

Welland &Wye

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Reviving Historic Hand Embroidery for the Modern Home

Welland & Wye is a boutique interiors business that designs and sells uniquely beautiful, traditional crewel-work fabrics and cushions, sensitively updated for contemporary interiors.

Suitable for curtains, blinds, upholstery and bed hangings, crewel-work fabric – also known as Jacobean crewel – features intricate surface embroidery in wool thread, often based around a Tree of Life motif and including flowers, foliage and naïve animals. Warm, lively and full of character, it is the embodiment of English country-house style, perfectly complementing the grandest drawing room or the cosiest bedroom with its rich texture and subtle colours.

Welland & Wye founder Frances Barber is dedicated to reviving hand-embroidered crewel-work, a highly skilled craft now practised only in Kashmir. Frances works closely with a family-run supplier, whose exceptional craftsmen come from families who have made their living in the mountains and valleys of the region for generations. This strong, long-running creative partnership is maintained through a flurry of WhatsApp messages, sketches, and photographs shared across continents.

At the heart of Frances' mission is a belief that heritage crafts must not only survive, but also thrive in the modern home. Welland & Wye embodies this commitment with every stitch.

In a world of fast manufacture, production of Welland & Wye fabric is reassuringly slow. Background cloth in linen and cotton is hand-embroidered in wool that has been naturally dyed to the same colours as those used in the 18th century: dusky pinks, earthy terracottas, natural greens and delicate blues. With a crochet-style hook called an *aari*, the artisans use a running- or chain-stitch to create motifs, generally adding intricate shading to enhance the richness of the design. There are more than 100,000 stitches in the average metre of fabric, and each metre takes around a week to embroider.

The Welland & Wye range, elegant, timeless and full of character, consists of ready-made cushions and a variety of fabrics sold by the metre. For orders of more than 30

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metres, customers can select their own backcloth or embroidery-wool colours, and it is also possible to work with Frances to create your own, unique crewel-work fabric.

‘Janwardar’ – a new design in collaboration with the Royal School of Needlework
Welland & Wye produces one new fabric design a year, each with muted colour palettes suited to both classic and contemporary interiors. In Autumn 2025, the company will launch its first official design collaboration with the Royal School of Needlework (RSN) Archive, based at Hampton Court Palace — an institution famed for its role in crafting coronation robes and the Princess of Wales’s wedding dress. This partnership marks a major milestone for *Welland & Wye*, aligning with an organisation that champions the art of embroidery at its highest level of craftsmanship.

The new fabric design, Janwardar (pronounced JAN – war – daar), meaning ‘bird design’, draws inspiration from a 1930s document, attributed to a designer known only as 'Schneider', that was discovered in the RSN archive. During the 1930s there was a huge resurgence of interest in Jacobean crewel work, and the ‘Schneider’ design took a fresh approach to very traditional Jacobean-style techniques. Frances worked with the RSN’s creative team to reinterpret the design into a soft, flowing repeat pattern, ideal for soft furnishings.

About Frances Barber

Frances Barber’s distinctive creative sensibility was shaped by her former careers in television documentary production and executive search, now channelled into her lifelong passion for interiors.

Frances inherited her love of interiors from her mother, Jan Baker, who ran a respected interior design studio in rural Herefordshire and introduced her to the beauty of crewel embroidery.

Welland & Wye is based at Frances’ family home on the Northamptonshire/Leicestershire border, just outside the market town of Market Harborough, in the heart of the English countryside. Frances lives there with her husband, three children, two dogs and a rotating cast of hens.

Where to buy

Welland & Wye fabric and cushions are available to purchase worldwide through www.wellandandwye.com. Additionally, products are currently stocked at Hobo Design in Petworth, where Frances works with proprietor Lily Chaffer to create a capsule collection of hand-embroidered cushions.

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