



When a member of the royal family wears one of your pieces, people take notice. But for the founder of Holland Cooper, this is simply the start. Growth is ‘an obsession’, she tells **Jennifer Hahn**

You probably wouldn’t know it just from looking at her. But Jade Holland Cooper is a bit of an adrenaline junkie. Only, she’s not the type who goes skydiving or bungee jumping. Instead, Jade (above) gets her kicks from seeing just how far she can grow her eponymous company. “It’s a natural obsession for me,” she says. “Even if I didn’t really want to run the business any more, I don’t think I’d be able to stop. It’s an addiction.”

And so far, it seems there is no limit to Holland Cooper’s growth. In 16 years, the business has gone from a two-metre stall at the Badminton Horse Trials in Gloucestershire, from which Jade sold tweed miniskirts, to a firm turning over £40 million whose pieces have been worn by the Princess of Wales. With Holland Cooper also an official fashion partner of the Cheltenham Festival this

year, the brand has set quite the pace. And it all started with an egg. Or perhaps a chicken, depending on how you look at it. Growing up, Jade spent most of her time on her family’s farm in Suffolk, riding horses and running an egg-selling business, after being gifted some hens. “I took it very seriously,” she remembers. “I worked out that the children didn’t have the money, so I had to target adults. My teachers probably ended up with way more eggs than they needed.” However, the way Jade would actually channel her entrepreneurial spirit was less immediately clear – she turned down the chance to study at London College of Fashion in favour of joining the Royal Agricultural College. In the end, she dropped out of her equestrian and farming degree in her second year to kick-start her self-titled business. She was 21. “At the time, I suppose it was quite controversial to turn down London College of Fashion. But I’m thankful for that decision every day because I would never have seen this gap in the market if I hadn’t.”

The gap in question was for modern countrywear that Jade and friends could use for events such as Cheltenham, but that would look equally at home in the closet of, say, Carrie Bradshaw. “I just couldn’t find anything that was tweedy but fashionable,” she says. “It was all badly cut. We were all wearing the same coat. And I thought, ‘Well, I can’t find anything to wear so I’m sure other people are having the same problem.’” Holland Cooper’s first garments were made using leftover fabric given to Jade

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by her mother, fashion designer Miranda Holland – who has created clothes for the likes of Elton John – and with help from one of her mother’s former seamstresses. Today, however, it sells (literally) a thousand different products – from menswear and riding gloves to tiny baby wellies – supporting the livelihoods of more than 100 employees, mostly women. “I employ a lot of mothers and women in their third phase of life – women who’ve had children and come out the other side,” says Jade, who has two young children (and shares two other businesses) with her husband, Julian Dunkerton, co-founder of British label Superdry. Holland Cooper has also grown to be one of the biggest

buyers of Scottish tweed and wool in the UK, where all of the brand’s tailoring is completed. “It became a real passion of mine to produce all of our tailored clothing within the UK,” says Jade. “I was told that it wouldn’t be possible. But I’ve taken factories from doing just five jackets a week with us to doing about 650.” The result is updated heritage pieces such as the full-length tartan trench coat worn by the Princess of Wales during the royal tour of Scotland in 2021. “She is pretty much the only person in the world you can’t pay to wear something,” says Jade. “Kate has the luxury to choose whoever she would like to wear, so that makes it even more special for me. It was probably the best moment of my career.” So how do you top that? Well, it seems as if Jade will stop at nothing short of world domination. Holland Cooper’s new 70,000 sq ft headquarters are currently under construction in Cheltenham and it recently launched a dedicated website for the US market. Australia and New Zealand will likely be next, with the aim of reaching a cool £100 million turnover in the next three years. “I am averse to standing still,” says Jade with a smile. “It’s not a space I enjoy or want to be in.”



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