

PARTY PEOPLE

Were you out and about this weekend?

Page 2



SNAPPER SQUAD

All of the best images on the theme of #Blue

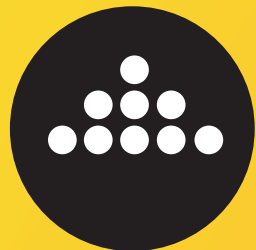
Pages 4-5



GIVE A PET A HOME

Can you offer a forever home?

Page 8



INSIDE

FREE PREVIEW

SENTINEL

#localandproud



@SentinelStaffs



/sentinelstaffs



thesentinel.co.uk

COVER STORY

SARAH DIXON

BY LEAH CASSADY

SARAH Dixon has always loved drawing but it wasn't until she was nearly 30 that she set up her own business to make the most of her artistic talent.

Now aged 33, Sarah lives in Stone with her husband, Joe, and creates personalised illustrations for a living through her company, Greetings from Sarah. She said: "I've loved drawing ever since I can remember and would draw at every opportunity when I was younger, even when I was out with my parents. I went on to do illustration at university and landed a graphic design role afterwards. "I guess I didn't have the confidence to turn illustrations into a career until we moved to Staffordshire when Joe was offered a job here in September, 2013.

"We had spent two years in Australia beforehand and I didn't have a job so thought it was a good time to get back to what I enjoyed while looking for work. "Initially I wanted to design and make wedding stationery but it was too late in the year for that, so I looked into Christmas cards instead."

Sarah, a self-confessed Christmas lover who starts listening to festive songs in September while working on her first Christmas orders, gave out cards in 2014 in the hope that people would then want to purchase them for 2015.

She said: "I enjoyed drawing again so much that I officially set up my business in January, 2014. It was a new venture so I was motivated and it was all really exciting, but it wasn't until November, 2014, when things started picking up.

"I was at a local printer to scan in my artwork when someone asked if I had a Facebook page as they loved my work. "She shared it and people saw it and became interested in what I did. Shortly after that, someone from Gladstone Pottery Museum got in touch and asked me to take part in their 2014 Christmas Fair. I quickly said yes but didn't have anything to sell, so I worked hard for weeks to get some designs together and it went so well that I started attending other fairs too."

Nearly four years later, Greetings from Sarah offers a variety of items and, being a romantic at heart, Sarah is pleased she gets to create personalised wedding stationery just as she set out to do.

She said: "A wedding is so personal and I wanted to offer more personalised items. I offer save the dates, invitations and RSVPs, as well as on-the-day stationery. "I was once asked to draw cakes as table names. The groom's nickname was Cakey so they wanted something different and chose items like Battenberg and lemon drizzle cake. It was a fun project.

"I also offer name cards with paintings of each person. I did this for my wedding in Tuscany in May and they were a real hit. "With anything I do, I like to focus on the people and build up an image around them. I ask for details to make it more personal, like specific outfits, favourite items or even backgrounds. It makes



Sarah Dixon working on one of her many designs. Inset and below, examples of her portrait and wedding invitations.



each painting unique." Alongside wedding stationery, Sarah also offers cards, portraits and family trees. Everything is created in her home studio in Stone, where music is regularly played and her paint palette is an old plate. She said: "My mum gave us a couple of old plates when we moved back to the UK, and I have since adopted one of them as my paint palette. I started using it and just haven't stopped, it's both cute and practical as it's easy to wash clean. "I'd love to say my studio looks like a

Pinterest board, but it's basic and minimalist – apart from my mess," she laughs. "I sketch my artwork from photos that have been sent in and a proof is then shown to the customer, who can request any alterations at this point. Once this has been approved, I'll paint them and send off the finished piece. This can take anywhere from half a day to a day or two, depending on how many people are included, but wedding stationery is more involved and so takes more time." Prone to getting bored, Sarah states that this is the perfect job for her as it's constantly changing. She said: "I've always been restless in other jobs and can get bored easily but not with this one, it's always different which makes it interesting. I also love hearing stories and background information that help make each painting personal. "I get nervous about sharing my work though and when I send proofs I always wonder if they'll like it, but I get really positive feedback which makes it worthwhile. "There is no real template with what I do, so people can have whatever they want – within reason," she adds with a smile. For information or to purchase Sarah's work visit www.greetingsfromsarah.com