, which can reach 50m in height, making it one of the tallest trees in England

Managed by Forestry England, the woodland has paid parking, toilets and marked routes

Walkers, dogs, cyclists and horse riders are all welcome

Red deer and buzzards are regularly spotted

