

Great Crested GLEBE



What started 25 years ago initially as a means of paying for the next batch of materials to enable enthusiastic nature photographer Scott Morrish to develop his stunning images has evolved into a trailblazing greeting card, calendar and stationery business that has eco-credentials as well as a commitment to the independent retailer right at its core.

As Glebe Cottage/The Eco-Friendly Card Company prepares to kick-off its 25th anniversary celebrations at Autumn Fair, PG went down the green memory lane with co-owner Sue Morrish.

Glebe Cottage (now also known as The Eco-Friendly Card Company) may be based in Devon, but from September it will also have a toilet in a village in Malawi, South East Africa. Sounds unusual yes, but then Glebe Cottage has never followed the normal path. Moreover, many in the industry, and the world at large, have benefitted from the trailblazing activities of this family publishing business too.

But back to the toilet. As Sue Morrish, who co-owns Glebe Cottage with her photographer husband Scott, explains: "With this being the 25th anniversary since we started the company we wanted to mark it by giving something back to society by supporting a different charity project every month for a year."

Sue and Scott are kicking off this 'anniversary programme of giving' by supporting Toilet Twinning, a water and sanitation

charity that aims to 'flush away poverty, one toilet at a time'.

However, it was the 'call of nature' of a different kind that is the very reason the publishing company exists, and why a commitment to having the utmost environmental credentials has been part of its DNA since its inception.

Having graduating from art college, Scott set his heart on becoming the UK's answer to Ansel Adams, striding out over the moors and into the wilderness of Devon to take photographs and then developing them in the garden shed of Glebe Cottage where he lived with his parents.

It was when he got to know 'the girl next door' (Sue's parents moved there and she came home in her university holidays) that things started to take off, both romantically and businesswise.

"Scott would make a few cards featuring his photographs, which he could sell to pay for the materials to enable him to develop his next batch of photographs. And I joined in, driving around in a rusty Datsun Sunny selling cards to shops to fund Scott's photography," recalls Sue.

It was as newly weds that Sue and Scott evolved their intermittent card publishing into a more commercial entity, clinching a Prince's Youth Business Trust grant to provide its first footing.

A quarter century later, and the Prince of Wales retains a connection to Glebe Cottage, as the company publishes products for Highgrove Enterprises (which raises funds for The Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation, a grant-making charity which supports a wide range of causes and projects), including supplying the Christmas cards for TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall.

With Sue taking on the business side of the company, learning on her feet - "I did a degree in English and Anthropology, not



Top: The company has been producing The Wildlife Trusts' cards, calendars and stationery under licence since 2011. The range is being re-launched at the Autumn Fair.

Above: Right at the start. Sue in the company's first office, in Scott's bedroom in the actual Glebe Cottage.

Right: Over the years, Glebe Cottage has been feted with several significant environmental awards. Scott and Sue Morrish were delighted to win a Business Commitment to the Environment (BCE) Environmental Leadership Award back in 2010.

A personal campaign

Sue and Scott Morrish have been heavily involved in an important campaign with The Sepsis Trust for several years.

Following the death of their three year-old son Sam, who died from sepsis almost eight years ago, Sue and Scott have been committed to raising awareness among the public and clinicians as to how to spot the symptoms of sepsis early and acting quickly.

"Sam was sent home from the GP at 5pm, having been told he just had a virus, but 12 hours later he had died from sepsis - a condition I'd never even heard of," shared Sue, who has made it part of her mission to minimise the chances of this happening to others. @sams_monkey

Right: A photo of Sue and Scott's son Sam and his monkey formed part of a NHS social media film to let parents know about flu vaccinations for children.



This is my best friend Sam. He died when he was 3 years old.



Business Studies!" she reveals - Scott was able to spend his time doing what he loves best, taking photos of nature, roles that have largely continued today, albeit juggled with looking after their children.

Right from the outset however, it was not enough for the couple to be producing products that celebrated the natural world as Sue and Scott have always been determined that the company would be run as environmentally responsibly as possible.

"To begin with, as a tiny publishing company, we felt rather powerless to be able to make a real difference, but by working with suppliers, investigating possibilities and remaining steadfast in our ethos we started to make progress," says Sue modestly.

Indeed, Glebe Cottage was the first DTR card publisher to have its own FSC certification (even today most publishers use their printers' FSC accreditation), it



the latter evidenced by the roster of environmental awards it has been presented with over the years.

While the environment is right at the heartland of the company, so too is its commitment to the broad mix of independent retailers who stock the company's photographic and art cards, calendars and stationery ranges.

"I do feel very proud of the relationships we have built with our independent customers," says Sue. "Some of them have been with us right from the start, while others, like the new

breed of farm shops and delis that also stock our products today, have become customers in more recent years. We would never have reached our first year, let alone celebrate our 25th anniversary, without their support. I look forward to thanking as many of them as possible in person on our stand at next month's Autumn Fair."

Above left: Scott was more than happy to be snowed in at the Lost Gardens of Heligan, enabling him to obtain some stunning shots that appear on cards.

Above: In addition to a photographic collection, the company introduced artists cards back in 1999, and has continued ever since, including this design by Devon artist Sally Rich.



started wrapping its cards in compostable bags (then made from potato starch) way back in 2006, and has been clearly explaining its eco-credentials on the backs of its cards before the majority of publishers had even thought about doing it.

Never afraid to campaign for change, whether to push for 100% recycled envelopes or working with Lake District papermill, James Cropper, to develop its own environmental board, Glebe Cottage has quite rightly earned the respect of its customers, the industry and the wider realm,

Left: Sue with baby Benjamin back in 2006 (he's now 13) when Glebe trailblazed by using compostable bags made from potato starch.

How time flies

1993 - Business founded with the help of the Prince's Youth Business Trust.

1997 - Made a commitment to only use 100% recycled envelopes.

1999 - Launched the company's first art card collections.

2000 - Started printing with vegetable-based inks and alcohol-free print techniques.

May 2006 - Became the first card publisher to use compostable bags (made from plant starch).

November 2006 - Obtained FSC certification - the first DTR card publisher to do so.

August 2007 - Introduced 'eco-labels' to communicate environmental credentials - Glebe's 'eco-commitments' to consumers.

December 2007 - First card publisher to become CarbonNeutral(r).

November 2008 - Won a Gold award at the International Green Apple Awards in the highly competitive printing and publishing category.

June 2010 - Won a prestigious Business Commitment to the Environment (BCE) Environmental Leadership Award.

September 2010 - Started working with Highgrove to publish its own-branded greeting cards, including the Christmas card for HRH the Prince of Wales.

September 2011 - Granted a licence by The Wildlife Trusts to publish its cards, Christmas cards, calendars and stationery.

August 2012 - Commissioned new 100% recycled textured board from James Cropper paper mill in the Lake District.

July 2015 - Introduced cards printed on paper made from 50% coffee cup waste and commissioned new 100% recycled coated board.

September 2016 - Started trading as The Eco-Friendly Card Company.