



## Turning Visions into Reality for Kilnwood Alpacas



### Littlebrook Farm, home to Kilnwood Alpacas

On the eastern edge of the Cotswolds, between Chipping Norton and Banbury is Littlebrook Farm, home to Kilnwood Alpacas. Owner Mandy Wilson has been breeding champion alpacas on the farm since 1999. She has an enviable reputation as one of the UK's authorities on alpaca breeding and husbandry.



David and Sarah Holland of DSH Carpentry and Design were originally recommended to Mandy Wilson by a friend. Several projects later, Mandy says,

**"I'd happily work with David and Sarah again ... obviously ... because we keep doing it! They've been absolutely great."**

Mandy Wilson has vision. She knows what she wants to achieve and has a strong visual image of the effect she wants to create. The ecological aspects of the timber building projects are very important to Mandy. She wants function, and above all she wants to create beauty, but not at the expense of the environment. Using green oak grown in the UK for the timber projects meant there were no unnecessary 'wood' miles adding to the farm's carbon footprint.

On Mandy's land is a beautiful man-made lake which is fed from a stream running across the property. This area is kept as a wildlife and nature reserve and, although the lake is used for boating, its stock of carp and trout are never fished. Mandy felt the lake was crying out for something more ... a beautiful wooden boat house built out over the water ... to add the finishing touch.

### Turning vision into reality

The boathouse had to be not only a thing of beauty, it also had to be functional and provide shelter for the boats. Mandy knew exactly how she wanted the boathouse to look and, working with David and Sarah, her vision was turned into reality. She said,

**"This is where Sarah really comes into her own. I was able to talk to her and sketch things out. With her artistic talent she was able to come up with a design I loved and it was very a quick process, considering how perfect the boathouse is!"**

The boathouse is constructed from green oak, sourced from Wales. The level of the lake had to be dropped while the boathouse was under construction. Pilings were used to support the structure which extends into the water. A cedar shingle roof completed the boathouse construction and ensured a weatherproof home for the boats.

Included in the project was the landscaping of the area around the boathouse. Because the site was on a slope, the area was levelled and a retaining wall constructed from large pine logs, felled from trees on the farm. This means the boathouse area can be used as somewhere to serve drinks, for the occasional BBQ, or a place to simply sit and enjoy the tranquillity of the lake.



### From boathouse to bridges

Mandy Wilson's next project was the building of five bridges across the stream in her garden. Mandy's vision was inspired by Monet's garden ... while she

couldn't grow water lilies in the moving water ... she could have bridges. Previously, crossing the stream meant negotiating slippery railway sleepers, which were hazardous and had little aesthetic charm. Again, working in consultation with David and Sarah, Mandy's vision was quickly turned into reality. Stained a subtle shade of Denim Blue, the bridges contrast with the surrounding landscape and perfectly echo the colours of the delphiniums when in bloom.

### Field shelters protect champion alpacas

Next on Mandy Wilson's agenda was the construction of green oak field shelters to protect her flock of prize alpacas from the weather. When alpacas are carrying a full fleece, they need protection from the heat of the sun.



The existing field shelters on the farm were old, in need of repair, and didn't provide the aesthetic or environmental appeal which is so important to Mandy. They had been an 'off the shelf' purchase some years before and didn't take the needs of the animals into consideration. The decision was made once again, to commission DSH Carpentry and Design to build four new shelters for the alpaca flock.



While alpacas are sensitive to the heat, they need light and ventilation to encourage them to use the shelters. Each shelter is unique and fulfils a different function, including use as maternity pens for the pregnant alpacas. One shelter, like a barn, has double gates, allowing it to be enclosed, and when the 'Cria' - the baby alpacas - arrive, it is used to separate the mums and babies from the rest of the flock.



Each field shelter was designed to exacting specifications to be functional, yet blend in with the beauty of the Cotswold landscape. The front faces of the roofs are clad with cedar shingles, and on the rear, clear roofing panels provide light. Increased headroom and good ventilation means the alpacas can use the shelters in comfort throughout the seasons.

A strong working relationship exists between Mandy Wilson and David and Sarah Holland. Mandy said,

**"I have a vision of what I want to achieve and it's not easy to impart that to someone else. But David and Sarah listen and take on board what I'm saying and what I want to achieve. They source the materials I want and have never tried to persuade me to change my ideas. This is important to me. If I need something, I simply phone up and they respond quickly. I would recommend DSH Carpentry and Design to anyone."**

**Mandy Wilson**

**Kilnwood Alpacas**

**[www.kilnwoodalpacas.com](http://www.kilnwoodalpacas.com)**

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