

News Release

30 October 2007

King-Sized Blanket's Royal Price

Skilled weavers and finishers at a traditional Leeds woollen manufacturer are wondering if they're now producing the world's most expensive blanket. The king-sized John Atkinson brand pure cashmere bed-mate emerging from Hainsworths Farsley mill is now crossing the counter at Harrods at a hefty £2,300 retail. And there's no shortage of customers in cash-rich Britain.

But according to managing director Tom Hainsworth, UK retail sales are only the tip of the iceberg for the firm's luxury blankets that also come in Merino and Pure New Wool.

"Stores such as Harrods and John Lewis provide a useful shop window for our luxury range, but they perform really strongly in the export trade and are found in royal palaces, leading hotels and on luxury yachts," he says.

"Whether we are contributing to record retail prices I'm not sure, but the blankets leave the mill at no-where near the eventual selling price and, of course, we do have a range of blankets available at much more affordable prices."

Lower down the blanket coverage scale, Tom, the eighth generation Hainsworth to run the family firm, is equally proud of the long-standing relationship with the Hudson Bay Company for the supply of the distinctive "Point Blankets."

Luxury blankets are just one example of the fine craftsmanship and ingenuity of what is probably Britain's last remaining truly vertical woollen manufacturer. The company clothed Wellington's troops at Waterloo and still provides the Trooping of the Colour scarlet ceremonial cloth. Hainsworths Interiors has gained the Royal Warrant for supplying furnishing fabrics to Windsor Castle and Bill Gates is another home-maker customer.

By collaborating with Du Pont to blend new wonder materials such as Kevlar™ and Nomex™, Hainsworths has also become a leader in the development of heat and flame-resistant fabrics, gaining an Innovation accolade in the Queen's Award for Enterprise. The co-operation has resulted in lightweight fabrics combining comfort with maximum protection for firefighters, Red Arrows pilots, security forces and others in hazardous occupations at home and abroad.

China is presenting a rapid growth market for the special Hainsworths felt used to clothe Steinway piano hammer, while expert shots insist on cartridges featuring Hainsworths wadding, which carry a special lubricant to clean the barrel as the shot expels.

Ian Williams, Executive Director of Leeds Chamber of Commerce and Industry said: "Hainsworths has survived and prospered, carrying out every process, from raw wool to a fantastic range of finished cloths. They have constantly explored new markets and developed new product solutions – proof that diversification and continuous innovation is key to success in manufacturing.

Ends

