

## **BISHOPSTON TRADING COMPANY**

### **The most ethical jeans in the world!**

Ethical retailer Carolyn Whitwell is staking a claim to making the most ethical jeans in the world.

Carolyn is a director of the Bishopston Trading Company which has its headquarters in Bristol and includes five retail shops, wholesale stockists and a mail order business.

Carolyn has been sourcing clothes and fabrics from the village of K V Kuppam in Tamil Nadu, Southern India, for more than 21 years. The factory at the village currently employs more than 200 tailors, cutters and craft workers and 300 weavers.

Bishopston Trading recently introduced "Clean Jeans" which the company believes may be the most ethically produced jeans in the world.

The jeans - for men and women - are made from fair trade organic cotton certified by the Fairtrade Foundation and SKAL. Although other fairtrade, organic jeans are available, the company has gone further - Bishopston's jeans are dyed using natural indigo, which is harmless to the environment, and the buttons are made out of coconut.

The indigo used in the dye is grown close to the dye works in Pondicherry, India. The yarn must be left in the dye bath for four days and then the cloth is washed several times to make it colour fast.

The cloth is then woven on small domestic sized powerlooms and the jeans

are cut by hand and stitched in India under fairtrading conditions.

The jeans are imported to UK by the Bishopston Trading Company, a workers' co-operative and members of the International Fair Trade Association. The jeans are for sale at the fair price of £38.

Carolyn says: "I wanted to show people that it is possible to produce clothes in a completely ethical way. People can make a difference simply by buying a pair of jeans.

"Tailors in K V Kuppam can afford to feed and clothe their families, repair their homes, send their children to school and save for the future. At the end of the working day they walk home to their families, which is the sort of thing we take for granted but is not necessarily the case in India where people often have to leave their villages and travel great distances to find work.

"The money they earn is spent locally which in turn creates more opportunities for more people.

"In addition to their wages, the staff have access to a provident fund for hard times, healthcare, sickness benefit and retirement.

"In the early days, people in India would often say to me 'It's not charity that we want, but work,' and that is what I have tried to provide. Trade is much more valuable than charity.

"I would like to make the point that fair trade is about supporting marginalised producers in developing countries throughout the whole supply chain, not just in the purchasing of the cotton.

"It's about quality of life and long-term commitment to high ethical standards throughout the whole growing, harvesting, manufacturing, transportation, distribution and retail process."

**- ends -**

Background Notes: Bishopston Trading Company has five retail shops in the West of England (Bristol, Bradford on Avon, Glastonbury, Stroud and Totnes) plus stockists throughout the UK and Europe and 4 mail order catalogues a year.

All profits from the company are used to benefit the people of KV Kuppam through the company's registered charity, the South Indian Rural Development Trust. This trust has funded an architect-designed factory in the village offering excellent working conditions for the staff.

There is a long tradition of hand-weaving in the village of KV Kuppam, in Tamil Nadu, South India. The Bishopston Trading Company currently provides employment for more than 200 tailors, cutters and craft workers and 300 weavers. Many of the tailors and hand-finishers are women who can take advantage of the on-site creche at the factory. Employees are offered secure employment and can remain close to their families rather than seek work elsewhere.

The Bishopston Trading Company is a member of IFAT (The International Fair Trade Association) and BAFTS (British Association for Fair Trade Shops) and is a licensee of the Fairtrade Foundation.

**Reader contact:** Bishopston Trading Company: Tel: 0117 924 5598

Fax: 0117 373 0254

Email: [mail@bishopstontrading.co.uk](mailto:mail@bishopstontrading.co.uk)

Website: [www.bishopstontrading.co.uk](http://www.bishopstontrading.co.uk)

**Captions:**

Pic 1: Cropped blouse and jeans from the Spring Collection at Bishopston Trading, blouse £19.95 and jeans £38

Pic 2 "Clean jeans" from the Bishopston Trading Company

Pic 3: A spinner at K V Kuppam

**Notes to editors:** Media enquiries: For more information and high resolution photographs contact Helen Riley, Headline Media, on 0208 348 3103 / 07931 300 425 or email [helenriley@headlinemedia.co.uk](mailto:helenriley@headlinemedia.co.uk)