

Shelflife



# Sam's life is all kids and cobnuts



## Biography

Sam Peter first trained as a milliner and then became a typographic designer. Nearly four years ago she trained as a yoga teacher and after giving birth to her son Oscar became a Birthlight baby yoga teacher. She now trains Birthlight teachers, as well as running a cobnut farm in Kent, and set up children's organic lifestyle company, Tatty Bumpkin in 2004.

Sam Peter mixes living and working on a cobnut farm with running her own children's organic and yoga lifestyle company. Here, she describes a typical working day

Upon letting the geese, chickens and ducks out, typically I might start the day with some baby or toddler yoga classes in the local hall and it's not uncommon to find me singing 'Mr sunshine, Mr golden sun..' to an enraptured class of 3 month old babies.

We live on an organic farm in Kent, where we grow predominately Kentish Cobnuts — for which we are one of Rick Stein's food super heroes for our dedication to the cause. We also have a limited number of organic sheep, which we sell to select restaurants and local people. Over the years, we have had to be quite creative in finding a means to keep the farm going, as being born into Kentish cobnuts (of which we have about 2,400) is not quite the same as being born into oil! I am a member of the Kentish Cobnut Association, and the whole family is committed to organic produce — buying local vegetable boxes and attending farmers markets.

The rest of my day revolves around Tatty Bumpkin, a natural lifestyle company for little ones that grew from an idea I had whilst I was pushing the pram around the farm with my first son... It was practicing baby yoga with Oscar which led me to study with Birthlight (which focuses on a holistic approach to pregnancy, birth and babyhood using yoga and to enhance mothers' and babies' well-being) and become a baby yoga teacher.

I developed toddler classes from this, which have become Tatty Bumpkin 'bendy, giggly, clever and strong' yoga inspired classes for little ones. We then discovered that there was a large gap in the market for really comfy, fun, practical and

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organic clothing for toddlers and children. Much of the organic market is taken up with baby wear or adult clothing and we thought children also deserved to benefit from organic enzyme-free dyes and beautifully soft cotton so we designed a range of organic clothes, toys, and health accessories around this and the spirit of Tatty Bumpkin.

When we moved to the farm, which has always been in the family, we decided to become officially organic, although the farm has always been farmed without the use of pesticides. Tatty Bumpkin had

to be a progression of this, and hence the organic nature of the clothes... However, from an organic perspective, the clothing is still in its infancy, and the manufacturing process I am finding pretty difficult. The minimum orders are high, and there are all sorts of limitations from a design perspective... in addition there is often a conflict with the Fairtrade angle — for example our Fairtrade supplier is not organic as he is too small. We are determined to stick it out though, as we believe in the sustainability of the product, but some days...!

After the morning classes it's back to the studio to check emails and deal with our manufacturers in Sri Lanka and Turkey, and hopefully some orders. I catch up with Vicky most mornings, my essential right hand who came to Tatty Bumpkin through the classes (her son has cerebral palsy and has benefited immensely) and we will discuss the progress and development of the various elements of the business.

In between all of this the occasional cobnut nutter (affectionate term!) might call up requiring some information or some nuts — at this time of year it is usually for the red squirrel market.

We are now working to develop the rest of the Tatty Bumpkin brand which will include CDs, books, a Tatty Bumpkin class network throughout the UK and maybe one day the world... as well as a new clothing collection. In amongst all of this activity, there will be a trip out to feed the pigs, and at the moment to check the sheep are not lambing — very imminent. Sometimes it's hard to remain focused as there are so many different elements to the day, but it very much feels like Tatty Bumpkin has found us and manifested herself here on the farm, to help promote a happy, healthy lifestyle to children.

At the end of the day, after collecting Oscar from nursery, feeding him and tending to his every need, the ideal way for me to wind down would be to do a yoga session — I really get so much from my yoga practice, it works at a very deep level, setting the foundation for life and in particular at the moment, running a new business. ●

