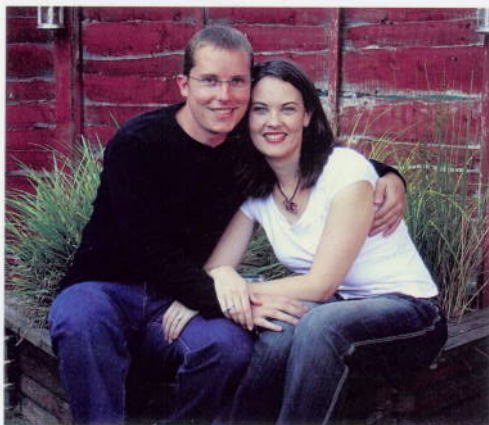


Q&A: EXCLUSIVE interview

Thames Ditton Yarnbomber unveiled...Natasja King



Readers may remember our coverage last year of the colourful woolly art installations popping up and adorning random spots around the village by an anonymous 'perpetrator'.

It was the first many of us had heard of this street art, also known as yarnbombing, and in reporting the topic About Thames Ditton respected the artist's wish to remain anonymous.

We can now exclusively reveal not only her identity but the reasons she is coming forward, the charitable cause she is supporting using her passion for wool and her husband's selfless act of charity which inspired her fundraising efforts.

So... you're 'The Yarnbomber'! What was the inspiration behind decorating our village with your lovely crochet work?

Thanks for saying it's lovely. It's that kind of response that makes me do it. I just want to add something pretty and colourful to uninteresting spaces to make people smile.

How did you manage to decorate trees, benches and railings with crochet without being spotted?

I just didn't take notice of people seeing me. I know as a rule yarnbombing is supposed to happen overnight and appear as if by magic, but I'm usually too excited to wait until the dead of night to put it up. I blog about my yarnbombing so if anyone really wants to know who I am they will Google it. I'm not the mysterious kind of yarnbomber, I'm the loud and proud kind!

Where did all of this start?

I taught myself how to crochet in 2009. As my confidence grew and I read about other yarnbombing projects around the world I thought why not do one myself.

We were all very intrigued to know who The Yarnbomber was. However, on a serious note, you're happy for all to know you as you're looking for your crocheting to help raise funds for a very worthy cause. Tell us about your husband's recent donation and your upcoming event.

My husband, John, is a living kidney donor. He donated his kidney in November and both he and the recipient, Pieter, are doing very well. Kidney disease is something you don't think about until you are faced with an unhealthy kidney or someone like Pieter crosses your path, or indeed you marry a man like John. I want to help raise money and awareness for the work that Kidney Research UK does in the only way I know how – crochet.

The event is on **9th November** from 10.30am in the Vera Fletcher Hall. I'm asking

that people crochet purple and white (the official colours of Kidney Research UK) 15 cm squares which will be made into blankets to be given to patients on dialysis. People from all over the world are posting squares to me. The 'entry fee' is something baked which we will resell. John and Pieter will be there to give a talk about their experience. Trust me when I say their story is very inspiring.



This was taken the day after the transplant operation. The atmosphere in the room when the two men met again for the first time after the transplant, was amazing.

John, what made you decide to be living kidney donor? Surely there are risks involved.

When I met Pieter in June last year he had been on dialysis for 3 years. He went through countless hours of dialysis every week, had terrible side effects, sleepless nights, and had very nearly lost the will to live. I had an incredible urge to help him. I did a lot of research and with the support of my wonderful wife I decided the risk was acceptable and I would offer to donate a kidney to Pieter.

You made history with your donation. Tell us more about that.

There are two types of donations: Directed and Altruistic non-directed. I had only met Pieter twice before offering to donate my kidney to him, so I technically did not have a relationship with him therefore my donation could not be a Directed donation.

It could also not be an Altruistic non-directed donation seeing as we do know each other. What swayed the HTA (Human

Tissue Authority) was the fact that we had grown to become very good friends in the 3 months of tests and built an emotional relationship. On this basis it was approved as a Directed Altruistic donation.

A situation like this has never occurred in the UK, and was not allowed by the HTA until now, because it would encourage the unlawful sale of organs. Thankfully they saw the sincerity of my donation and approved it, making my Directed Altruistic donation the first of its kind in the UK!

Is being a living kidney donor something you would recommend to others?

Every time I look at Pieter and see how happy and healthy he is, it fills me with tremendous pride and gratitude, so yes.

Natasja, what's next for The Yarnbomber?

I would like to redo the bench in Summer Road, it's just a matter of finding the time to do it. I do crochet demonstrations in New Malden once a month and there is a Guinness World Record breaking attempt planned for 15 March 2014 to coincide with World Kidney Day.

You can read about John and Pieter's experiences as living kidney donor and recipient on their blog <http://twoguysonekidney.blogspot.com>, and find more information about the Crochet For Kidney Research UK event at <http://crochettime.net/>



I made these squares for International Yarnbombing Day on 8 June but it was vandalised within 24 hours.