**Emma Heathcote-James**

**Little Soap Company**

**Personal/Business Biography:**

*In 2008 a high flying media executive left the city to start a new life in the Cotswold countryside which she’d made her home but not been there to enjoy. Little did she know that a chance encounter at the village fete would be the catalyst which led to her founding the multi award winning Little Soap Company*.

Emma Heathcote-James is a fireball of energy. A mix of high heels, essential oils, eco warrior and wellies interlaced with running and yoga to keep her sane. The Little Soap Company’s roller coaster journey includes accolades of being the first company to be taken on by Waitrose within its first year of trading to up-scaling from making 350 handmade bars of soap a day to 40,000 at a factory!

Upscaling in 2012, the first bar of soap rolled off the production line to hit the supermarket shelves. It quickly became Waitrose’s best selling bar soap as it enabled customers for the first time to buy organic soap, at an affordable price, as part of their regular weekly shop in a UK supermarket. Until this time there was no organic bars on the shelves.

Emma’s grandmother always used soap - proper pure soap - the sort that doesn’t make your skin tight and lasts ages in the dish. She had stashes of the stuff, bought mostly from French markets stockpiled in their house, so it was without question she grew up always using proper soap – liquid soaps hit the market but totally bypassed them as a family. It was only after Gran died, and the stash was fast dwindling that Emma came to realize how hard it was to buy chemical free soap in the UK. She couldn't understand why you couldn't go to a supermarket and pick up an honest, synthetic free - let alone organic - brand of soap... it seemed totally bizarre.

To her, the skin care market is so akin to the food industry – it’s about provenance and that less is more. Just as Jamie Oliver proved you only need a handful of ingredients to make a healthy fast food supper, the same is true with soap. We are awash with chemicals in our day to day lives and more and more people are choosing to move away from this.  As more people are developing allergies and intolerances, never has the need for pure synthetic-free soap been more relevant.

Emma entered the market offering the consumer choice – she believed pure soap shouldn't be only available in specialist shops and online, and if made in volume needn’t retail at ridiculous prices either. She wanted pure, natural soap to be easily accessible at high street supermarkets and to become part of everyone’s weekly supermarket sweep.

It has been a long and hard journey from hand-making on the Aga and selling in sub-zero degrees at local farmers markets to almost 4 years on being able to upscale production to a factory and finally line the UK supermarkets shelves as the first organic soap bar.

Educating the general public and supermarket buyers about the difference between a synthetic ‘soap’ or ‘beauty bar’ versus pure, naturally moisturizing soap is an ongoing process. But with contracts now supplying *Waitrose, Booths, Sainsbury, Boots* and *Tesco* and being taken on by more and more outlets, the company is thriving.