

Site of rural charm

Natalie Prior meets the sisters who founded an innovative website for stylish products inspired by countryside living



Inspired by their love for the quintessential English countryside, Worcestershire sisters Hannah Collins and Sophie Baines have launched an online collection of British-designed interiors with a distinctly rural theme.

Their innovative and stylish new website, called The Country Style, has seen the sisters, who were born into a Worcestershire farming family – they are “self-confessed country bumpkins” – team up with almost 40 partners to offer classic and contemporary products with themes including rural landscapes, wildlife, farming, countryside traditions and hobbies.

As well as interiors, the easy-to-navigate online

shopping emporium sells clothing and gifts, including items suitable for keen gardeners, avid foodies, children and even family pets.

Hannah, co-founder of The Country Style, said: “The Country Style is for anyone who loves the great British countryside. It has taken months of hard work by our amazing team, but we are delighted to now have a fantastic website adorned with gorgeous photography that customers will enjoy visiting.

“It is full of interesting and inspiring articles that anyone with a passion for the countryside will relate to. We really want everyone to feel as if they are ensconced in the rural lifestyle whilst browsing.

We want to share products to showcase the best of the producers who champion the countryside in all they do.”

Sophie added: “The idea came from Hannah and myself looking through social media and just happening across a multitude of amazing businesses who produce beautiful rural and countryside-inspired interiors, gifts and fashion items.

“We thought it would be amazing if they were all in one place, somewhere you could visit and know you will find something to love every time – and so was born The Country Style.”

The sisters grew up in Hartlebury, Worcestershire, on a small arable farm which is where their offices



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are now based.

Thirty-six-year-old Hannah lives on a farm in rural Worcestershire with her husband Rob, who is a cider apple farmer and children Winnie, aged three, and two-year-old Nell.

The graduate of Harper Adams University in Shropshire has worked in and around agriculture for most of her career. Although already running her own business – chartered surveyor firm Moule & Co – when the idea of setting up a website celebrating the best of the beautiful British countryside wouldn’t disappear, she and her sister Sophie decided they had to act on their dream.

Thirty-three-year-old Sophie, who went to Keele

University in Staffordshire, lives ten minutes’ drive from her sister on a farm in Ombersley with her husband John and children William, aged five, Tom, aged three, and one-year-old Polly.

Sophie worked in the NHS for almost ten years as a health professional before becoming the managing partner of The Country Style. She has been instrumental in getting the website up and running and Hannah’s business experience has been vital to the establishment of their new venture.

The family-run enterprise is managed with the expertise of four more women who are passionate about everything from family life to farming, from photography to floristry and from walking the dogs

to equestrian events.

Penny Evans is a farmer’s daughter from Worcestershire with a background in floristry who is responsible for videos and creative content. Lucy Conn, who previously worked for Cheltenham Racecourse and The British Horse Society, is marketing manager, and Victoria Giles, who is a member of Worcestershire Young Farmers and recently graduated from Worcester University with a degree in Business Management, is the account manager. Accomplished horsewoman Lucy Richards is the photographer in residence.

Sophie said: “There are so many benefits to running our own business. We feel fortunate that



our offices are based on our Dad's farm, so we get to work in lovely surroundings, while spending time in the countryside. Being able to work flexibly is a real plus as well as meeting and working with lots of lovely people. You live and die by your own sword when running your own business, but no two days are the same, so we could be speaking to producers, doing budgets, uploading the website, deciding on content or managing the business. Within the next year we are aiming to increase the number of products we offer and enhance the site further."

Hannah added: "The website is going really well so far, and we've had some great feedback.

We hope it will appeal to everyone who enjoys the countryside .

With so many gorgeous items to choose from, the sisters say it's difficult to choose their favourite pieces, but one of Sophie's favourites include the Harebelle creations featuring countryside designs and the sofa toppers from The Lounging Hound, which combine practicality with beauty.

One of Hannah's favourites is Clare Brownlow's extraordinary art which is drawn with a pheasant feather.

Looking ahead to interiors trends for spring, the sisters say that warm, natural wood elements will replace the white Scandi look and that bringing

the outside in with houseplants will be popular.

Sophie said: "We will look to nature for colour inspiration so terracotta, forest and olive greens, and peach will all be back on trend. Brass will replace rose gold and organic textures and traditional crafts are all set for 2018."

Hannah added: "We would love The Country Style to be the 'go-to' site for country lovers to find something they really love."

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