



A day in the life of...

LINDA PURVIS

No two days are the same for Linda Purvis, the owner of Encore designer clothes agency in Cirencester: she could be visiting clients in Belgravia, adding the finishing touches to her recently refurbished cottage or pricing up clothes in her shop. However, the unifying theme is her ability to greet each day with a highly contagious joie de vivre. Here, Jo Bolton describes a day spent with Linda, at Encore and in and around Cirencester...

An unexpected 'water feature' erupting through the paving outside the kitchen door might put a dampener on most people's day – but not Linda Purvis'. In fact, thanks to her unshakeable optimism, Linda is quick to draw a positive from this burst pipe: "The water will be off for five days but I'm quite lucky really as I have a standpipe in the garden, so I can fill up my bucket from there."

This innate optimism is just one of the reasons that Linda's business, Encore, has thrived for nearly 20 years. The designer clothes agency, based in Black Jack Street, Cirencester, sells pre-owned contemporary designer clothing and accessories for men and women. It is very much at the smart end of the pre-owned spectrum: items here are exactly screened and all in excellent condition, in season and in vogue.

Linda is a fan of "the effortlessly chic style of the French and Italians" but her shop is an eclectic

mix of different styles, colours and sizes. The shelves and rails are brimming with Prada, Marlene Birger and Mulberry and when I visited the shop, one of Linda's three assistants, Bridget Gifford, was excitedly sorting out a bag crammed with mint-condition Brora cashmere. "We do ask for people to call before they deliver clothes and I also visit London weekly and offer a collection and consultation service," explains Linda. "I have some very loyal, long-standing clients who regularly pass on entire seasons' collections."

The doormat that greets customers to the shop states: "Beware of the Yorkshire terrier" (a nod to Linda's Northern roots) and although she may display the tenacity of a terrier and is fiercely loyal to friends, family and her clients, there is none of the misplaced 'terrier-type' bravado. In fact, it quickly becomes apparent that she is self-deprecating in the extreme and is genuinely surprised by her success.

Over a pot of tea in The King's Head, we discuss her career path to becoming a successful business woman. Linda grew up in Middlesbrough and then came to the Cotswolds with her two small sons, Alex and Oliver, in 1995 after the breakdown of her marriage. She had been living in Java and arrived with a small amount of money and a dream to give her boys that quintessentially English rural start to life: "I really believe that if you have a dream, you have to keep that dream in your head. In Indonesia, I

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would read magazines about living in a little cottage, with my children going to the village school – and actually my dream has come true."

Linda had been helping to design the interiors of 5 star hotels in Indonesia but was keen to try something new on her arrival in England. A friend suggested opening a high end dress agency and Encore was established in South Cerney in 1997. Linda settled on the name Encore in homage to the New York shop where Jackie Onassis used to resell her barely used clothes.

While Linda was thinking about starting Encore, she happened to read an article about a charity event Trinny Woodall had put on. Linda says, "I wrote to her and asked if we could have the clothes that hadn't sold in return for a donation to charity. She phoned me the next day and I left London with bags and bags of amazing clothes. The shop in South Cerney opened with those as the core of our stock. A few years later, we met again and she asked me to help her put on the Couture Car Boot Sale in central London to raise money for Action on Addiction: we ended up making a five figure sum for the charity."

Linda spends her days collecting clothes from London and the south of England and then preparing them for re-sale in the shop. She clearly loves Cirencester and the Cotswolds generally, which she calls "an enclave of loveliness".

Following a fantastic lunch at one of Linda's regular haunts, Made by Bob, in Cirencester's Corn Hall, we make our way to her recently refurbished home. The quaint exterior of the traditional Cotswold cottage belies the contemporary interior which she has designed: a palette of muted colours, clean lines and stand-out furniture give it a fresh, 'Danish' feel. The shelves are peppered with photographs of her two boys whom she refers to as her "greatest achievement".

As we go into the garden, Linda smiles when she hears the chattering children leaving the school opposite. "I think I have a really nice, balanced life. In my life now, I feel so blessed with everything," she says. She then starts filling her bucket from the garden standpipe!

**Encore, Cirencester:**01285 885223 / GL7 2AE / encore-cirencester.co.uk

Encore is a contemporary designer clothes agency based in Black Jack Street, Cirencester. The shop is open 10am-5pm, Monday to Saturday. Consignments of ladies' and mens' clothing and accessories are accepted on Mondays and Fridays by prior appointment. Consigned goods must be in excellent condition and ideally no more than five years old; all sizes are welcome.