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| MILK | Unpasteurised sheeps milk |
| RENNET | Traditional animal rennet |
| MADE BY | Martin Gott |
| REGION | Holker Farm Dairy on the Holker Estate, Cumbria |
| FLAVOUR & TEXTURE | The flavours are savoury, salty and meaty - sometimes even reminiscent of smoked ham. The textures can vary quite a bit from quite a crumbly interior with moist breakdown under the rind to smoother and creamier all the way through |

St James is named after the late James Aldridge who was a cheesemaker, maturer, champion of farmhouse cheesemakers and unpasteurised cheese and friend of the Gotts. When Martin was 16, his father bought a flock of ewes. The family then were too busy to really work out what to do with their milk and invited James Aldridge up to help make cheese. Martin was encouraged to join in. 2 years later at Manchester Farmers Market, Martin met Graham Kirkham; a meeting that would eventually lead to an 18-month apprenticeship.

After learning to make Lancashire at Kirkhams, Martin and his partner Nicola moved to Somerset to milk goats with Mary Holbrook at Sleigh Farm. While there, they had the opportunity to keep their own sheep and Martin began to experiment with making cheese. One early attempt was a fresh, one-day-curd Lancashire, which he sold at Bath Farmers Market. He gave one to Randolph who showed it to Bill Oglethorpe our cheese maturer at the time and an advocate of all things washed-rind. The inevitable happened and Bill began to rind-wash them with intriguing results.

From Somerset, Martin and Nicola moved to a small, beautiful farm on the Holker Estate whose lands overlooks Morecombe Bay

with the Lake District behind it. After a year building the dairy and making cheese, disaster struck when they discovered their entire flock had a retrovirus called maedi visna for which there is no cure or vaccine, and had to be put down. This was heartbreaking for Martin and Nicola who had bottle-fed many of the sheep as lambs. Martin visited some producers in the Auvergne where the Lacaune breed of sheep is native and returning home, he continued to make cheese with milk from a neighbouring farmer. He decided to replace his flock from France, where maedi visna is routinely tested for and buy Lacaunes, which are the breed whose milk is used to make Roquefort.

It took a year before the sheep were ready to milk but St James has made with Holker's own milk for about 2 years. With the challenges of a new dairy, replacing their flock and still continuing to make cheese, you could forgive Martin and Nicola for becoming despondent, but both are made of stronger stuff. Although one of the youngest cheesemakers we buy from, Martin is indomitable capacity to take in knowledge and face challenging situations head on. Nicola no less so. Alongside all the challenges they've faced so far, they also found time to breed Labrador puppies and chickens as well as raising their son Daniel and daughter Zara.

