



# makers guild in wales

30 years of making memories

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# Introduction

The Makers Guild in Wales is an Independent Craft and Applied Art Organisation. Originally set up as a Cardiff craft co-operative in 1984, we are now celebrating our 30th anniversary while still retaining our original community ethos – all craftmakers volunteer their time to help in the gallery, with at least one coming in each day to demonstrate and talk to visitors.

The Guild has expanded over the years so that we now have a membership of 78 Wales-based maker-members. This gives the people of Wales an opportunity to see exhibitions of work by some of the very best craftmakers.

Any craftmaker living and working in Wales can apply to become a member. Craftmakers are selected by means of artistic quality alone, meaning that only the very best can show their work. In June 2012 the Guild was used as an exemplar study into co-operative consortia by the Wales Co-operative Centre.

As part of our 30th anniversary celebrations, we are producing a very special publication of members' memories and recollections of their time with the Guild, from the very first pioneers through to our talented new blood. The special book will be packed with stories from members as well as giving them an opportunity to showcase their work in print.

Before we embark on this exciting venture, we wanted to publish a short taster book to present a quick glimpse of our past, a selection of the sort of stories we are looking for in the main book and some of the amazing work our members have produced over the years.

So, for all those MGW members reading this, we want your memories and pictures of your work.

And for all those visitors to Craft in the Bay, the Guild's stunning HQ, here's a quick view of what we do. We value your support and welcome you at all our events and shows.



the makers guild  
in wales

craft in the bay

urdd gwneuthurwyr  
cymru

crefft yn y bae



**Molly Curly, who led the Makers Guild into its first permanent premises at the Old Library, Cardiff**



# We want you!

be part of a wonderful memoir

*Molly Curley wants your memories of the Makers Guild in Wales*

This is just a tiny 'taster' for the book we are hoping to produce very soon, all about our astonishing history, over the last 30 years.

Already we have received some superb contributions of members' memoirs, but we really want every one of the members of MGW to be included, together with photographs of their work.

So, don't be the only member missing from what is shaping up to be an amazing publication charting the history of the Makers Guild in Wales and showcasing our members' brilliant work.

Have a riffle through your memories - even recent ones - especially from newer members, Friends of the Guild, Trustees, Staff, and people who have helped in so many ways. Then send those thoughts to us very soon so that our wonderful designer has a chance to produce a best-seller! See the end of this booklet for details of how you can be involved.

Molly Curley

# Our story

How it all began



## *Molly Curley remembers the early days and the move into the Bay*

It all really began at a craft fair held at a big school in Cardiff, which the organisers had failed to publicise, so no one came.

About 50 stallholders spent a long day moaning to each other, but several of us decided we could do better ourselves, and arranged a meeting. The idea of a Guild was put forward and after spreading the word around amongst makers of high quality craft, the Makers Guild in Wales was formed at a meeting in February 1984, by 22 of us. Some of these founder members are still making and exhibiting at Craft in the Bay.

The important thing was to agree a constitution – none of us were ‘committee’ people, and felt our way cautiously. Conditions of membership were that work produced was of high quality in design and craftsmanship, original, and made in Wales. In the craft world, makers would sell their work at craft fairs organised by others. There was little or no quality control, resulting we feared, in the word ‘Craft’ acquiring a down-market image. So,



**One of the first Makers Guild in Wales craft fairs, held at St David's Hall 84**



**MGW members sharing skills: Mick Morgan (left) teaching on the wheel, between 1995 and 1998 and John Hobson put on regular demonstrations in the Cory's building between 1998 and 2002**

to establish a visible standard was necessary. By this time, though we had no exhibition space, many makers were keen to join MGW, so selections were held, with current members adjudicating. This led to an outcry by those who inevitably failed to meet our standards: "Who selected you?" They were right, we had invited each other. So we put ourselves up for selection by a group of external selectors – respected members of the art world. Our membership was slashed, but, shocked as we were, we carried on.

We were offered our first exhibition by the Design Centre which then prevailed in Cardiff, got write-ups in the local press, and even appeared on BBC News on TV. Selections continued and the membership grew slowly. We exhibited here and there, and

ran several successful weekend selling events in St. David's Hall. As a result, we were offered space in the now redundant 'Old Library', to open our first gallery in the heart of Cardiff. It was a daunting enterprise to run a full-time retail business, but luckily an ex-member who was no longer making for health reasons, stepped in as Manager, and we all took turns with stewarding, or administration duties, and made it work.

After six years the Old Library closed for refurbishment, and we had to find new premises. We were lucky to be offered the 'old tin shed' in Cardiff Docks (as it was then known) which had just been vacated by Techniquest. It was a 9000 sq. Ft. steel building opposite Harry Ramsdens, in its own car park but Cardiff Bay had yet to be born,





**Display of work by John Hobson and Margaret Hansford in the old Techniquest building, 1995-98**



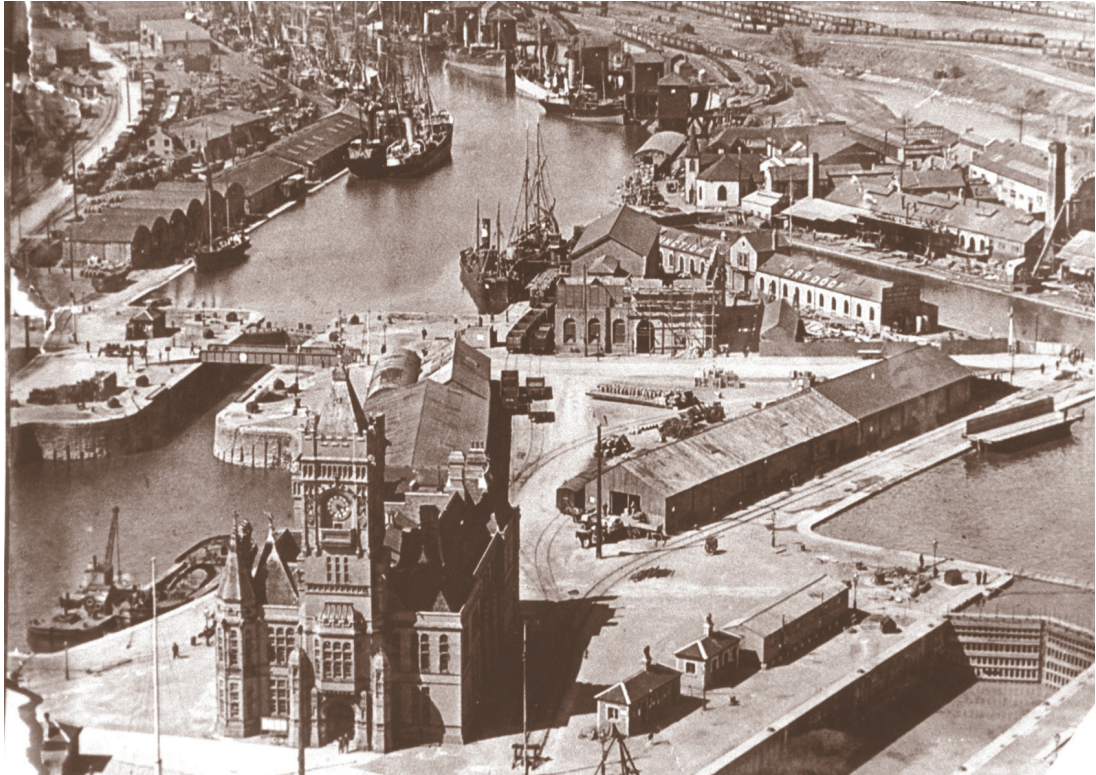
**An early, and popular, Makers Guild Craft fair, held at St David's Hall in 1984-1985**



**Display of work by Mick Morgan in the Cory's building, where shows took place between 1998-02**



**One of the ceramic birds by Esther Provis that featured in the 'Splash in the Bay' exhibition, 1995**



The Bay as it was. The Craft in the Bay home is next to the two boats at the top of the picture

and we were doubtful – not to say scared! To equip such a huge space, we were fortunate to receive a grant from the Arts Lottery Fund, and had a quantity of plinths made, fixed up fabric covered screens to cover the steel walls, put up spot lighting, and used the existing counter and coffee bar. Against all the odds we filled the building with our products, and even created and equipped two workshop spaces, one for textiles, the other for ceramics where we ran classes. About this time we became a Cooperative company, and an Educational Charity, which enable us to approach other charities for funding, and gave a reduced Rate commitment.

Three years later the building was sold to make way for the Waterside Development (it is now a car park), and again we looked around. We moved into the ground floor of a large office block consisting of three or four rooms – most unsuitable security-wise, but with the usual tenacity, daring, dedication and expertise of members, and quite a bit of luck, we survived there for four years.

We needed our own permanent premises. Cardiff Bay was developing fast, we looked at various options. The Wales Millennium Arts Centre was on the drawing board, and a small semi-derelict building stood on its intended site. This had been a dock-side transit shed where goods would be stored between ship and train, known as the 'D Shed', one of the last of its kind. It was a 'listed' building, so could not be scrapped, but had to be moved. The owners gave it to the MGW.

Cardiff Planning Department offered us a site on the Flourish, to re-erect it, suitably refurbished. They followed the difficult task of raising the funds. Again Lottery funding etc came to our rescue, and our architects created what you see today, including the purpose-built workshops and cafe. You can look up and see the original and unique steel structure supporting the roof, and outside are the original iron pillars. Around the outside are bricks inscribed with all the products (with prices) of the goods which were once stored in the building.

This may read as if things fell into place easily, and all was plain sailing for MGW. Not at all! Our success has been due wholly to the complete dedication of so many members. A brilliant series of Chairmen, Treasurer, Exhibition and Education officers, and countless helpers ready to lend a (skilled) hand when needed. And all in their own time when they should have been making to earn their living. I am so grateful to them all, and feel honoured to have been involved for the last 30 years.

Throughout this time the standards we began with have never slipped. Top priority is high quality craft. This is rigidly enforced. Regular re-selections were held for many years, some makers actually losing their membership, and now, anything not reaching our standard at the regular 'reviews' is removed from display. Members respect the rule and sometimes worry in case they are found wanting, when bringing in new work.

But look around, and see the result!



# Alison Moger



Having joined The Makers Guild in 2006 I have not only enjoyed having the privilege to sell my work in its beautiful listed building, I have also had the good fortune of meeting talented makers from all over Wales. Being part of the Guild encourages you to develop positively and to have greater awareness of your own professional development and the importance of supporting others in a positive way.

During my time with the Guild I have seen and been involved in, helping to set up many outstanding exhibitions that would have been unachievable without a remarkable team of talented people who keep the day-to-day running of the Guild looking effortless! To attain this outcome there has always been a tremendous amount of unseen hard work going on in the background, encouraged by lots of tea and good humour!

The Guild also gives you the opportunity be involved with the education workshops which is highly rewarding and good fun for the maker and those taking part – encouraging your own development and that of others alongside creating positive communication within the wider community.

I consider myself very privileged to be part of the Guild. It not only offers access to a wide network of like-minded professional people, who would be happy to offer advice and support should you need it, but it also the provides friendship and understanding from talented and experienced professionals many off whom have spent years selflessly creating it into what it has become today.









# Anne Woods

Newly arrived in Wales from Northern Ireland, where I had been teaching and exhibiting embroidery, I was delighted when some time later a high-quality art/craft event was established in our church hall. Through it I met Molly Curley and Anna Adam. When Molly, Anna and a number of others went on to form The Makers Guild in Wales I was pleased to become a founder member.

This was the best thing that could have happened as through the Guild I have met so many talented people who have been a real inspiration. During the years since, I have participated in many ways, including being Treasurer for a time in the early days and acting as part-time manager when the Guild moved into the Old Library with Lorraine Voisey as manager. I continued in this role until we became established in our wonderful gallery on the Flourish and were in a position to employ Simon as permanent manager and all the rest of our excellent staff.

I count myself very lucky to have been involved in this great organisation as it has evolved over these 30 years. Working as part of a cooperative movement has built a feeling of community among us all while striving together for the good of the organisation. May the Makers Guild in Wales continue to foster that in the years ahead.



# Do Burgess

**Pot Pic to be scanned and placed here**



When Molly asked me to contribute something about our beginnings, all I could think of was that without her we would never have begun at all, let alone continued and grown. If ever there is a candidate for beatitude in the crafts world, I will vote for St. Molly.

At the initial meeting we were a small group of crafts people and I remember meeting Anna Adam amongst others. Thanks to Molly's efforts we were able to establish ourselves in the Old Library and become a cohesive group. Being assistant manager for a day and under Lorrain's instruction, dusting became a pleasure. Handling all those lovely things, with the soulful music of Enya in the background gave me a real appreciation of the skills of others.

It taught me to be careful too. One day I put a bowl of Barbara Lock's on top of a high cupboard only to hear it crash behind. I was aghast, the cupboard had no top! I was relieved to hear Lorraine say: "Don't worry, our insurance will cover it."

The committee decided to ask members to put forward their ideas for a logo. There was a prize of £100 for the best and I gambled on winning and, went to Ieuan Rees the calligrapher and offered him the money if he would letter *The Makers Guild in Wales*.

He created this beautiful oval shape, which we used for years. My husband David has reminded me about the time when we stewarded the Guild's exhibition in Brussels. It was in a superb gallery in the city centre found for us by a good friend and Guild supporter, Audrey Wright, now sadly dead.

One day two elderly Welsh ladies came in and they were on a bus tour of Belgium. "Well, this is more like it!" I heard one say in a strong Welsh accent. "This will show them – no taste, the Belgians."

The other one said: "It reminds me of a gallery in Cardiff where a man came in and fancied buying one of the paintings priced at £100.

"He approached the young woman at the desk and said: 'How much would you take off for cash?'

'Everything except my yearings,' was the reply."

David started laughing so much he had to go outside. Living in France now I make very infrequent visits to Crafts in the Bay. I can only express my admiration for the way you have developed into such a successful professional group and I am proud to have been part of it.

# Shirley Jones

I applied for membership of the Guild in 1999, urged to do so by Kate Bosset. Initially, I was uncertain that as a maker of artist books I was a suitable candidate since, from a few visits to the Old Library, I associated it with an organisation retailing mainly ceramics, textiles and jewellery. However, a determined Kate pointed out that as a writer, printmaker and letterpress printer I offered no less than three crafts, and Kate could be very persuasive. Indeed, when I first saw her in action as the Chairperson, I thought, perhaps a century ago, she might have been one of those intrepid women explorers, who would have seen off an African lion, armed only with an umbrella. She certainly worked tirelessly and with huge determination as part of that small group, which included Molly Curley, Stuart Neale and Ron and Anna Adams, who steered a path from that rather dreary Bute Street site to our splendid new gallery in the Flourish, in 2002.

Molly, in her letter welcoming me to the Guild, emphasised that this 'small group' put in hundreds of unpaid hours of effort and expertise to ensure the success of this venture, and deserved and expected the wholehearted support of all its members. So obviously I fulfilled my stewarding responsibilities conscientiously, and in 2001, took on the

curating of an exhibition in Brecon's fine Museum and Art Gallery, in July of that year, of the work of twenty of our members. The exhibition was opened by Jenny Randerson, then Welsh Assembly Minister of Culture and attended by Lord Lindsey MP and Assembly Member Kirsty Williams. Organising over two dozen crafts people well outside their geographical comfort zone was the hard bit, but the standard of work, and the way it was displayed was great.

I have never regretted my joining the Guild, and indeed feel my own reputation to have been enhanced in having my work displayed in our beautiful gallery, showing the superb work of my fellow Guild members.

In 2006 I was delighted to be asked, on behalf of the Makers Guild, to produce an elegant certificate offering Life Membership, in recognition of their outstanding service to the Guild, for Kate Bosset, Molly Curley and Margaret Handsford.

These days I would also take my hat off to our manager, Simon, and his trusty team, Charlotte and Cindy, and his assistant managers. We must all wonder what we would do without their efficient and patient support!









# Liz Lawrence

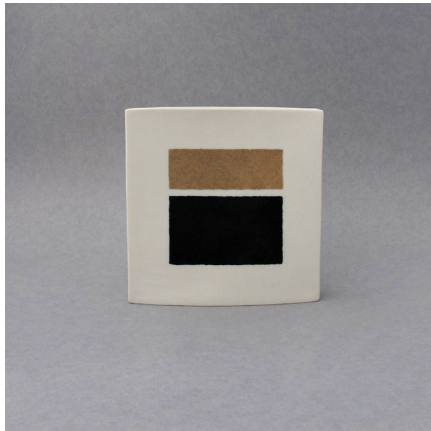
This has been quite a year. Not only is it the Makers Guild's 30th Anniversary – but it's exactly 10 years since I became a Member, shortly after I moved across the bridge from Bristol. My very good friend Lorraine Coles of Church House Designs in Congresbury told me about Craft in the Bay, so I quickly made the pilgrimage to Cardiff to see for myself. I was instantly captivated both by the lovely building and the craft work on show there.

I well remember buying some Rauni Higson silver earrings in the shape of Celtic curls which I still regularly wear today! I met Simon who charmingly 'stitched me up' for an extra £1 . . . was this for a raffle ticket . . . or did we have the Lucky Dip way back then?

Duly impressed, I quickly applied to join and was lucky enough to be welcomed into the Guild as an Associate Member, thus beginning my membership of MGW.

As a newcomer to Wales, Membership of the Guild was a lifeline. Back then I was in the throws of carving out a rather late career as a fulltime craftsman – spending much of the time alone in my workshop. The stewarding days were a massive mental boost, making me feel part of a creative community and since joining the Guild my work has developed as new challenges have presented themselves.





# Ron Adams

## a short recollection



This 'experience' occurred after MGW's prestigious opening of Craft in the Bay in early June 2002.

The great and the good attended and much publicity resulted on TV and in the local papers. It was a great occasion. We closed the building, set the alarms and went home happily after an extremely busy day.

And, yes, you guessed it; at around 3am the alarms had been activated in the building. I drove down to the site to find the Police and the Fire Brigade waiting for me. As I searched for the keys in my pocket one of the members of the callout team in a clear voice said to his friend: "Don't know why anyone would want to break in, can't be anything worth stealing here!"

# About our Gallery

## Craft in the Bay

Our gallery is open seven days a week 10.30am until 5.30pm. During your visit you can see and buy work from our changing craft exhibitions, exploring the very best in contemporary Welsh craft. We have a beautiful showcase of jewellery, ceramics, textiles, metal work and furniture exclusively made in Wales. You can learn about the inspirations and processes behind the work of our Maker members. Talk to Guild members about their work at our 'Meet the Maker' events and take part in our hands-on, creative art and craft workshops.

The Makers Guild in Wales is fully committed to its charitable aims, namely the promotion and preservation of applied art and craft skills, by presenting craft and applied art of the highest quality for the public to view in its gallery, Craft in the Bay in the heart of Cardiff Bay. The Guild has been successfully managing to sustain and maintain its Charitable Objectives for over 30 years.

### **We want your memories**

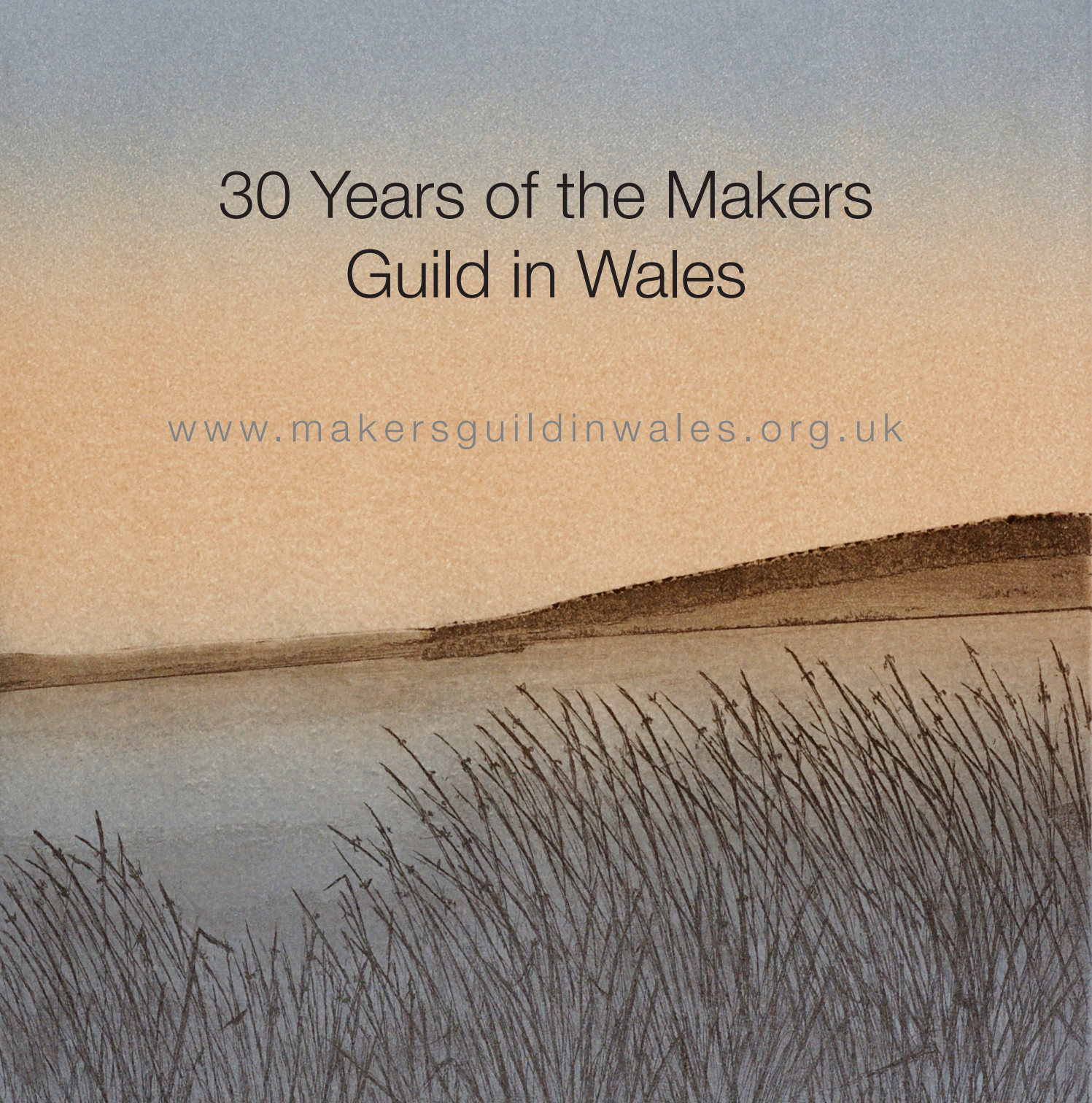
**We want to share this proud and beautiful history with the world in a special book. So, all members, past and present, all staff and MGW friends, please send us your stories and images of your work, send us your recollections of making beautiful art in Wales.**

**You can email Simon Burgess at [simon@makersguildinwales.org.uk](mailto:simon@makersguildinwales.org.uk)**

**Or just drop in your story and pictures at Craft in the Bay**





A landscape photograph featuring a body of water in the middle ground. In the foreground, there are tall, thin reeds or grasses. In the background, a low, dark wall or embankment runs across the frame. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The overall scene is serene and natural.

# 30 Years of the Makers Guild in Wales

[www.makersguildinwales.org.uk](http://www.makersguildinwales.org.uk)