



# Thoughtful gold

LUCY BRYANT speaks to SUSIE HOGBEN about her and sister Annie's love of the story behind gold.

Lewes-based business Gold Park is the combined venture of two passionate sisters, Annie Slack and Susie Hogben.

The pair have a combined passion for gold and are fascinated by its permanent nature, as no degree of melting down and re-working the material will affect its value.

Although people have been reusing gold for centuries, Gold Park want to share this passion with others, and express the beauty behind gold which lasts and lasts.

Annie, Gold Park's designer and maker, gained a degree in silversmithing and metalwork from Camberwell College of Art. She then completed a Masters in silversmithing at the London Metropolitan University,

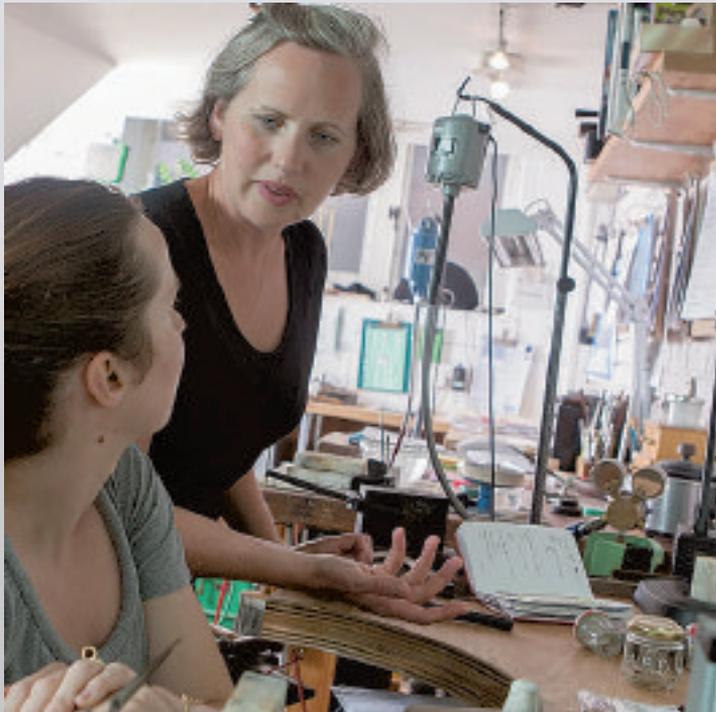
Susie, who describes herself as the organiser, had always wanted to run her own business. Having looked after other businesses as a bookkeeper, she decided it was time to do something more personal.

As a new enterprise, which has only been in establishment for 18 months, Gold Park has already set out a great providence for its gold creations, with two clear paths and passions.

The first of these is 'Heirloom Gold'. Knowing that gold can be melted down and reworked, they had the idea that you could take an inherited piece of gold and turn it into a piece you'd wear all the time.

"You might think, I've got granny's ring that





Above: Examples of the beautiful gold work

I love, but it's not my style, so you hide it away in a box," explains Susie.

"Our thought is you should wear it. Melt it down and make it into something you'll wear everyday."

The idea initially came from their grandmother.

"She used to wear these gold bangles, and we always thought of her jingling around the house," smiles Susie.

"We inherited those bangles and when they broke, Annie, using her skills, was able to re-work them into jewellery that we now wear ourselves."

The ability to hold on to the memories that come with inherited pieces, whilst getting a great deal of pleasure out of them by wearing them everyday, is something which is so special. So often, items sit unused and unappreciated, but at Gold Park, Annie and Susie are able to deliver the best of both worlds.

"For my 40th birthday, Annie made me a lovely gold necklace from some ugly 1960s cufflinks of my dad's," laughs Susie.

"It's just something we've always done and loved doing."

Using heirloom

gold highlights both Annie and Susie's sentimental nature, and Susie explains how she 'loves talking to people about the history and stories behind their jewellery'.

"People really love telling us their stories and we love hearing them," says Susie.

"A popular idea at the moment is to blend gold, using gold from both the bride and groom's family to make their wedding bands."

Weddings are a particular area of interest for both sisters, and something that Gold Park is venturing further into. Having recently showed at a couple of wedding fairs, Susie shares how she 'loves working with brides and grooms because they're always so happy'.

"They want to wear these rings every day so it has to be perfect," says Susie.

You may be thinking, what if I don't have any heirloom gold? Worry not, as Fairtrade gold is their other crowning glory.

"Why wouldn't you use Fairtrade?" asks Susie. "It's absolutely the right thing to be doing."

Both sisters hold the same

values and to them the 'provenance of the materials used is very important'. It's been that way from the beginning.

"We're registered with the Fairtrade Foundation," reveals Susie.

"You pay a small premium, which ensures the mines come up to standard. There's health and safety, good working conditions, no child labour, protection of the environment...everything is considered."

This thoughtful approach to gold is important to ensure 'we feel less detached from the people doing the hard work', and Susie explains how currently in fashion there are lots of questions being asked about where things come from and who made them.

"It's nice to have trade stability and know you're doing the right thing for everyone involved," she adds.

Gold Park's current collection is the Facet Collection. The inspiration was taken from cut gems and diamonds and the way that the light reflects off of those facets. The rings are designed in the same way, but all made in gold.

"You can't get Fairtrade precious stones, so this is how we can offer Fairtrade with the same beautiful light reflection and level of interest," explains Susie.

The rings are beautifully different and contemporary, and the 'uninterrupted designs emulate the perpetual bond between two people'. This would make them perfect for engagement, wedding or eternity rings.

● To shop, browse collections or enquire about your heirloom gold, visit [www.goldpark.uk](http://www.goldpark.uk)

