

MADE IN THE VALLEYS AGM
CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT OCTOBER 2016

I'll start by saying thank you for all the support both for me and the committee from everyone who has got involved this past year so far. This is my first report and AGM as Chair, so please, if I miss anything or anyone out do say. The committee has undergone a few changes over the last year and we have new members graciously taking on roles and it has to be said, excelling themselves. Our previous Chair, Melanie De'Castro Pugh, a founding member with Melissa Warren back at the Heritage park has stepped down from the position and I have tentatively stepped into her bright purple shin kicking shoes as Chair. Also, Membership committee member and missed friend, Helen Silvers, who has moved to Bristol, her homeland, has been replaced by the exceptionally able, Karen O'shea, fairly new to Made in the valleys let alone the committee, she has already made the position her own and it's our great delight to have membership now in her capable hands. We, the committee made a request for more members and that has surely happened, and help from our members when requested is always gratefully received, though more is always needed, even if it is one discreet task, offering lifts to other member to events, letting relevant members know if they think something may be of use to the others in the group. When members pull together there is no end to what we can achieve for each other, ourselves and the Valleys that we make our home!

Since our last Exhibition, which was so well received and as many of you know, was featured on S4C's 'Pobl Y Rhondda' which aired earlier this year, which I know got a lot of people excited and interested in Made in The Valleys, as they came eagerly seeking out our exhibition when the show aired, sadly 4 months after the exhibition ended. But I let them know, we are back this November, and we promise to be bigger and better than ever! Sion is currently filming series 2 and has already done some shots here at the gallery, only last week in fact, and plans to do another series again independent of 'Pobl Y Rhondda' based on artists and crafts people of the rhondda valleys, his producer Emyr was very eager that we should be on board, how could I refuse?

We have many plans to make **so** much more of what we, what you! have to offer by your craft being based here in such a beautiful and, lets face it, understated part of the world! The Welsh are not known for bragging, oh yes, we'll defend our honour when it comes to supporting any sports event involving a certain neighbouring nation, ahem. But we need to learn to shout proudly about our great achievements and show off what wonders we have on offer. In Ireland and Scotland, you cannot throw a stone without hitting a brown sign or a well marketed billboard boasting the jewels of their land and its people, so why not do the same? True, we struggle to find the support of certain pockets of power, or the talk is there but tends to fail when it comes to action, so we need to do this ourselves, we need to make the effort.

Now, don't be put off by my plans to single handedly save Wales! We can do this in small steps, and we have an idea of how we can get started, through the funds raised by membership fees, we can market Made in The Valleys better and get noticed, bringing people to us! Made in The Valleys wants to create an 'Open Doors' event, an Art Trail up the valley, linking us all venue to venue, we want to create a map and in the cases for those who find it impossible to open their own doors, either due to location or otherwise, we can team members up in certain areas to utilise a single space. Made in The Valleys secretary, Melissa, has been in talks with a local organisation to preserve and breathe new life into the forgotten churches of the valleys, the potential from us working together could be fantastic! Melissa has visions of trapezes and other fantastic spectacles, we won't be overlooked thats for sure!

These are just some of the ways we plan to help you, our members, and the place we live and work. But we have also now put together a pack of benefits to members

so you can all feel our support is not just dreams and promises, but practical things too. We have arranged some 'perks', if you will, to being a member.

Members can benefit from the following

Trade price bespoke framing, here at Giles Gallery.

Reduced prices on product merchandise (such as images onto mugs, coasters or shirts and bags) and product photography for a professional look in online shops.

This has kindly been offered to member from The Studio, Pontyclun, when mentioning Made in The Valleys membership.

Significantly reduced prices on PAT testing, essential for those of us with business insurance for demonstrating and teaching, it can add up.

Then there is the confidence that our customers can feel in our businesses by being part of an umbrella organisation, such as Made in the Valleys, the pride we have in our makers, the quality of them and their work, our endorsement as a brand to push Crafts and Art of the Welsh Valleys away from home made knick knacks, to skilfully hand made craftsmanship, functional or beautiful, but made with skill and to the highest standards.

I'd like to end by thanking the committee for all their volunteered hard work, for giving up so much of their own time to help make Made in The Valleys an ever growing success, and to the members who, without whom, there'd be nothing worth fighting for. We all make in the Valleys, a lot of us were indeed 'made' in the Valleys. Let's continue to make us and it great again.

Beth Giles