

| GREFFTWR LLŶN |

| LLŶN ARTISAN |

AVRIL BTHELL

COOL JEWELLERY, WARM HEART | GEMWAITH CŴL, CALON GYNNES

- WORDS BY GEIRIAU GAN DEBS WILLIAMS -



At 70, most of us are thinking about slowing down and taking it easy, but Abersoch jewellery designer and silversmith Avril Bethell used her retirement to learn new skills and turn a hobby into a business.

I first encountered Avril at Criccieth Food Slam. She's one of those people that you instantly gel with: warm, chatty, interesting and kind, she reminds me of my late grandmother, who I counted among my closest friends. Any time spent in Avril's company leaves one feeling nurtured and loved, somehow.

What's more, Avril is a jewellery designer and silversmith of considerable talent. Her work is exquisite. Highly original, coolly contemporary, Avril's silverwork is artistic but extremely wearable. No wonder her Criccieth stall was so busy.

Erbyn cyrraedd 70 oed, mae'r rhan fwyaf ohonom yn meddwl am arafu ac ymlacio ryw 'chydig, ond mae'r dylunydd gemwaith a gof arian Avril Bethell o Abersoch yn defnyddio'i hymddeoliad i ddysgu sgiliau newydd a throi ei hobi'n fusnes.

Deuthum ar draws Avril gyntaf yn Slam Fwyd Criccieth. Mae hi'n un o'r bobl hynny sy'n hawdd cynhesu atyn nhw: ryw agosrwydd yn perthyn iddi, llawn sgwrs, yn ddiddorol ac yn glên, mae hi'n fy atgoffa o fy niweddar nain, dynes roeddwn i'n ei chyfri'n un o ffy ffrindiau pennaf. Mae gan Avril ryw naws ofalgar a llawn cariad yn perthyn iddi, ac rydw i'n ei deimlo bob tro y bydda i yn ei chwmni.

Mae Avril hefyd yn ddylunydd gemwaith a gof arian talentog dros ben. Mae ei gwaith yn rhagorol. Yn hollol wreiddiol, ac yn cwl o gyfoes, mae gwaith arian Avril yn greffus ond hynod o hawdd i'w wisgo. Does



**Above and opposite page: Much of Avril's pieces are inspired by the beautiful Llŷn landscape
Right: Avril on her stall at a local craft fair**

A few weeks later I'm interviewing Avril, and it's like chatting to an old friend.

First things first, I'm keen to hear how a 70-year-old lady finds herself starting a silversmithing business. What's the journey that brought her to this point?

"I started coming to Abersoch when I was four," Avril says. "Every summer my parents would bring me here on holiday. When I was 15 I met my husband here, and after we married we bought a caravan and carried on coming here with our four children for holidays.

"Meanwhile I took up hairdressing as a career, and had my own salon in Sale for fifteen years," she continues. "Then I spent another fifteen years as a construction plant manager in my husband's business.

"And after that, I owned and managed a business centre - you know, serviced offices, that kind of thing. So yes, I've had quite a varied career! "Then we decided to come back to Abersoch. My husband retired before me and I was coming down to stay with him at weekends, then driving back to Knutsford on Sunday nights. It was exhausting, so after two years I sold my business and joined him." How did the silversmithing come about?

"After retiring I went to a sculpture class at Felin Uchaf - my great grandfather was a famous sculptor in Glasgow, so I thought I'd have a go at that - but I realised I didn't have any of his talent!

"So instead I started going to an art group at Sarn and met Hannah who was doing courses on silverwork. I went for a two-day course, and ended up going one evening a week for 2-3 years. One day

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MAE GWAITH ARIAN AVRIL YN CREFFTUS OND
HYNOD O HAWDD I'W WISCO.

dim rhyfedd bod ei stondin yng Nghricieth mor brysur.

Ychydig wythnosau'n hwyrach, dyma fi'n cyfnewid Avril, ac mae'n teimlo fel sgwrio efo hen ffrind.

I ddechrau, rydw i'n awyddus i glywed sut mae dynes 70 oed yn dod i ddechrau busnes gemwaith arian. Beth yw'r siwrne sydd wedi'i harwain i'r fan hon?

"Dechreuais ddod i Abersoch pan oeddwn i'n bedair oed," meddai Avril. "Bob haf byddai fy rhieni yn dod â fi yma ar wyliau. Pan oeddwn i'n 15, fe wnes i gyfarfod fy ngŵr yma, ac wedi i ni briodi, fe wnaethon ni brynu carafan a pharhau i ddod yma ar ein gwyliau gyda'n pedwar o blant.

"Yn y cyfamser, roeddwn i'n dilyn gyrfa yn trin gwallt, ac roedd gen i fy salon fy hun yn Sale am bymtheg blynedd," meddai. "Wedyn, fe dreuliais bymtheg mlynedd arall fel rheolwr safle ym musnes fy ngŵr.

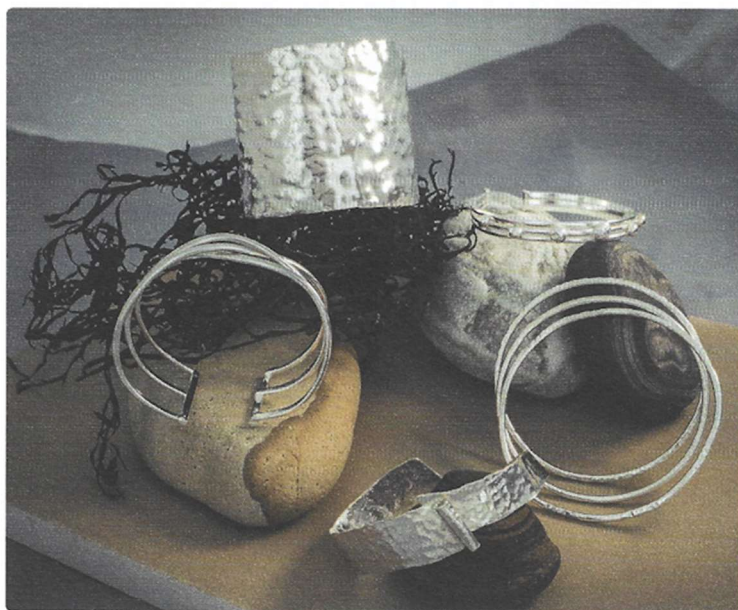
"Ar ôl hynny, roeddwn i'n berchennog ac yn rheolwr canolfan fusnes - swyddfeydd efo gwasanaeth, y math yna o beth, wyddoch chi. Felly do, rydw i wedi cael gyrfa reit amrywiol!

"Wedyn, fe wnaethon ni benderfynu dychwelyd i Abersoch. Fe wnaeth fy ngŵr ymddeol o fy mlaen i, ac roeddwn i'n dod i aros yma efo fo ar y penwythnosau, a gyrru'n ôl i Knutsford ar nosweithiau Sul. Roeddwn i'n blino'n lân, felly ar ôl dwy flynedd, fe werthais i fy musnes a dod yma ato."

Felly, beth wnaeth i chi fynd yn gof arian?

"Ar ôl ymddeol, es i i ddosbarth cerflunio yn Felin Uchaf - roedd fy hen daid yn gerflunydd enwog yn Glasgow, felly meddylliais y byddwn i'n rhoi cynnig ar hynny - ond sylweddolais nad oes gen i ddiferyn o'i dalent!





WHEREVER I GO
LOCALLY I SEE PEOPLE
WEARING MY PIECES,
WHICH IS A BIG
COMPLIMENT

LLE BYNNAG Y BYDDA
I'N MYND YN LLEOL,
RYDW I'N GWELD
POBL YN GWISGO
FY NGEMWAITH,
SY'N GRYN DIPYN O
GANMOLIAETH

I said to Hannah, 'I'll have to buy all the tools so I can make jewellery whenever I want to' - I'd found my niche, and I loved it. In those days, my three girls were always adorned in silver jewellery!"

After making prizes for her golf club, where she was Lady Captain, Avril realised she was onto something and turned her hobby into a business. "The prizes were so well received I thought I could make money selling a few!"

Avril works from a spare bedroom at home. "It's an inspirational setting," she says. "The room overlooks the garden and has French windows. I get a lot of inspiration from nature, from walking on the beach, and that's the thing about Llŷn - it's so inspirational. You only have to look at things like seaweed to be inspired."

Although Avril mainly works in silver ("I don't work in gold because if I made a mess I'd be upset!") she often incorporates gemstones, and recently she's been using freshwater pearls. She goes to the Spring Fair at the NEC every year to pick up ideas and materials. "I'm stuck out here working on my own most of the time, which I enjoy," she says, "but it's good to go somewhere like that occasionally and refresh yourself."

As a small business owner who works from home, I understand exactly what Avril means. You get used to your own company and sometimes being around other people is hard work.

"I like the solitude of getting stuck in and designing and making, being in my own little

"Felly, fe wnes i ddechrau mynd i grŵp celf yn Sarn, a chwrdd â Hannah, oedd yn gwneud cyrsiau gwaith arian. Es i ar gwrs deuddydd, ac mi fues i'n mynd un noson yr wythnos am 2-3 mlynedd. Un diwrnod, dyma fi'n dweud wrth Hannah, 'Bydd rhaid i mi brynu'r tŵls i gyd fel y galla i wneud gemwaith pryd bynnag rydw i eisiau' - roeddwn i wedi ffeindio fy nghreffft, ac roeddwn i wrth fy modd. Yn y dyddiau hynny, roedd fy nhair merch wastad yn gwisgo gemwaith arian!"

Ar ôl gwneud gwobrau i'w chlwb golff, lle'r oedd hi'n Gaptan y Merched, sylweddolodd Avril ei bod ar drywydd rhywbeth gwerth ei gael, a throdd ei hobi yn fusnes. "Cafodd y gwobrau'r fath ganmoliaeth, fe wnes i feddwl y gallwn i wneud pres yn gwerthu ambell un!"

Mae Avril yn gweithio o lofft sbâr yn ei chartref. "Mae'n le ysbrydoledig i weithio," meddai. "Mae'r 'stafell yn edrych allan dros yr ardd, ac mae gen i ddrysau gwydr. Rydw i'n cael llawer o fy ysbrydoliaeth o fyd natur, o gerdded ar y traeth, a dyna'r peth am Wlad Llŷn - mae'n le mor ysbrydoledig. Mae hyd yn oed gwymon y môr yn fy ysbrydoli."

Er mai mewn arian mae Avril yn gweithio'n bennaf ("Dydw i ddim yn gweithio mewn aur, achos mi faswn i'n ypset 'taswn i'n gwneud llanast!"), mae hi'n aml yn cynnwys gemau, ac yn ddiweddar, mae wedi bod yn defnyddio perlau dŵr croyw. Mae hi'n mynd i'r Ffair Wanyrn yn yr NEC bob blwyddyn i gasglu syniadau a deunyddiau. "Dyma fi'n fan hyn yn gweithio ar fy mhen fy hun y rhan fwyaf o'r amser, ac rydw i'n mwynhau hynny," meddai, "ond mae'n dda mynd i rywle fel'nau weithiau, i adnewyddu'r cysylltiad."

Fel perchennog busnes bach sy'n gweithio o gartref, rydw i'n deall yn union beth sydd gan Avril dan sylw.



Above: Avril enjoys the social aspect of craft fairs where she gets to meet people and chat about her work. Below and left: Avril's daily walks on Abersoch beach are a great source of inspirations for her collections

zone, from when you design it to when it turns into something beautiful," Avril says. "But I do enjoy the craft fairs, getting out to meet people. It's double sided; once you're at a fair and get busy chatting it's a very nice way of life. I've always had 'chatty' jobs - hairdressing, managing the offices - these are very social occupations, but now I'm in my own little space, watching the birds, with the dogs watching me work, and I love it."

What I love most about Avril's jewellery is the purity and simplicity of the designs. They're not overly fussy, but the craftsmanship is beautiful. What does Avril think sets her apart from other designers?

"I think my jewellery is very contemporary and wearable," she says. "You can get up in the morning and put it on and be dressed for both the day and the evening. So much of what we buy these days ends up sitting in a drawer, but wherever I go locally I see people wearing my pieces, which is a big compliment." She continues: "My designs are very natural, unforced. I think they're popular because they're inspired by Llŷn, and that resonates with people who cherish the area. And my pieces make lovely presents. You can buy them for as little as £30; elsewhere you'd buy something not nearly as nice for that amount, so people remember me if they want to give a nice gift."

Avril's most popular pieces at present include the bee pendants and bracelets she's been making to help raise money for the families of the Manchester Arena bombing victims. "One of my daughters asked me to make her a bangle with a bee charm," Avril says. "She posted it to Facebook and loads of

Mae rhywun yn arfer efo'i gwmpeini ei hun, ac weithiau mae bod o gwmpas pobl eraill yn waith caled.

"Rydwy i'n hoffi bod ar ben fy hun a mynd ati i ddylunio a chreu, bod yn fy myd bach fy hun, o'r adeg rydw i'n ei ddylunio nes mae'n troi yn rhywbeth hardd," meddai Avril. "Ond rydw i'n mwynhau'r ffeiriau crefft, mynd allan a chyfarfod pobl. Mae'n ddeublyg; unwaith rydych chi'n cyrraedd ffair a mynd ati i sgwrsio, mae'n ffordd braf iawn o fyw. Rydw i wastad wedi bod mewn swyddi sy'n golygu sgwrsio - trin gwallt, rheoli'r swyddfeydd - mae'r rhain yn swyddi cymdeithasol iawn, ond dyma fi rŵan fy lle bach fy hun, yn gwyllo'r adar, efo'r cŵn yn fy ngwyllo fi'n gweithio, ac rydw i wrth fy modd."

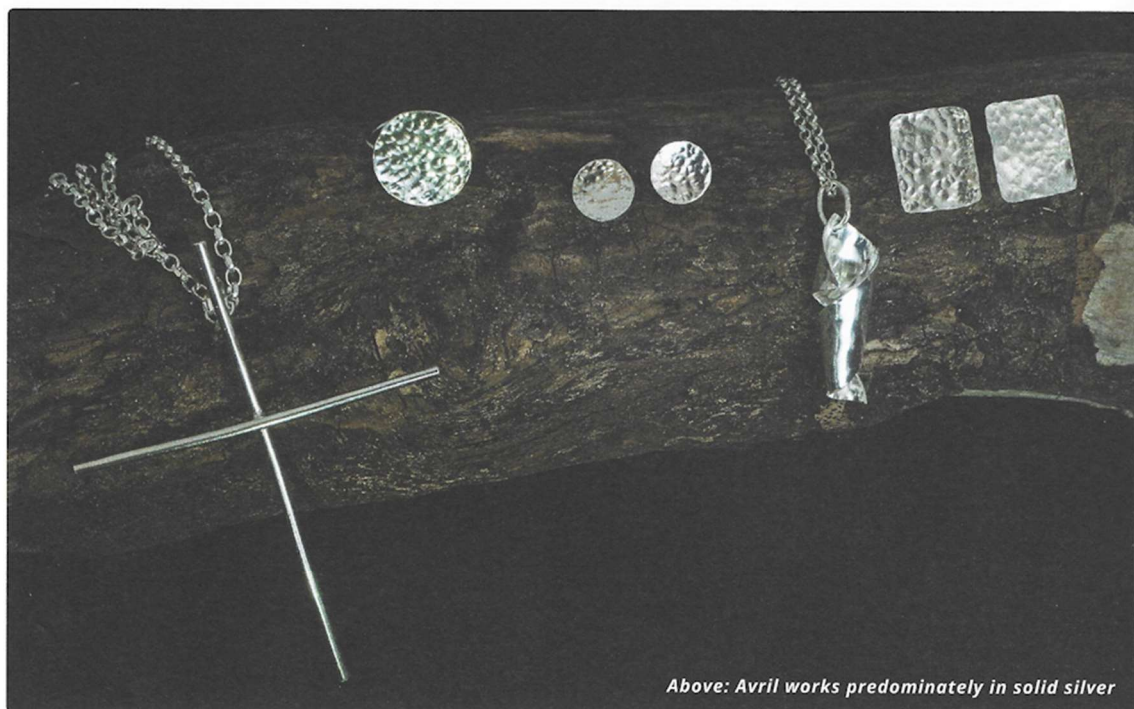
Fy hoff beth am emwaith Avril yw purdeb a symledd y dyluniadau. Dydyn nhw ddim yn ryw ffyslyd iawn, ond mae'r creffftwaith yn brydferth. Ym marn Avril, beth sy'n ei gosod hi ar wahân i ddylunwyr eraill?

"Rydwy i'n meddwl fod fy ngenwaith i'n gyfoes ac yn hawdd i'w wisgo," meddai. "Mi fedrwyd chi godi yn y bore a'i wisgo, ac mae'n gweddu i'r dydd ac i gyda'r nos. Mae cymaint o'r hyn rydyn ni'n ei brynu'r dyddiau yma'n eistedd mewn drôr, ond lle bynnag y bydda i'n mynd yn lleol, rydw i'n gweld pobl yn gwisgo fy ngenwaith, sy'n gryn dipyn o ganmoliaeth."

Meddai: "Mae fy nyluniadau'n naturiol, yn ddigymell. Rydw i'n meddwl mai'r rheswm eu bod yn boblogaidd yw eu bod wedi'u hysbrydoli gan Llŷn, ac mae hynny'n taro deuddeg i bobl sy'n caru'r ardal. Ac mae fy ngwaith yn gwneud anrhegion hyfryd. Gallwch brynu rhai am gyn lleied â £30; byddech chi'n cael rhywbeth ddim hanner cystal am y pris yna o rywle arall, felly mae pobl yn cofio amdana i os ydyn nhw'n chwilio am anrheg neis."

Mae darnau mwyaf poblogaidd Avril ar hyn o bryd yn cynnwys crogdlysau a breichledi gwenyn y mae hi wedi bod yn eu gwneud i helpu i godi arian i deuluoedd dioddefwyr y bomio yn y Manchester





Above: Avril works predominately in solid silver

people wanted them – I've sold about three dozen, maybe more."

With so much experience packed into Avril's 70 years, does she have any ambitions where her craft is concerned?

"I don't have a lot of ambition now as I'm 70 and don't want to overdo things," she says. "It just evolves, which is nice because I'm not pushing at it or stressing over it. The only time it gets a bit stressful is when I have too much going on at once – like when I'm preparing for an event and have visitors staying at the same time. But I rope them into helping, sometimes... one visitor helped me by cutting out the cards for the Manchester bees, which was nice!"

It seems fitting that someone who's treated her life as a gift to be cherished – an opportunity to pack in as much as possible – is spending part of her 'retirement' helping to ease the pain of loved ones of those who've been robbed of that gift. But then, that's Avril all over; she may work in silver, but her heart is most definitely made of gold.

You can buy Avril's jewellery from her website: www.jadore-silver.co.uk. Avril's Manchester bees are available at Boudicca in Abersoch. •

Arena. "Gofynnodd un o fy merched i mi wneud breichled iddi efo gwenyn arno," meddai Avril. "Dyma hi'n ei rannu ar Facebook ac roedd nifer fawr o bobl eisiau un – rydw i wedi gwerthu rhyw dri dwsin neu fwy."

Gyda'r holl brofiad mae hi wedi'i ennyn yn ei bywyd, oes ganddi unrhyw uchelgeisiau o ran ei chrefft?

"Does gen i ddim llawer o uchelgaïs bellach, gan 'mod i'n 70 a dydw i ddim eisiau'i gornwneud hi," meddai. "Mae'n esblygu, sy'n neis gan nad ydw i'n gwrthio nac yn teimlo straen am y peth. Yr unig adeg mae'n mynd braidd yn straenus ydi pan mae gen i ormod yn digwydd ar unwaith – os rydw i'n paratoi am ddigwyddiad ac mae'n ymwelwyr yma r'un pryd. Ond mi fydda i'n eu corlannu nhw a'u cael nhw i fy helpu weithiau ... gwnaeth un ymwelydd fy helpu drwy dorri'r cardiau ar gyfer gwenyn Manceinion. Roedd hynny'n neis!"

Mae'n addas rywsut bod rhywun sydd wedi trin ei bywyd fel rhodd i'w drysori – cyfle i wneud gymaint â phosibl – yn treulio rhan o'i 'hymddeoliad' yn helpu i leddfu poen teuluoedd rhai sydd wedi colli eu bywydau mor ifanc. Ond dyna Avril i chi, efallai mai mewn arian mae hi'n gweithio, ond mae ganddi galon aur.

Gallwch brynu gemwaith Avril o'i gwefan: www.jadore-silver.co.uk. Mae Gwenyn Manceinion Avril ar gael yn Boudicca yn Abersoch. •

We Love Jewellery | We Love J'adore Silver | We Love Creativity | Caru Gofannu Arian | We Love Avril Bethell