

Interview with Sue from Little Green Pigeon

This month's feature is with the lovely Sue from Little Green Pigeon. Our eco-friendly partner who without her, we would not have been able to launch our wonderful yoga animal clothing range! I first met Sue through a zoom meeting we were invited to by a member of staff from Birmingham Dogs Home. From there we set up another zoom meeting and well the rest is history. I can truly say she is one of the nicest people I have ever met and that is why we had to share her with the rest of you!

Sue's vegan journey began when she was just eight and we wanted to know what promoted her at such a young age, to make this decision?

A PETA rep visited my school and I had never previously been taught where meat comes from, or that animals were exploited and used for animals testing. I was horrified! Literally that day I went home and told my mom I would never eat meat again and would not use products tested on animals. My mom said she would support me to give up meat but until we knew more about nutrition, I couldn't give up fish, so I was pescatarian for a year and when I turned nine, I became vegetarian.

When I left school, I went to an Agricultural college. I trained for four years for my veterinary nursing degree. I worked in veterinary practice for twelve years.

The practice I worked in while I was training was what is known as 'mixed'. Which means it is large and small animals. I worked as a large animal nurse on farms, helping Herdswoman and honestly, I saw nothing but love and care for all the animals I saw. I never once felt that the farmers didn't care for their animals, so I never once questioned that it was wrong to keep them and breed them and keep them like this for our use. The dairy herds that I helped look after were



super happy grass-fed cows with high welfare standards. It took another twenty years for the penny to drop that not all farms are like that, and I started to question that if eating products made from cow's breast milk was ethical, should I become vegan?

Sue has obviously always had very strong ethics where animals are concerned and to make that decision at such a young age is admirable. Sue has a daughter and we wanted to know about how she tackled motherhood, with a lot of debate surrounding the impact of a vegan diet for children?

My daughter has been vegetarian since birth (2002). When she was ten, we started researching why people became vegan and

honestly what we saw online during that first session was enough to make us both vegan, that day!

We are both unanimous in saying we wish we had become vegan sooner. I think the more you learn the more it makes sense for everyone to become vegan and the whole farming industry becomes more and more just that "an industry".

We think it is fantastic that Sue and her daughter researched this lifestyle together. It's important that children should be empowered to make their own decisions and carve their own lives, and what a great thing if they can go on this journey with adults that are supporting them. We are in total agreement; we wish we'd of become vegan sooner!

We have only known Sue as the founder of Little Green Pigeon and we absolutely love the name of her business. We wanted the scoop on the name of the business and if it is named after one special green pigeon in particular?

So- I left veterinary practice when my daughter (Peggy), was very small and I set up a dog walking business. This meant that I could continue to be a part time mom and part time worker. So, in the school holidays it meant Peggy would often be out with me walking for four or five hours a day. She never complained no matter what the weather as she just adored all of the dogs in our care.

To pass the time on walks we would watch the birds and she quickly became very good at spotting different birds from their song and by their flight patterns as well as seeing them, so we both learnt so much about birds.

Unfortunately, in 2009 I had an accident and fractured my lower spine and coccyx and ruptured three discs. I couldn't walk for several months and therefore I lost my business. Once I recovered, I went back to work in veterinary practice as a surgery co-ordinator and this was when I started to look after the birds that came into the practice.

You would not believe how many vets and veterinary nurses are scared of birds! Before I knew it, I had an aviary at home, a soft release cage and 80-100 birds a year to rehabilitate. Around 40 of those birds a year were pigeons and I just fell in love with them. We don't have little green pigeons in the UK, but visually I just think they are stunning...so when I was thinking of a business name this was the first and only choice.

Well we think it is a great name and what an interesting and varied journey Sue has been on to get to this point in her life. If you have seen her website, (you really have no excuse not to have seen it), then you will know her designs are amazing! We asked where she gets the inspiration for these designs?

I know this is going to sound odd considering what I do for a living, but I hate shopping. I don't even enjoy looking at clothes and I never browse online stores. I will literally replace an item of clothing when it wears out, some of my dresses are eighteen years old. So, I guess I just design artwork that I like and add it to clothes, mugs etc and if people buy it then it's right! Peggy is the artist behind many of the birds we have on our merchandise, she's such a good artist.

An extremely artistic family and again you must get over to the website and check out the fabulous designs. (Link below)

We are proud to agree with Sue that some of our clothes are so old they're from different decades but there's nothing wrong with that, as unfortunately too many clothes end up in landfill and we are increasingly becoming aware of the environmental impact of fast fashion. So, we say keep those retro clothes and wear them with pride!

We thought as this is a vegan newsletter and we are vegans we should at least touch on the topic of food. So, Sue, are there any recipes in particular you like to cook?



Okay, so you know I said I hate shopping, that's closely followed by cooking 😊 I hate it, honestly, food is fuel for me.

I will literally eat anything if I'm hungry. A bowl of peanuts & seeds, some gherkins from the jar, a plate of spinach from the garden. We don't have meal times in our house, as we just eat when we're hungry. Some days we hardly eat anything, other days we have a massive great dinner. Luckily my husband enjoys cooking so he tends to do that while I work, as he is retired. If I have to cook it's extremely rare I follow a recipe. I tend to look at what veg I have, throw it in a pan and make a sauce or base to go with it.

I guess if I really have to cook then the most common thing I make is chickpea curry, as it's simple and quick. I like lentil dahl too. My absolute favourite is roasted chickpeas. Roast them under the grill with liquid seasoning, smoked paprika, oil, salt and liquid smoke. Add this to gnocchi with fresh raw spinach from the garden and homemade passata. Simple!

Basically, if it takes more than twenty minutes to prepare and cook then it's rare,

I'll eat it. It drives my husband mad as I'll make a sandwich while I'm cooking then not actually eat what I've cooked for everyone else as I can't be bothered. Once I've had to look at the ingredients cooking for forty minutes. Peggy and I often say that if it wasn't for my husband, Ian, wanting to eat food then we would both live on Huel!

We think it's a great idea to only eat when you're hungry but unfortunately, I am always hungry, so therefore I usually spend most of my days eating!

So as Sue is not an avid cook we asked if there was anywhere she had visited that cooked particularly good food?

This is really difficult to answer because I dislike eating out. We will occasionally go to Zizzi's for vegan pizza and there is this fantastic place Coalbrookdale in Shropshire, called Green Wood café which is just superb for vegans and ethical eaters. For me, it's about being with the people I'm there with rather than the food so I tend not to notice what we're eating. If I'm out with friends and family I would happily eat a sarnie to be honest as long as there is good vegan red wine, I'm happy as Larry.

We agree we love a good red! Although I personally have to confess, I have become engrossed in a meal when out and completely neglected my friends or family to become wrapped up in the food 😊

It's clear that Sue is an extremely busy person, running her fantastic business and caring for her beautiful birds. We asked her how she unwinds and ensures she keeps a healthy work life balance?

I am extremely fortunate in that a few years ago we moved to our dream property in my home county of Staffordshire. It's pretty much in the middle of nowhere with no close neighbours and lots of wildlife. We have a large garden and a big allotment (200x25 metres), so when I'm not working, I can generally be found there. Growing and tending to the plot, running around with the dogs or watching the birds. As a household

we can easily spend two hours watching the birds without realising time has passed. We have a nature reserve opposite the house which houses over forty species of birds and mammals who visit daily such as, sparrowhawks, buzzards, voles, pheasants and jackdaws.

My favourite birds to watch are the long tail tits. They're just so funny how they zoom from feeder to feeder. I don't like going on holiday, if we do go away it's to visit friends and family and we normally find an RSPB reserve or a hide nearby.

I do love Scotland and the north so we go on the odd week every few years, but generally I have everything I need for happy mental health here! (I've never been abroad and never will).

I think we can all agree that happy mental health is paramount and it is important to ensure you know what promotes that for you. We totally agree that nature is one of the main things that contributes to mental health wellbeing and there's nothing like a brisk Autumn walk to blow the cobwebs away!

Despite the fact that Sue is not a massive fan of cooking we asked if there are any new recipes/ingredients she has discovered during lockdown? As a lot of people have found a new love for growing their own vegetables, and we know Sue has an allotment, we thought we'd pick her brains for inspiration.

This year we had a bumper crop of Snowball turnips, so Ian has perfected his turnip soup, which is a favourite for all of us!

So, before we left to google snowball turnips and put them on our wish list, we had a final few questions for Sue, what advice would you give to someone starting out on their plant-based journey?

Now this is a great question! (Thanks Sue) I have two pieces of advice:

Firstly, don't worry about what other people do or don't do, eat or don't eat, don't worry about their opinion of you and your beliefs. Just do the best you can!

If you go to sleep at night knowing that you have done everything YOU can do to stop animal exploitation in YOUR life and lessen YOUR environmental impact then you will sleep well.

You cannot change the world, just don't let it change you!

Secondly, eat proper food. We occasionally eat what we call 'junk food' pre-prepared pies, burgers or pizza etc.

But ninety percent of the time we eat fresh vegetables, legumes, herbs, and vegetables that we grow here.

Wherever you can afford to buy organic vegetables.

Great pieces of advice there and we are all for concentrating on yourself and not your neighbours. Like Sue said do what YOU can. We all so unique and have many different things going on in our lives so your experiences will most definitely not be the same as some-one else's.

Another thing we love about Sue, is the fact that her business is PETA-approved, eco-friendly and completely vegan! What more could we ask for really?

As she is such a pro 😊 we asked her for a bit of advice to share about becoming more eco-friendly.

Again, I have two pieces of advice. The first one is really basic, loo roll!

Get an online subscription to a bamboo or eco-friendly loo roll manufacturer and you will not only help the environmental impact on the planet you will take one less daily hassle out of your life as they deliver straight to you every two months (or whatever you set your subscription to).

It seems a lot to spend out £30 all at once for loo roll but we find it's far cheaper in the long run and there's no plastic involved.

Secondly, if you're a car owner, when you can, get an electric car.

I have a Nissan LEAF it's just the best! I absolutely admit I am a bit of a car nerd (that's probably the one type of shopping I do enjoy).

I would estimate I have owned around sixteen different cars now and the LEAF is the best. The new LEAF I bought in 2018 has now done 22,000 miles and has only cost around £400 in electricity. That's brilliant!! So, whatever you pay out on loans and fuel is absolutely balanced out by the cheap running costs. You do have to be organised with your routes, but you get used to that and the charging stations are starting to get better and better now.

Wonderful words of advice as usual! We love working with Sue and feel privileged to be in such a wonderful partnership.

Sue- I just want to add that sharing my company and platform with other companies such as the wonderful Soy Oi 😊

If we all work together, I think it's so much better for ourselves as vegan business owners, for the planet and its animals and for our customers. Working with Soy Oi has been an absolute pleasure and long may it continue.

We second that, it's been wonderful working with Sue and this feature has been a lovely way to find out more about the brains behind Little Green Pigeon.

From her strong-minded decision at the age of eight to abstain from eating meat, to her wonderful creations, designs and snowball turnips!

On a final note we want to reiterate what Sue has said about not worrying about what other people think. Follow your own values and lifestyle choices, and this will ensure your own happiness rather than comparing it to that of others. Another thing is research. This is vitally important if you are embarking on a vegan lifestyle, as there is so much to explore and learn. This is a continuous



journey but if you are well prepared, like Sue in her LEAF then you are sure to enjoy it thoroughly as well as being kind to the planet.

We know it may feel daunting at times, we've been there, and everyone makes mistakes that's why it's a journey. Mistakes are there to learn from not give yourself a hard time over. If you are feeling overwhelmed, don't know where to turn or have burning questions about a vegan lifestyle then please email info@soyoi.co.uk and we will help as best we can.

This is a community where we want people to feel welcome and supported as well as enjoying great food!

Thank you again to Sue for answering our nosy questions and to find out more about Sue's business and browse her products visit <https://www.littlegreenpigeon.co.uk/>