



I've been asked to talk to you about **future proofing education and engaging with entrepreneurial alumni.**

I read with interest that the European Commission first referred to the importance of entrepreneurship education in 2003.

15 years later.... here we all are still talking about it, still trying to nail down exactly what this means; what the common definition should be; how the governance of this can be delivered by academia in the classroom.

One of the most effective, most tangible and measurable ways to enhance people's lives is to fuel and empower the world's entrepreneurs – the individuals whose imagination and power create the next disruption in finance, technology, medicine, transportation, agriculture and every industry that affects the lives of millions of individuals in societies around the world.

Perhaps the very reason the great and good haven't arrived at an homogenised plan is because by its very definition an entrepreneur is 'maverick', is 'rebel', 'cut a path', 'bend the rules', 'break down preconceptions', is 'disruptive'.

The famous entrepreneurs of our time are rich beyond imagination, their lives the stuff of fairy tales: Howard Schultz (CEO of Starbucks) lifted out of extreme poverty by his love of coffee; the late Steve Jobs (co Founder of Apple) given up for adoption by his single mother; and Jack Ma (Founder of Alibaba), who tells how he applied for 30 jobs in his youth and was rejected for all of them.

Many famous entrepreneurs, the ones with staggering wealth and the most compelling backstories, are the tall poppies who have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, striding out alone on their risky missions while the rest of the world marvels at their success.

When such stories capture the headlines, it is hardly surprising that so many people think that entrepreneurs are born, not made. But we're here this week to discuss mounting evidence from the universities and business schools which are increasingly embracing the idea that entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurial mindset can be taught.

Perhaps the objective is being missed by a rebel mile.

Rebel student

Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

-A Einstein



hello
NICE TO MEET
you

I'M A REBEL.

(I THINK POSITIVELY.)

Slide 2

I came to university as an old timer. 34 years of age, mum to a 10 month old, lots of experience and adventures but suddenly unexpectedly a single parent statistic. I was penniless, exhausted with fear of not being able to cope and I was looking for a safe zone – a way out of the abyss.

I had bombed school, was a fast learner but I bored quickly and I rebelled at everything just to be noticed and ultimately, I was 'asked to leave'.

I somehow managed to achieve 6 O'levels but no A'levels – I went abroad two months before my finals on a whim after an argument with my mum and after working in every job imaginable around Europe for two and half years I eventually agreed to come home and tried to settle into a studying Law at Swansea College. I lasted six weeks.

Id been independent for nearly three years, travelled around Europe on my own, had adventures that seemed far fetched to my homebody fellow students so I stopped talking about them for fear of being called out as a dreamer. I had so much

experience, I'd learned so much of what matters, about life, about how to survive and work ethic and so much more than I would have learned in school or college – so why was it that my experience was recognised as an education in itself?

I was frustrated and as entrepreneurship as a term wasn't a thing yet, I had to try and find somewhere I did fit in.

1990s



I went to London, learned graphic design and moved on to an annual contract with Goldman Sachs and J Walter Thompson for three months apiece over winter months and lived the rest of the year in Turkey. I built a treehouse camp by the beach, ran a restaurant, went scuba diving at night, paragliding by day and got married.

Seven years later I came back to Swansea to give birth to my son so that he could play for Wales one day, and very suddenly, without warning, I was on my own and everything I had was gone. My home, my savings, my husband – all pulled from under my feet in favour of someone else who'd been nurtured during my pregnancy. I'd had a dream of a life but that was gone and with no qualifications to show for it and a child to support I had to start from zero.

Applying to go to Uni therefore was unequivocally a radical leap of faith.



Foundation Art and Design

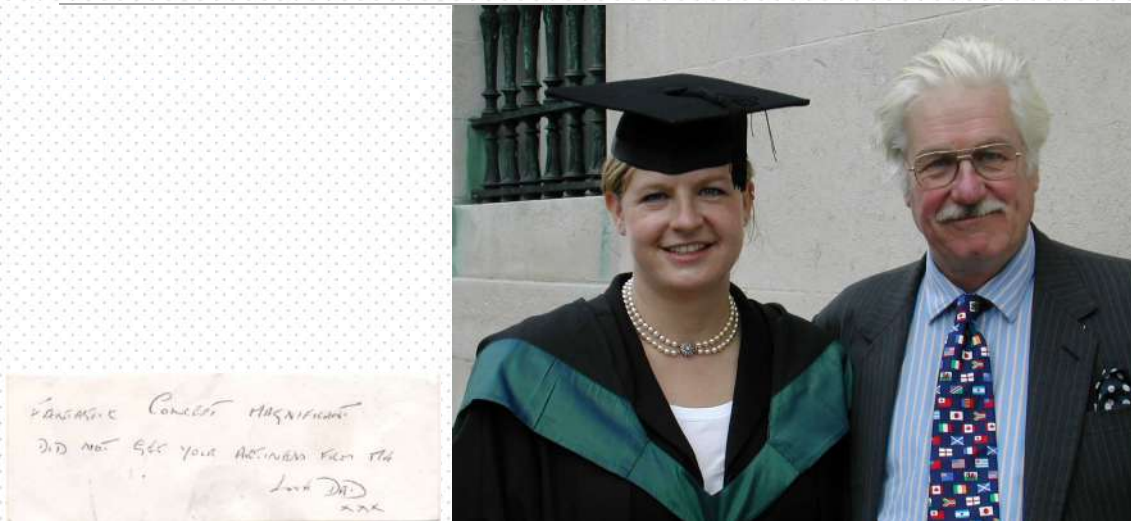
The Principal on Foundation Art and Design in Swansea interviewed me in the street with a babe in arms and a battered car loaded with sewn, painted and sketched paraphernalia. He told me after he'd retired years later that he'd had night sweats for weeks after he'd given me a place on the sheer gall of my interview, but I kept my promise and I never gave him cause to regret his decision.

I started that year on the presumption that it was like school. I was punctual, respectful and attentive. I thought I'd be kicked out again if I didn't keep my head down. I worked hard, I listened and I learned to trust my own judgement again.

I loved every single milli second of that Foundation year. I was free to express myself, to use my imagination without criticism, to try and to fail and to laugh at failing and then try something else. When I joined the Surface Pattern Design degree at Swansea Institute I was so excited – I spent the summer writing business ideas and filling sketch books – full of ideas, full of products, full of hope. I thought – if I put my heart into this and get a First I can move out of the council house and away from the druggies and the drunks throwing eggs and stones at passers-by, away from the kids keying my banger just for the hell of it, away to a home my friends and family won't be fearful of parking outside when they visit me. Getting a first would give me the

credibility I needed to start my own business so I could send my son to a good school with good people and I wouldn't need to worry about his future.

Graduation day, June 2004



Three years later I achieved an Honours degree, a European Social Fund Scholarship to do a Masters in Enterprise at UMIST and had a ready made concept for a product and a business which I worked on from year two of the degree. At graduation I was chosen to exhibit at the New Designers Exhibition in London and was subsequently listed in the top ten 'hot new designers for children by WGSN (the Worth Global Style Network and global trend forecasting bible.....').



Frustration and fluff

BUT. BUT. Things didn't go to plan. At least not for me.

I'd expected to experience the same creative happiness on the degree as I'd had in the Foundation year but suddenly I didn't fit. My ideas didn't fit. Suddenly I wasn't enjoying myself. Suddenly no one was interested in my ideas and I had absolutely no interest in the fashion orientated direction everyone else was focussing on. Suddenly it all seemed rather fluffy and samey ...and that all too familiar felling of being vulnerable and frightened came lurching back into view.

By year two I'd comprehensively fallen out with my lecturers and there seemed to be the unanimous decision to leave me to my own devices. I attended regular sessions with the Uni psychologist who made all the difference by listening to me prattle on about the custody battle I was fighting, my struggle with the lecturers, my frustrations and more – all without judgement; and when my car was torched in the council estate where I lived, the Uni stumped up the cash from their hardship fund to buy me a new banger - because, Bronwen said, the Uni recognised how determined to succeed I genuinely was.

I kept my own council. My lecturers never knew that I was homeless for a while, that I

lived on 12p a day, that all my student loan went on childcare, that when I needed materials or petrol or nappies it was a huge struggle to find the money. I didn't tell them because I didn't want to give them the slightest hint about how much my degree meant to my future.

I lived on the food parcels my wonderful Dad delivered every Monday and I earned money by typing up other students work and making cushions and curtains through ads I placed in the local paper.

Acrylic furniture



My lecturers insisted I could only do three modules, but I did five – two without telling them. I wanted to take full advantage of all the facilities and opportunities available to me. Zac, my son, didn't care where he was, as long as he was with mummy, warm, fed and safe. So I had all the time in the world to focus on what I wanted to do.

I persuaded a sign making company in Bridgend to let me do their marketing, design and PR for two days a week in return for them helping me to build the furniture my son had drawn and constructed out of acrylic. I had no experience of marketing, design and PR and they knew that, but I worked hard, their sales increased, we all got on really well and it just worked.



I studied all three levels of printmaking and used my son's artwork as inspiration. I'd get scrap plywood offcuts from Homebase and give him a permanent marker. He'd lie on his belly and draw from his imagination – then I'd hot glue gun over his marks, pre and ink the boards and transfer the images – some of them four feet tall, to paper.

Design for children by children



I manipulated, boiled, shredded and layered fabrics until I came up with a natural textile which wouldn't shrink, and this became the basis for my product format. I wanted to find something which emulated the silky edge of my Grandma's heavy woollen blankets and the comfort and security they held.



My lecturers insisted I was not permitted to hold a public exhibition as an undergrad, so I set up and ran two.

I set up Fresh Ambition with three other second years and we persuaded King Street Gallery in Carmarthen to allow us to exhibit our work for our external project. The mayor of the town opened the exhibition, the press and all our friends came, our lecturers came, we had rave reviews for our work and our efforts and some of the pieces even sold which was exciting.

But lecturers were not happy with me at all. Although they never said it to me directly, I knew they were furious with me – they weren't cross with the others in the group, just me for apparently daring to prove them wrong which was never my intention. I just couldn't make them understand that it was never about them, but about me, about us achieving and succeeding, but they closed ranks and I gave up trying to change their minds.

Model House Exhibition, Llantrisant 2004

Jo show is child's play

A SWANSEA mum's four-year-old son was the inspiration behind her art work, which is currently being given a public exhibition.

Port Tennant's Jo Ashburner, in the final year of a degree in surface pattern design at Swansea Institute, is including images that her young son drew at the age of three in her exhibition at the Model House Design and Craft Centre in Llantrisant.

She originally put her work on show in an exhibition at the King Street Gallery in Carmarthen in October as part of a group called Fresh Ambition which she formed with three fellow students.

The work includes a selection of "noo-noo"

comfort blankets made up of hand-felted woollen shapes embroidered or printed with her son's images.

The Model House exhibition was set up as part of a market research exercise — with accompanying questionnaire — questioning why design for children is so adult-led as opposed to child art-led.

This has helped Jo to complete the research process of a dissertation focusing on the theme Design for Children Using Child Art.

"My current focus is on the design and production of conceptual games and garments for children combining the mediums of print-making and Perspex," said Jo.

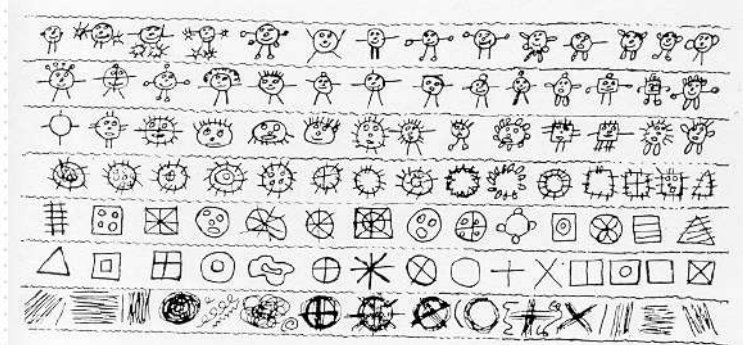
EVENING POST (SWANSEA), 24 FEBRUARY 2004



I persuaded the Model House, a high end reputable gallery in Llantrisant to allow me to borrow one of their white gallery walls for a week. I said I'd adjudicate and work for nothing in the gift shop and that I wanted to know how people would react to my designs without prompting. I got on well with the manager and she agreed instantly. I called the local newspaper who knew the gallery and manager and they did a write up on my efforts which increased footfall to the gallery, much to her delight. The Model House subsequently went on to buy Noonoo products wholesale and to sell them for over 10 years, milking the back story.....

Despite all best efforts to try and placate my lecturers and perhaps make them proud of me, they were adamant to a man that the degree was 'art darling' and they simply would not enter into discussions about the commercial opportunities I was integrating into my design pieces with the end goal of having my own business.

Rhoda Kellogg
1948-81



Zac would come to Uni with me every day that he wasn't in pre-school. He spent three years with a fantastic group of 20 something undergrads who I credit with his amazing social skills and he'd sleep on piles of fabric under my studio desk, build tents, collects pins and sit in lectures filling sketch books with his fantastical pictures.

Throughout the degree I concentrated on the idea of **design for children by children** and technically Zac had a degree by the time he was 4 years old.

My textile and paper work interpreted my toddler son's artwork and my dissertation explored theories that children are born with an inherent ability to draw. I researched published theories that children in Borneo, China and the UK will draw the same sun shaped images, stick legs and eyes with remarkable similarity, regardless of culture and geography and that when they then go to school, adult perception, perspective and pressure 'disneyfies' everything and the natural creativity disappears.

Slide 13 (Rhoda Kellogg)

Rhoda Kellogg was a psychologist, scholar and child educator who collected and

studied children's art over the course of her lifetime. From 1948 to 1981, Kellogg collected several million drawings made by children, ages 2 through 6, as they scribbled to teach themselves to draw.

Kellogg's theory was that universal patterns and developmental stages can be found in a study of children's art and I found this fascinating.

I realised that this form of art brings comfort to children through recognition and familiarity and I translated that idea into textiles with texture and functionality, and Noonoo was born. I figured that if the likes of Picasso, Miro and the naivety of the art of other Grand Masters, worked then why not Noonoo.

This didn't really go down very well as you can imagine. Who did I think I was?!



My interim grades were frankly desperate and at the end of year two I was leaning towards believing I'd made a chronic mistake.

I stepped my rebellious art history and life drawing lecturer and legend in his own lifetime, Osi Rhys Osmond, who sat me down in the canteen and relit my ambition.

Who are they? he said. Who are they to say whether you have the talent to succeed or not. They know what they know and they teach it and they're good at what they are there to deliver and they've done it for years. That's what their job is, that's what they've been employed to do. Things change but they can't – they've agreed to a plan and they have to follow it. Just because they don't get you or what you're doing, doesn't mean that you're wrong. Don't be a fool.

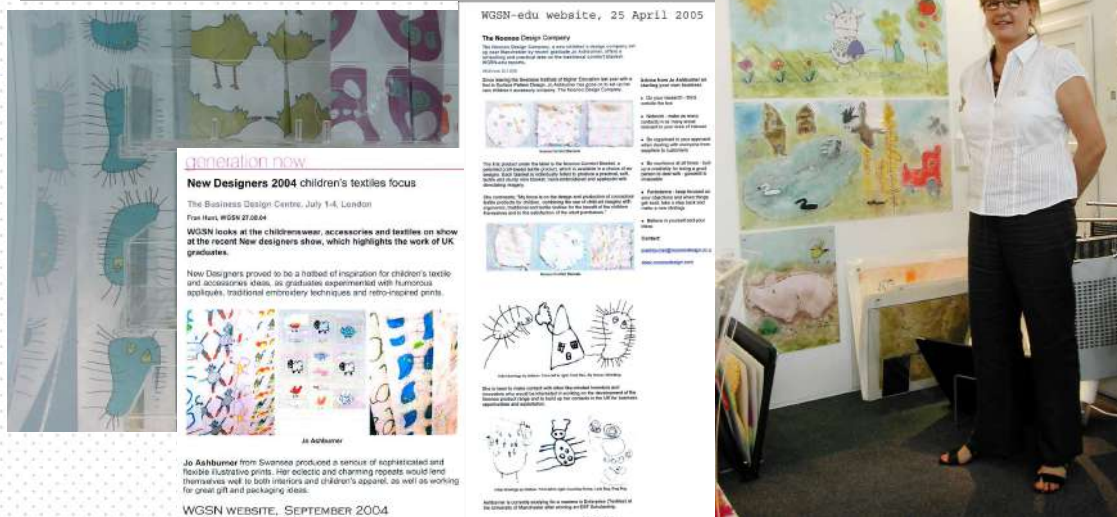
So I stayed. I kept out of their way and although everyone was terribly polite, I knew had to just get on with it.

No one was more shocked than I when my grades were pinned to the studio wall. My lecturers were agog. First class Honours, 87% and top of the year no less, all marked and graded externally.

Go figure.

But by then it didn't matter. I'd made my point respectfully, without a cross word, with self-respect and without a drama. I'd made the point that being rebellious and being different and pursuing an idea, no matter how out of the box it is, is OK and to be different you have to stick to your guns.

New Designer's exhibition, London 2004



Slide 16

After graduation I moved up to Manchester with Zac to start the MEnt. I realised pretty quickly that I faced with a year of talking about my business proposition, a year of critical analyses by academia who without exception they were educating me on the risk of entrepreneurial spirit from the comfort of a public sector wage and pension package.

I felt terribly guilty. I'd been awarded one of only two ESF scholarships for a Masters in its very first year, but when they asked me to help rewrite the course for future students while I worked my way through it, I couldn't do it, so I made my excuses and nine weeks after starting, I left with a promise that it was only a formal interruption and that if I could, I'd go back to finish the qualification, but I never did.



Two weeks later I was driving around Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam in a smelly sweaty yellow taxi looking for a building to rent. I had £6K on a credit card which Dad had given me, I had no collateral, no safety net and it was make or break.

15 minutes of FAME



Click to watch VT

Two years later I was awarded UK National Businesswoman of the Year. I was running an ethical factory with strong social values, fair wages and a safe environment for abandoned women and their children. I was running a successful factory in Vietnam on remote, paying rent and wages for the 28 people I employed there and visiting for a week every eight to keep on top of it all. I gave two UMIST students the opportunity to work for me – one went to Vietnam to assist with the running of the Noonoo factory and the other worked at trade fairs on the Noonoo stand selling to trade. The first went on to be accepted at St Martin's College of Art and the second now works as a buyer for John Lewis.



©NOONOO



www.noonoodesign.com

Noonoo was selling worldwide through eight distributors – Australia, Japan, Scandinavia, France, two in the US, Taiwan and New Zealand and I employed seven staff in the UK, on sales and admin.

I was exhibiting worldwide, travelling and having adventures. I was in the media and press very regularly and all this on the back of the product I designed in my second year at Uni, all on the back of gut instinct, impatience and entrepreneurial rebellion.

Jo Ashburner Farr – current CV

UWTSD Alumni, Surface Pattern Design (First Class Hons) 2004
Top ten designer for children (WGSN) at New Designers, London 2004
Department of Trade and Industry British Female Innovator and Inventor 2005
UK National Businesswoman of the Year 2006
Rising Star (Wales) 2006 (Insider)
UK National Business Awards (SME Entrepreneur of the Year) 2007
Entrepreneur of the Year (Manufacturing) Wales 2015
Founder and Managing Director of Noonoo est. 2005
UK National Gift of the Year 2009 (Noonoo)
New York Sustainable Product of the Year 2009 (Noonoo)
Entrepreneur in Residence University of Wales Trinity Saint David since 2011
Founder and CEO of social enterprise Red Dragon MFG (Flagmakers) Ltd 2014
One to Watch (Red Dragon Flagmakers) FINALIST, Enterprise of the Year 2015
Manufacturing Start-up of the Year (Red Dragon Flagmakers) FINALIST, Wales Start-up Awards 2015
Social Business Wales (Welsh Government), Advisory Board Member
Big Ideas Role Model

I share my news with my almer mater, Trinity St David, every step of the way and I'm enormously proud of the relationship I have with the dynamism of the uni. I credit them entirely with giving me the platform to make something of my life and to make a difference to others.

The Dean of Faculty, now retired, would frequently joke with me when she was off to Japan and abroad to make academic connections, that she was using my story as an example of a rebel student entrepreneur that the Uni was so very proud of.

I never did have any meaningful contact with my degree lecturers directly again. I saw one or two of them in passing in the distance at events, exhibitions and lectures and I went out of my way not to intrude on them when I was asked in to speak about my experiences to undergrads and post grads through the Big Ideas initiative.

No doubt it's a hard pill to swallow to congratulate someone who made your working week so stressful and unsettled, but the students did ask me to open their Graduation Show in the local theatre three years running which I was incredibly privileged and thrilled to do.

Over time the old school lecturers have retired and been replaced by my peer group of graduates and the degree and the University has become everything I would so have loved it to have been when I was there.

Slide 23

I'm told that I contributed to the change as the example for the Surface Pattern Degree, changing its focus from 'art darling' to art and design' for commercial purpose. Other courses such as graphic design had already firmly embedded what the Uni calls 'entrepreneurship' when I was doing my degree, and that I effectively became the driver for Surface Pattern to catch up.

If I had to choose a job as an alternative to running my own business, my perfect happy place would be to share my experiences and teach future generations of rebel entrepreneurs. I sometimes miss the camaraderie of the studio and the diversity of challenges and full-blooded excitement of the whole learning process, the debate, the frustration, the risk taking. I wish I could do the degree all over again with the advantages and open door of opportunity available to the new generation now.

I have been Entrepreneur in Residence since 2010 in an Ambassadorial capacity and a role model for the Big Ideas Wales initiative delivering lectures and workshops to undergrads, graduates, HE, FE and businesses to share my story. I love the challenge of working with NEETS - a label I very much identify with - and I try and enable and empower those who although they don't fit as a square peg in a round hole and still have the potential to be entrepreneurs, to be successful, to be providers and leaders and mentors themselves.

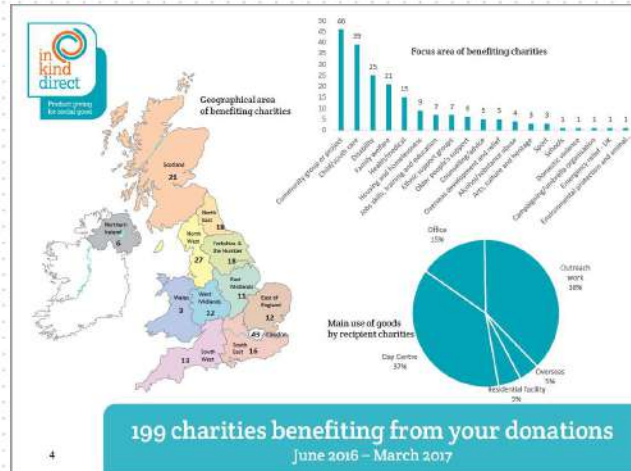
When a University listens to its students it learns from them. With that knowledge it will grow and keep ahead of the curve in the fast changing world we live and do business in.

Where is Noonoo...?



Founded in 1996 by HRH The Prince of Wales to provide an efficient and easy way for companies to donate consumer products to good causes.

Noonoo benefited 199 children's charities in the UK in the period June 2016 to March 2017.



In 2012 I shut down my manufacturing unit in Vietnam and gave Noonoo away to a Princes Trust subsidiary charity in 2015 to benefit children in poverty. Founded in 1996 by HRH The Prince of Wales to provide an efficient and easy way for companies to donate consumer products to good causes, Noonoo benefited 199 children's charities in the UK in the period June 2016 to March 2017.

Red Dragon Flagmakers: a social enterprise

Welsh Government, Dr Who, Vanity Fair, European Space Agency, Ministry of Defence, Effat University (Saudi), Ministry of Fisheries (WAG), NATO Summit, Skyfall, Cavalry & Guards Club, Iceland's fishing fleet, SSGB, Anthropoid, Royal Yacht Squadron, London Welsh, Pembroke Castle, The Senedd, Palace of Westminster, John Lewis PLC, UWTSD, Hale Construction, St David's Cathedral, Royal Welsh Regiment, London Olympics....



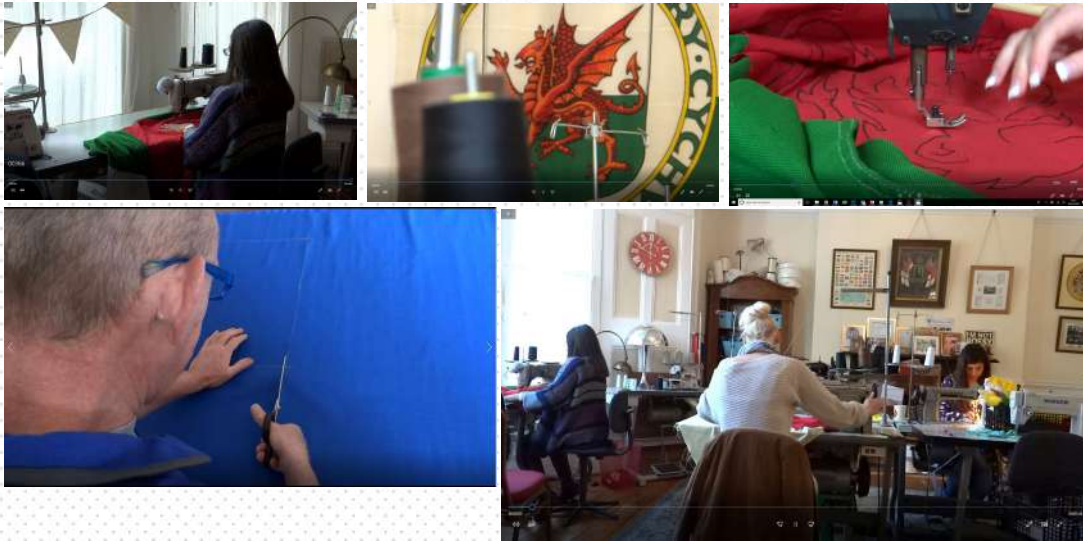
In 2014 I formally registered the only social enterprise Flagmaker in the world and one of the very few registered social enterprises currently manufacturing exclusively in Wales.

The business had belonged to my father who had retired in 2005 but it was mismanaged and forced to close within three years, laying off over 50 workers, some of who had been working for Dad since the 1970s. It was heart breaking to see what Dad had built be destroyed so I did my research, salvaged what I could, convinced Dad to keep on trucking and remodelled it into the business it is today. One of the first pieces I made in the build up to formally registering the business was to make the pure silk Union flag made into a dress for the catwalk at the Olympics. The second was to secure a contract with John Lewis for eight month's worth of work to make flags for retail sale for the Jubilee and the Olympics in 2012.

We went on to be the official supplier to the NATO Summit Wales in 2014 and we now supply b2b, b2c and private clients worldwide. Our branding goes against the nerdy demographics associated with flags and our business has a unique, open and contemporary personality of its own.

Our core business is the production of custom traditional sewn flags. You'll see on the slide a small snapshot of our client base. Our USP is that we are a social enterprise, yes but predominantly that we make World class flags right here in Wales, we don't import flags like our competitors do and we don't have a production line system, so this means we can change what we're doing at the drop of a hat.

We make flags, we train skills



The social mission of our business is to train skills to rehabilitate people from marginalised backgrounds. This mission grew out of the desperate lack of competent machinists available for employment. Those that had the skills were retiring and we needed to fill a gap in the market to be able to fulfil orders.

We developed an eight-stage training programme which takes about two months and gives each trainee introduced to us via the Shaw Trust, Remploy, JCP and the prison service, the skills to be job ready – either with us or within the wider business community.

That training programme will hopefully achieve accreditation through Gower College this year and we are collaborating with them on the delivery of apprenticeships in textile goods production as part of the Welsh Government Valleys Task Force.

Our ISO 9001: 2015 is under construction and in 2018 we will be expanding to new premises in the South Wales Valleys.



We are collaborating with Trinity St David on our next adventure, project and gamechanger, ROOF. Developing tech to underpin the products life time guarantee, innovative life saving composite textiles and employment opportunities for the people who need it the most. We have partnered with The Wallich, Wales' homeless charity who support us with the pastoral care, introductions and outcomes monitoring and amongst others the Welsh Regiment is testing our product on exercise in extreme conditions.

We currently have three Trinity St David interns working part time with us on the project, training as they finish their degrees and towards their full time employment with the Company. We are delivering a 10 week project at Coleg Sirgar Jobswell to give the design students there an opportunity to work on a real time project and for us a chance to spot and engage with some emerging talent.

It is my heartfelt ambition to have a significant positive impact on the rise of homelessness by 2020.

Jo Ashburner Farr
www.rdm.wales



The responsibility for building the foundations for realistic positive and exciting entrepreneur education is an incredible opportunity if not an Everest scale challenge.....

The thing is that as a rebel, an entrepreneur, I can make real time decisions on the spot, not have numerous meetings to get to a decision and I'm eager to put my back to the wheel of entrepreneurship in education before the next 14 years have passed.

Lets do it.

Thank you for listening.