

Flying the NEST

Last year a mother and daughter duo hatched an idea to create quilts that conjure up fond memories – and now their unique business has wings.

By Annie Hirst. Pictures by Colin Finch.



Memories are made of...vintage lace, snippets of pretty fabrics, stitched illustrations, intricate embroidery, beadwork and much, much more – at least, they are for one unique Norfolk business, Nest.

Set up just a year ago, last October, the new enterprise aims to create lasting memories from pieces of fabric embellished with embroidery and beadwork – and memories that can be on permanent display.

That in itself is a unique, personalised service, but Nest is also one of a kind in a very different way for it is the brainchild of a mother and daughter duo, Pauline German and Kelly McClorey.

Both share the most amazing creative eye and design skills as I discover when we meet at the family's farmhouse home in north Norfolk. Though Kelly now lives with her husband Ciaran in Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, she is a frequent visitor to Norfolk – and when she's not in the county she keeps in regular contact via the computer and telephone.

"It works really well for us as we can work on various sections separately though we're constantly in touch," she says.

"We share very similar ideas so there's no conflict and it is good to work together so that we can give each other a second opinion," adds Pauline.

Mother and daughter are quite clearly a

harmonious team – and very talented. Although Kelly has trained in design – she did a degree in fashion at Manchester University and worked as a costume designer in London making ballroom dresses among other things – Pauline is entirely self-taught.

And just how much she has learnt over the years is evident as we move around from room to room.

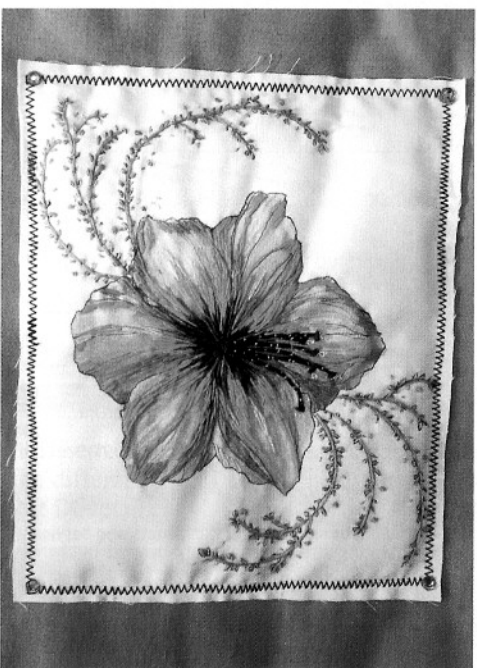
First, we go to the hub of it all, upstairs. And I'm entranced from the very moment that I set eyes on the beautiful quilts as the detail is phenomenal.

"Wow, you just can't get the sense of how wonderful they are from the prints," I exclaim, completely taken aback by the beauty and richness of some of their finished wedding quilts, laid out for me to see.

"This is very striking – the wedding colours were black and fuchsia pink and so we used fabric from the dresses, the napkins, the groom's tie, the bride's dress and turned it into this," explains Kelly.

"We sketched the church and printed it on to the silk, then stitched over the design to embellish it, and we also made cushions as well as the quilt," Kelly adds, pointing them out for me.

We're in one of the five bedrooms of the old, flint farmhouse, lovingly restored by Pauline and her husband, Rob, and this provides a perfect backdrop for the quilts.





Kelly McClorey, left, and Pauline German, the mother and daughter team who have set up a craft business together.



The duo's beautiful work extends far beyond wedding-memory quilts – or other special occasion quilts, such as birthdays, anniversaries and christenings – to incorporate wall-hangings, bed runners and cushions, all designed to complement a new or existing colour scheme. It is easy to imagine their work in any setting, traditional or modern.

My hand falls on a folded quilt – and this, in coffee and cream hues, is one of those created to enhance a colour scheme. It is lovely to touch and to handle – and I can picture it bringing together all the decorative aspects of a room.

Another piece features an initial letter – an ideal present for a child's room – and again, this could be made of new material, swatches of curtains, or simply fabrics that match. Or it could be made from pieces of favourite outfits, bits of old dresses or shirts, for example.

"We all have fond memories of some of the things our children wore [Pauline also has a son, Ben] and this way we can keep those on show rather than locked away in cupboards," says Pauline.

Nest is an idea that both Pauline and Kelly hope will grow and grow – each design is bespoke and they work with customers to give them a unique design and one which they will treasure forever.

"People can come to us with a design or just

an idea and we will work with them to achieve what they have in mind," Pauline adds.

And, looking around at the many drawings, paintings, tapestries and quilts that are to be found all around the house, you just know that this is true.

For the detail is breathtaking and the finished result a thing to treasure. Many drawings hark back to the time 11 years ago when the family lived in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia where Pauline ran a successful greetings card company.

"That took six hours," Pauline explains when I admire a pencil drawing of a wooden door. "It's one of the doors you see in the souk [market place] and I made the sketches into cards and calendars.

"There's a large ex-pat community there and there was nowhere they could buy cards so that's how it all started."

Pauline still does the occasional card – usually the family's Christmas card. "It's always a scene of the house, and each year we all wonder which one it'll be," says Kelly.

There's plenty of choice – as the 200-year-old farmhouse has a wealth of original features and is set in a sprawling but well-kept flower garden and has its own delightful bluebell wood.

"We still both draw and go on painting courses together – watercolours, pen and ink," Kelly adds.

You sense that this is something that will continue – no matter how successful the new venture becomes because the women have such a creative eye.

It must run in the family as Pauline explains that her grandfather was a woodturner. Now Pauline and Kelly are hoping that their work will be something that will also "run in families".

"We like to think that our pieces will be handed down; they are real memory pieces and evoke such happy times," says Pauline.

"But we're open to any ideas – we can do pieces that reflect the Norfolk landscape, for example, the beach huts, the scenery – all our work is very personal.

"People should have a look on our website and then get in touch with us – we enjoy the challenge of creating happy memories," adds Kelly.

Once you have seen their work, I am sure you'll agree that they really are works of art – and pieces to cherish ●

Contact Nest on 01263 578167 or by email at: enquiries@nest-online.co.uk. The website is www.nest-online.co.uk where you can see more photographs and find out more about the bespoke service. Prices start at around £40 for an initial pillow wall hanging, with cushions around £60, wall hangings from £150 and large quilts with vintage laces and fabrics from £400.