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enjoying nature – rather than the sticking your head down and going around a lake.”

Before Sea & Stream, Lou was a qualified physiotherapist. “I loved it,” she says, “but I couldn’t balance it with family life.” Today if Lou isn’t looking

after her family or swimming, she is working on her business. “When I started, I had this beautiful vision of me doing work for a couple of hours a day, the website running itself and me swimming the rest of the time,” she says. “But it’s not like that at all! I

think if you love something, then you don’t resent the hours you spend on it. I don’t know where I would be if Covid-19 hadn’t happened, but I am feeling optimistic about the future.”

Seaandstream.co.uk

SWIMMING SUSTAINABLY

Ella Foote meets ethical entrepreneur
and swimmer Lou Jones



“A lot of people enjoy outdoor swimming because we love being in the natural environment, but it is actually quite ironic because what we wear and what we do isn’t always good for the environment.”

Lou Jones was swimming with her family when the idea for an ethical swim shop came to her. “One of my children asked me what was on the surface of the water – it was sunscreen.” It prompted a search for a shop that sold environmentally friendly products for swimming. “There were only a handful of specific shops and none of them focused completely on sustainability,” says Lou. “That is how Sea & Stream began.”

Lou sources ethically produced swim products – from swim kit to cards and gifts

Sea & Stream is a small swim business focussing on sustainability. In setting up the business, Lou was faced with the same problems many

of us have to contend with when trying to shop ethically. “I thought it would be easy to pull together one of each product you need for swimming outdoors, but it was really difficult to find items and wade through all the greenwashing. There isn’t much transparency defining what makes a good or bad product.”

THE ENVIRONMENT IN MIND

A year on and the business is thriving despite the pandemic, testament to the post-lockdown surge in outdoor swimming and the growing trend of consumers demanding ethical and sustainable products. “I look at a company ethos, the materials a product is made from, if it has been made fairly and how they are treating their workers,” says Lou. “We also have a recycling scheme to ensure swim hats and goggles don’t end up in landfill.”

The business also donates a percentage of profit to environmental organisations. “I am very aware that being a business that is trying to be sustainable and telling people to buy stuff is an awkward thing,” she says. “So, we focus on sustainability, but when you need something or want to buy a gift we have all these great products with the environment in mind.”

IN TIMES OF NEED

Lou has always been an outdoor swimmer. As a child she lived next door to the school she attended and where her mother was a PE teacher. “In

the summer holidays we were allowed to use the school outdoor pool, which wasn’t heated,” says Lou. “I just loved it!” She would also join her Mum for swims in the Thames near to where they lived.

Lou found herself back in the water after a difficult period when she lost both her parents within two years of each other. “It was an awful time,” she says, “but I carried on. Then, after I had my second child, I started to get really bad anxiety.” Lou was really struggling and so a couple of friends suggested doing a sea swim challenge from Padstow to Rock, in Cornwall.

A mile in the sea was a massive challenge for Lou back then. “I had to make time to get out and practice getting swim distance in,” she says. “But I did it and really caught the bug for swimming outdoors again, to the extent that the following year I did the Bantham Swoosh (6k) and Dart 10k events. I used my training time as a way to take time out. Every Friday I would go to the Cotswold Water Park and just swim and swim as long as I could until they closed the lake. It was really beneficial getting me back on track mentally.”

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

For a while it was all about distances in a wetsuit until last year Lou got brave enough to join the Wiltshire Wild Swimmers. “It introduced me to the whole other part of outdoor swimming – the group bit. The support, the camaraderie and heads-up breaststroke

