

The pride of Wales

Sasha Kagan reports back from an exhibition of the Cambrian Mountains Wool Project, attended by Prince Charles

I COULD hardly believe my eyes when an unexpected invitation for canapés with Prince Charles arrived in my inbox! The event was organised to celebrate the exhibition of winning designs produced for The Cambrian Mountains Wool International Design Challenge, and was to take place at Nanteos Mansion just outside my local town of Aberystwyth.

The sun shone majestically over the Welsh mountains as I drove through sheep-filled fields and wildflower meadows to the coast. I soon recognised many of the brightly dressed textile community assembled in the coach park. After a big welcome and security checks, we were whisked off to the mansion.

The exhibition was put on for Prince Charles as he is patron of The Campaign for Wool, and is very interested in helping to revive and promote the woollen industry in Wales. The event provided an excellent opportunity for guests to network and catch up with each other's news. The mansion was buzzing with excited designers, knitters, spinners, weavers, textile traders, gallery owners, farmers and

industry professionals, all very impressed with the high standard of the exhibits.

The aim of the 2015 Challenge was to demonstrate the beauty and versatility of Cambrian Mountain Wool, to help rekindle historic links between local sheep farmers, wool processors, designers, makers and retailers. From the 128 applicants who sent in designs, 37 were selected. Each designer could choose one kilo of wool tops or yarn in 4ply or DK, or three metres of woven fabric, to create a unique textile work.

Artistry on display

I was immediately attracted to a delicate fitted jacket by Sue James from Llynfi Textiles. The handknitted body panels featured interlocking hexagonal shapes with lace panels and pearls referencing the jacket's historical inspiration; a tiny ruffle trim neatened the V-shaped bodice, and a turn-over collar and machine-knit sleeves completed this delightful composition.

Felting was well represented by a stunning sculptural head piece by Carole Wadham, a pair of luxurious leather boots by Lorraine Pocklington of Greenweeds,

a portrait head by Joy Dawes based on a sheep seen grazing near her home, and elegant felted jewellery by Yuka Jourdain.

Crochet was given a modern look by Flora Collingwood-Norris. Her cardigan sported fine geometric shapes cleverly constructed to produce a light, airy and contemporary garment. Maria Lalic charmed us all with her dolls and teddies made from the Cambrian Mountains herringbone tweed woven especially for the project by The Natural Fibre Company.

Suddenly the hubbub died down and a hush descended as Prince Charles entered the room. He toured the exhibition and was introduced to each of the exhibitors in turn. He was very impressed by the display and spoke encouragingly to the makers.

A feasibility study is now planned to look at ways of getting fine wool produced in the region in commercially viable quantities and quantities, with a view to setting up a sustainable operation for the future. ☺

For more information and to get involved in the Cambrian Mountains Wool project, visit www.cambrianmountainswool.org



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Prince Charles meets designer Flora Collingwood-Norris



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Sasha Kagan (right) with Jen Jones of the Quilt Museum Lampeter

1 The exhibition was held near Aberystwyth 2 This delicate jacket was created by Sue James from Llynfi Textiles 3 Welsh sheep head by Joy Dawes 4 Exhibits included these gloves by Tishya Oedit and felted jewellery by Yuka Jourdain