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“ Cambridge is the only place in the world that this book could happen – Anne Atkins

Culture | pages 35-39

Quote of the week



Jasmien Verheyen

Cambridge Carbon Footprint

Opinion

Something old, something borrowed, something green

We all have outfits we hardly ever sport, but would you guess that 30 per cent of the average wardrobe remains unworn?

Despite not wearing what we already have, we're buying new clothes at a faster rate than ever before. In 2014, people bought on average an incredible 60 per cent more clothing than in 2000. If that sounds unlikely, stroll through, say, Primark and you'll be amidst hordes of people dragging baskets overflowing with cheap garments. Put simply, we're buying too many clothes, paying too little for them, and not wearing them long enough.

Many of us are aware of horrific working conditions in some Bangladeshi factories, but less is known about how environmentally damaging the fashion business really is. It takes 10,000 to 20,000 litres of water to produce just one kilogram of cotton. Fabric dyeing is the second largest water polluter in the world. The textile industry emits more greenhouse gasses than all international flights and maritime shipping combined. In the UK alone, 300,000 tonnes of clothing end up in landfill each year. The list seems unending.

The good news is that you can keep your style on point, while minimising your impact

on the environment.

Here's how to make a start:

- Wash your clothes as little as possible, and at low temperatures. Embrace air-drying if you can.
- Repair torn fabrics. Not into sewing? Consider taking it to an experienced sewer at one of Cambridgeshire's many Repair Cafés.
- Restyle your attire with simple tricks. Transform jumpers into cardigans, trousers into shorts, and dresses into skirts. You can find inspiration for alterations online.
- Borrow outfits from friends for special occasions.
- Revamp your wardrobe by hosting a clothes swap party or swish. Cambridge Carbon Footprint can provide guidance and gear.
- Donate items you won't wear anymore to a charity shop, and buy from them too. Cambridge has an abundance.
- If you do buy something new, choose well. Go for items you'll wear often and for the best quality within your budget. Organically sourced and ethically produced would be ideal.

■ On Saturday, November 17, Cambridge Carbon Footprint will be hosting a huge sustainable fashion festival at St Barnabas' on Mill Road. It's free, and everybody's welcome.

■ For details nearer the time, see circularcambridge.org



Repair Cafés are a great way to give new life to older clothes