



PROMOTION



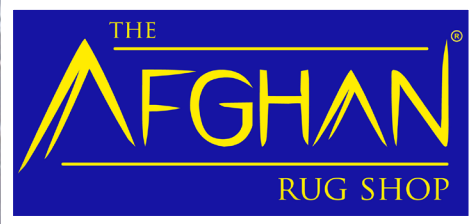
From the Hindu Kush to Hebden Bridge

Just how did handmade Afghan rugs find their way to Hebden Bridge...

Established in 2015, The Afghan Rug Shop in Hebden Bridge is the only place in the world, outside Afghanistan, you will find a shop solely selling fairtrade, handmade Afghan rugs and kilims. Owner, James Wilthew, spent six months serving in Afghanistan in 2003/4 with the UK Provincial Reconstruction Team, based in Mazar-e-Sharif in the Northern Provinces. "If we had a few hours spare we would drop into the rug shops on the way back through town, drink tea and chat to the locals."

"I bonded with one of the rug traders in particular and developed a love for their traditional rugs. I brought several rugs home thinking this would be my only chance - it was 2003, there were no smartphones and the internet there was very unstable, so never thought I could buy again once I'd left." About 10 years later James had left the RAF and moved to Hebden Bridge with his family, when a friend asked about one of his rugs they'd seen, he said 'do you think you could find the guy you bought that from and get me one?'...if you can I'd get

more than one!' James accepted the challenge and the idea for the business was born "It took a few months of cold-calling Afghanistan, Google and social media searches, emails to strangers, but ultimately I tracked down my friend Rafi, the rug seller I hadn't seen or spoken to since 2004." After an online reunion, James took the gamble and acquired premises in the centre of Hebden Bridge, "We had to establish imports from a very rural and remote part of the world, sort money exchange and banking issues, but we eventually



figured it all out."

There are no middle-men, their rugs come direct from the weavers markets, James stocks doormats through to huge country house rugs over 6x4m. It's not just rugs though, they sell furniture, beautiful handmade glass from Herat and

pottery from Istalif town.

After four years of trading, they are proudly partnered with Turquoise Mountain, are Living Wage employers and corporate sponsors of Afghanaid, putting money straight into projects in the communities their rugs come from. ♦

Open 10-5pm, 7 days a week. You can take a virtual shop tour via the homepage of their website to see their full stock range or purchase online:

01422 843331 ♦ www.theafghanrugshop.co.uk
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