



photo is enough to inspire me to immortalise someone's beloved pet forever. I am still trying to find time to create my own bear in memory of my nine-year-old Rottweiler I lost a couple of years ago.

"I have a background in art and dressmaking. As a child I was always drawing and sculpting animals - I have loved animals from as far back as I can remember. My mother is a dressmaker and she taught me how to sew as a teenager. I dabbled in making bears back then for myself and friends, but basic ones, nothing like the artist bears that are available now.

"I have always loved plush toys, bears, dogs, rabbits, and had a huge collection as a child. As I grew up - that's debatable! - I reluctantly gave them away as that was the right thing to do at the time.

"I was drawn into the world of teddy bears when I discovered that adults could actually collect bears without being looked upon as a 'freak'. I started off with manufactured bears, the major brands such as Steiff, Hermann and Russ, until I discovered artist bears. I was completely converted by these individual hand-made bears with loads of personality and decided to give it a go myself."

Kim started making her first artist bears in 2003 and has

been creating her own range of Russell Bears since 2004. She attended a few bear workshops to learn the basics of putting a bear together, and different techniques of bear making, then added her own interpretation of each technique and applied it to her own style of artist bears. Pattern drafting and sewing in the past was a great help in creating her designs and now she is forever thinking of new ways to help her bears evolve so that she doesn't get bored with the same style.

Eventually she would love bear making to become her full-time occupation but at the moment it has to be part-time due to other commitments - she works part-time in her husband's family transport business, handling the paperwork, finance, data entry, banking and day-to-day administration. Every spare moment is devoted to the bears, however.

"Once I'm in the 'zone' with no interruptions, there is no stopping me," she says. "Sometimes I will work from the moment I get out of bed until it's time to go back to bed."

Kim works mainly in mohair, alpaca, ultra-suede, leather and needle-felting, but has just started using recycled fur coats and occasionally uses whatever other materials inspire her at the time. Virtually all the Russell Bears are one-of-a-kind, as she likes all her creations to be truly individual.

Above:
Fergus (adopted)