

Season 2, Episode 1 · Interview with Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Welcome to this episode of the W Power podcast, created to share the stories of businesswomen from across the arctic rim and hear from them about growing and running businesses and some of the most remote regions of Northern Europe. I'm your host, Jennifer Macdonald-Nethercott. Our series will feature amazing women who have overcome the challenges posed by the remote geography to set up thriving small businesses. All of them have received support of one kind or another from W-Power, a project funded through the Northern Periphery and Arctic program of the European Regional Development Fund.

My guest today is Cheryl Jamison, artist at Glansin Glass. Cheryl was born and bred on Shetland and her fused glass products to reflect the environment she lives in, which, as she describes, is stunningly beautiful and also has a rich heritage, archaeology and geology. Cheryl's pieces reflect this and the sea around Shetland. Welcome to the podcast, Cheryl.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Thank you very chuffed to be asked!

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

It is great to have you here and to find out more about Glansin Glass. We could start with why you started doing this and creating glass pieces?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Well, I think we moved back to the island just after our first child was born. And you are kinda limited in the island (Unst) as to what kind of jobs are available. Mostly you have to take what's available to you. I've actually got a master's degree and I wanted to be a teacher, but for various reasons that didn't really happen. I think I'd always had in my mind, I always wanted to

start my own craft business, but I never really found my thing. And when the kids were smaller than I, any kind of different classes whether a weekend or day class that was available, all different mediums and different techniques, I would go on all of those. This was partly to answer the need to be creative in me and also partly to when the bairns (children) are small and you just need time for yourself. And I still never really just found that the thing but it was always my ambition was to have some kind of business.

And then in 2007, there was a trip arranged. It was for the people of the North islands of Shetland. It was a project with the Highlands of Scotland and Norway. And it was the idea if to qualify you basically to have your own business or want to have your own business. It was sort of like a fact finding visit to Norway that we went on. I qualified and I went on that. Some of the things we were seeing was a cheese factory or turning a barn into a restaurant. Wasn't that really appealed to me too much, but I just thought, well, any kinds of travelling is good thing to do. Completely by chance I met a Norwegian lass (girl) on that trip. She was making jewelry, she explained. But it turned out to be fused glass jewelry. She was staying in the same accommodation. When she opened up her box to show that night I just remember saying, wow, imagine being able to make that. And my friend was standing next to me and she said: "Well, Cheryl, why don't you?"

I never even had a fused glass before. I never knew you made glass in a kiln. Came back, started researching it - and just, I've always loved glass. I used to collect blue glass. So, it was something I was really interested in but I never thought of something that was accessible to me to do. But then I discovered this was something that really could be could be something. And it coincided with when the MOD were leaving the island, we had RAF Saxa Vord here so they were leaving the island and there was money available for businesses starting up. So, in that sense, it was quite a good timing.

I got a few hundred pounds to help me buy my first kiln and glass cutting equipment. I officially started in 2008 found some training with a guy in Glasgow and got started.

Looking back, you just always think for a long time I felt really kind of frustrated thinking I want to have some kind of business, craft business. Why am I not doing that? Actually, finding lots of excuses. Why am I not doing it? But I look back on it now, well it all just happened at the right time.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

So being on that trip, obviously sounds like the real sort of catalyst. And that moment when you go in your Eureka moment. And you saw that lady's box and saw the pieces.

When you were starting up, did the islands really influence you at that time or what was the style of pieces you were making in those early days?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

I think I mean, just absolutely initially it was just I suppose I went away and spent four days with a glass artist in Glasgow and I learned the basics. And then I came home and immediately just launched right in. And I remember right from the very start that was very much about looking what there was around me. I made quite simple, I suppose, not generic, I found, right from the start, that that unless I made something with a Shetland, twist or a Shetland kind of thing it doesn't mean anything to me or something to mean something, his piece to mean something to me - it had to be, to have a bit of Shetland in it.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And it means I'll give you a bit of yourself into every piece you make. And I imagine with the nature of it as well the nature of, each piece is unique because of the way you're creating it.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah, absolutely. And even if you don't make two bits the same, just the nature of glass and melting glass, you can never guarantee that they are going to come out the same. Or sometimes I've got pieces on my website that's been made ten years ago and then somebody will see this and say, oh, can you make me one of these? And then I try to replicate it and you'll never get it never quite the same so that always comes with a bit of a warning. Just to let them

know that it can't be exactly the same. But then that's the selling point when you're doing something like this. The fact that it's unique is this is the kind of selling point.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Which is great, isn't it. In terms of initially going back and setting up your business, what process did you go through? Obviously after you'd been to Norway and then you'd be on your training to Glasgow? What process in terms of setting up the business did you take next?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Once it got my kiln and even then, to be honest, my kiln came and it was delivered into the porch. It couldn't come in the next door (in the house). It was too wide for the next door. And it sat, we had to take it, it was going to be lifted out with a tractor. We had to lift it to the back door to eventually end up in our spare room. And it actually sat there for six weeks. People could hardly get into the house. People kept coming along saying have you not moved this kiln yet.

But I, I think it was been such a long time coming, to actually start this business. And at the start of 2007, when I first discovered a fused glass, this sort of thinking, maybe in a year later, well this is it, I've managed to get this stuff bought.

At that time, I was actually working for the local college part time. But I decided that actually I thought I could do it both together. And I realized I actually no because Glansin Glass was always going to come at the bottom of the list kind of thing and everything else would have to come before.

I made the decision to give up my job. And I think I actually was terrified that it was actually happening. This was real. And so, I never pushed to get my kiln moved. And finally, after six weeks, got the kiln moved. I remember it first firing and just being really scared and thinking, well, what happens if something goes wrong? Or I find myself allergic to this and I can't actually work with it and all my plans. It's funny how things go. But yeah, the plan was always just work

from the house at that point. It was very much just start making stuff and see, see what the markets like, see how it goes.

I was meant to be a test, but the reality was it took off really quickly and so the kiln was in the spare room. I had an old duvet folded on the sitting room floor and cut glass. Our youngest of three bairns was two. And it wasn't really an ideal thing to be doing in the house of a two-year-old, but luckily nobody got injured. So that was OK.

I very quickly realized I needed to get premises and I went to the local authority, the Economic Development Department. It had just started Business Gateway. So eventually we were put in touch with them. We spent a lot of time trying to sort of work towards that, but really got nowhere with that. I think it was poor timing with the financial crisis, that happened. There was no money available.

I actually I managed to, I worked for four years before the year just from the house. And it really wasn't ideal. I didn't have any sort of display space. So people if came along to buy anything, it was a case of having to empty plastic boxes onto the kitchen table. And I had actually joined the locally craft association, which set up a craft trail and I didn't have premises. I felt I needed to be on craft trail. That really was not ideal having all those people coming in to the house and having to clear the breakfast off the table and get out the glass...it's not really the impression you'd want to give.

It's one thing to be, I suppose, locally made, handmade, but it doesn't create the right impression, I don't think, unfortunately.

I ended up, out of pure desperation for a solution to my premises, I bought a portacabin as someone suggested a portacabin, which I thought was going crazy for Shetland in the winter. But I spoke to somebody else, a lass that was doing her knitware from a portacabin, and that was OK. She said that you should put an extra layer of clothes on in the winter. It's fine.

I bought a portacabin off eBay, it came up in the back of a lorry. It was kind of crazy. (laughs) But it was a very quick after spending 4 years trying to get premises and ended up being a very quick way to do it. But I planned then that was going to be the five-year stopgap and I was still going to pursue my dream of a kind of proper place to make glass. And so finally, that was then and at the start of 2018, we heard that there was Leader funding available through the European Funding just before we were leaving Europe. I started on a journey then January 2018. And I'm nearly at the end of that, I'm actually building a visitor's centre that has started. It's been an absolute nightmare journey and I would not advise anybody to go down that route. But we are nearly there as it hadn't been for coronavirus we'd have been there by now.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

...but everything obviously had to stop for it. And certainly then, as you said with getting that portacabin, did that then give you more of that sort of dedicated display space for being on that trail that you then you didn't have to keep on packing and as you said, cleaning up the family breakfast before people arrived?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah, it still wasn't a big space, but it was a space to work, a space for the kiln, and then a dedicated space for sort of a tiny shop area. It really made a huge difference. But still, I think people kept asking for an online shop. And I felt, I always thought I would once I got the portacabin but the reality was, I didn't have the space, you know it not just even to get the glass that all of a sudden, you'd have to have in stock to sell online, its the packaging and everything else. And I really was struggled with space. I still had some of my machinery equipment in the house, that I was having to work with. So was it still was not an ideal setup, but it was a vast improvement from working from the house. But when I look back on it now, and think even that 4 years of working in the house, it was so far removed from anything now. The portacabin certainly served its purpose. And my five-year stopgap actually became more like eight years. But that's still not bad I think.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

But that's it. With your new development, with you say this is a purpose-built visitor center that you're doing, you'll have more display space and be able to increase that online presence as well?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yes, part of the Leader project is a new website. My old one it's very, very out of date. So a new website that has an online shop facility in it. And then also the new building has more, a bigger shop area. But for me, more importantly, I've got space that I want to set up in the corner. It's got an absolutely stunning view- we are up high on a hill and looking down over nearly half of Shetland, we are really lucky with the view. I want to have a space, sitting there, with big patio doors where people can walk in the door, sit down in the corner, got a really nice coffee machine - it's going to be installed shortly, with a nice cup of coffee, and they actually can have a go making their own glass, hanger or glass coaster.

Because I've been doing over the past few years, I've been doing classes like that and maybe hired the local hall travelling across Shetland and doing I've going into some schools, that kind of thing. But I'd like to have that. I couldn't have done that the in the portacabin. I would have had to put at least a day's notice to clear my workbench, to give people space. And this will be a dedicated space where people can walk in and sit down and have a go. And it's all about kind of creating that. I think people are looking for experiences. The nice cup of coffee and the view and the whole it's all part of it as well.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

That's it. And it all will be so unique, that kind of experience for a visitor to have. And as you say, they'll be able to take their own inspiration of Shetland and put it at their own piece to take. And have a brilliant souvenir from your holiday as well.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah. Yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

..isn't it. You can't recreate something like that anywhere else.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

That's it. I was looking and kind of considering the idea of crowdfunding and so looking for a completely unique experiences, which might actually become part of what I do offer. But the idea that you could nearly offer people a tour of the island in the morning and a nice lunch and then in the afternoon, they could make their glass and their package. So that it is not just that they go and explore themselves, but you could actually take them - somebody who's lived here all my life more or less, I could take them and show them all the places to see and stuff. If you can actually really offer the absolute personal experience, I think it would be a good thing to do.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Definitely, I think there's so many opportunities around that. And in terms of other parts of setting up the business, was there any other challenges apart from obviously premises that you experienced along the way? And how did you overcome those?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Apart from the premises, I think things like you live here in Unst and I found the training. I try and keep up learning new techniques with glass and that kind of thing.

Most of the training courses I could find are down near Bristol. They actually pay for that kind of thing. It is really expensive to go away for classes. But really lucky here we've got an organization called Shetland Arts. I think they would offer a grant that you could basically put towards training any kind of personal development like that.

I've been really lucky more or less since I've started most of the years – you could put it towards equipment if you need it. But it was more about developing yourself and your own practice, I think. And so, I've been on some training, but I do find that I would go for any training. I would go down and I would probably really be the only Scottish person and certainly the only Shetlander there. So had to explain, when they had come for hours on the motor way or something and I think, actually I left home whenever like two days ago, I left home to come

down. Just to expand to that, because you have to cover your costs more or less double to bring to the transport and your flight and the accommodation itself. So that's been a challenge. But at the same time, luckily there has been support to help towards that, which been really good.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And that's really great, isn't it? You've got an organization that sort of recognizes that that training is such a key part of what the creative industry requires as well. Your skills fresh and probably your interest fresh as well in the pieces that you're creating.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah, definitely. I know that I listen to some of your previous podcasts and somebody mentioned being so kind of bogged down in running the business. It can be really hard to get your head into looking at where else you want to go with it.

I think for me, if I think it would have been really hard to justify spending that money on training, because basically it meant money away from the family or whatever. So one it gave me the chance to do that ut also it gave me the chance to just start doing focus on something else, looking, actually looking at the training available and picking something. Whereas if you didn't have that then you would be so kind of stuck in a rut, you know? I mean, You got used to that rut and it made you go in a different direction with things. And so every technique I learned, a little bit of a novelty on this classes because I'm always looking for that Shetland twist, everything I'm doing to my designs can be quite different from other people's. When we have eight people on the courses and I nearly always pick the blues, I'm really into blues and turquoise. Mostly everybody knows I'm into, that's the colours. But I'm always looking for that kind of Shetland twist.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And it's always good. And when you do, as you say, to go meet other people and maybe they haven't traveled as far, but their experiences will be very different with working from glass and

the influences that they bring to the class, I imagine are very different to the influences you said you bring Shetland to the class.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah. For me, those it's not just learning the technique. It's very much about meeting those people, because I am more or less the only person in Shetland that is doing this so it can be quite kind of lonely and isolated like that. To actually go and meet these people even after the event it's just a Facebook friends or you recognize the names on the Facebook forums and that kind of thing. I just fairly helps and make you think you're not just alone with this. The networking opportunities are very important.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Which, as you say, builds up a network of people, because I imagine there will be times where something is maybe not quite working and you just want to bounce an idea around.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Definitely, yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Yeah. You've got a group of people that totally know what you're working with and the different ways that glass reacts to different pieces as well.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah, yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

It definitely was great. I mean, obviously you saw those challenges, but this year has brought very different challenges to us all. And I was just wondering how covid-19 has affected you and the business?

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Yeah, like I say the whole grant process, build process, it's been going on for me for the past couple of years. It's been that's been very challenging anyway. And at lot of points we thought that was the end of the story with it, that there's lots of times where things wear actually going pear shaped, we thought it was going wrong. Finally, the kit had arrived, it was in November, which is not ideal building time in Shetland but we had a nice window of weather. And it was all moving ahead fine with the idea that we'd be open for the start of this tourist season, April, May time.

It was meant to be complete and even through into March, we were still thinking, thinking that and planning for that. And then coronavirus came along and so we had the builders on site. That was everybody hit down the tools and stay in. They are back on site now and we're maybe just a few weeks away from them being finished. But those months and I think just never knowing how long it was going to be, for everybody, nobody knew in March how long this was going to go on. We still don't know. For the next year, what this is going to mean for us.

Part of me thought, oh, this is great. I can spend this time making stock. I need a lot of stock for the website.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Yes.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

But what had happened just before coronavirus we had moved the portacabin I was talking about. I still got it, but we've moved that off the site to allow for the building and the carpark and stuff to happen. And we had taken half of the stuff out and it was held around the house in boxes. And it ended up being an absolute shambles that you couldn't find anything. And then even some of the stuff that was piled in boxes in portacabin, it doesn't make for a workable space. I still had a working kiln, but I didn't really have the space to work in. And physically there was no space. But I think almost mentally, I can't really explain it. But I found it so hard. In the past, glass had always been the thing that can actually call my own little haven, was going

into the portacabin and get away from everything. I don't know what was during lockdown, I just I really struggled and couldn't get my head around it or something. And I think I wasn't doing too bad but at the same time I couldn't make any glass.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Subconsciously it had sort of affected that creative spirit in you in some way. And I think you said it was that it was the unknown for everyone, wasn't it, as to how long that was going to go on for? And obviously because you were partly through such a massive building project.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

With everything in upheaval that that back in March is always OK. I've only got a few more weeks and then I'll be in my new lovely visitor center and Purpose-built studio and everything will be ready to go.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And that's kind of pulled away from you. And you have no control then, isn't it? Then it's hard to get to get back into it.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass: 25.17

Yeah. And I mean, it's, I don't know. We are, where we are now. Partly actually looking back, I mean, I was, I, I was kind of like so frazzled back in March. The pressures of this build project were so great that if we then gotten and been ready, if we've been ready to open April, May time, it would have been a full on getting plenty stock made for the website and open to the public and suddenly and when I have been working in the portacabin its always been really

flexible, basically just outside of our house. If I'm home, I could go and if anybody turned up on the doorstep, I could go and see them.

The new building, was right from the start, was going to have to be set hours, it was going to be open. With far more of a tie and just hard work. And right away had to start paying back both the bank loans and that kind of thing.

It was going to be a lot more pressure. Even when they get the building open. So actually, looking back on it, I'm wondering how would I have coped with it being a whole different summer. If we've got the building up and open as it is today, as lockdown has eased. We've had some really lovely kind of family time and time with friends this the summer. And I'm just thinking, actually, if I ever got the business open, I wouldn't be here. I'd be stuck there, couldn't sit on the beach at the moment. It does have its positives and they give that time to just stop and think, OK, there's a lot of things that will still have to be dealt with but can't be dealt with at the moment. So just take that break. And so, yeah, I mean, I'd wonder what it had been if I if I hadn't made that break.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Obviously, this summer you have managed to enjoy the summer with family and friends and as you said, make the most of that opportunity that was handed to us as well. In terms of this all going forward, how do you see your goals and objectives for the rest of the year going?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

I think it will be, hopefully say within the next month and the building be finished and start moving everything into it. Still not entirely sure with the lockdown and the fact we are in phase three of the lockdown at the moment. You could open up at the moment what exactly that means for visitors? I probably could have people coming in to the shop area, but whether the idea, my dream of having people come in and make their own glass just becomes a bit trickier when they are touching, you know what I mean, they are touching the different bits and how

you could clean everything? A lot more things to think about. Hopefully we are able to have some people let in the building over the time and even into next year.

There is still that dream of how we're planning to run it, hopefully next year can happen. And once I get the space, get my kiln and everything moved into the new space, I'm hoping then I can make lots of stock and start getting the website up and running.

It's ended up actually, during the lockdown, otherwise I couldn't make glass, I actually had small glass heart tokens made. I had planned to give them away to have them at my opening. And that didn't happen. During the lockdown, people were always wanting to say thank you to the NHS (National Health Service) and the NHS workers and I thought that I could turn them into little cards sharing the love. and it was to say thank you for all you do. And for long time during lockdown I sat with them and didn't do anything with them.

Didn't want it to look like I was kind of...almost profiteering...

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Yeah. I know what you mean.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

..from the situation. I was kind of really conscious of that. And then ended up I thought, well actually I do still have a business to try and keep afloat so that has to happen. And I know it's not like profiteering, it's just trying to make some money. And because I found that I actually didn't really qualify for much financial help at all during lockdown. So I started selling these little sharing the love tokens and I put a donation for each one to NHS .

I ended up selling over 500 them.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Oh, brilliant.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

I know a lot of times I thought, oh my gosh, if I sell 50, I'll be doing well (laughs). That was a really good thing. But even for that, it was maybe about starting to look at not at diversifying exactly but look at different products that you think people - there is a need for.

I started to develop a kit so you can make your own kind of rainbow hanger. It's really a bit late getting it done, but it's all just taken a bit longer. So even developing that and developing whatever things could be offered online is still going to be really important, I think, moving forward.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And I think you're right, it's having those certainly for your online offering, having those different sorts of introductory products as well, that people might buy one of those first and then come back and buy one of your bigger pieces online.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

It starts to get your name into more households and builds up that online...

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

...kind of things for you. So I think as well with the Christmas coming up as well, you'll have an opportunity for the online side of things because ...

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah, hopefully.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

...you have more and more people...

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

There's kind of big Shetland craft that happens in November that's not been canceled yet, but they're still not sure if that's going to go ahead. So that will be a big miss. That's a good quarter, of our annual turnover in that event. So if that's off. And even if it's on, it's going to be a far smaller affair. I think so.

Yeah. That's to get the building ready. It's very much we're getting it ready for Christmas. Push, like a lot like of online, and to push online for that.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

That's it. And I suppose even if that doesn't happen, it's traditional format. You hope they might even do some online sort of activity fairs. At least you've got your website ready and some pieces created. You'll not miss out completely on that key part of the year for you.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah, yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And in terms of the W-Power network, how's that helped you in your business?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

That's been really good. And well, we were successful in sort of applying and won the the money to help that was meant to be for a marketing project, the idea that we were getting this new building, new website. So that's all on hold at the moment because we've just to get all that to happen. And then the page for the marketing campaign for that. It's so good, just to be selected for that. I think just yeah, it's just going to give you an idea. Maybe I'm doing something good here. Yeah, I think you can have a lack of confidence, just working yourself with whatever so it kind of endorses you, I think. I was looking forward, I was maybe going to go, there's was going to have some kind of get together in Ireland in May, I think. I was thinking to go along to that, that all got canceled. I really have not had much chance to do much networking yet, but I could see that that's very much happening in the future. That would be a

really good thing to get involved with, for the future. But I think it's such a good thing that, I mean, just for anybody to realize that, women in business and in areas that maybe they have got a lot more challenges. So just to be to be recognized like that. I think it's amazing.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

It'll be great for your business, as you said, with this project, to have that the expertise behind you as well...

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

...definitely

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And the ideas that will come through to really launch it, once it's ready. And it's probably better just to pause something like that at the moment. And then, you'll have all that power behind you.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yes.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

You're ready to go, which would be really good. And in terms of sharing with the listeners, we're wondering what one thing you'd wish you'd known when you started your business, now, looking back?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

I think, looking at your questions, that was the one I found the hardest, then I was discussing that with my son and he said, well, if you look at it differently, is there anything you would you would have done differently? And even that I find really hard. I suppose it's that old adage that no mistake is a bad mistake and you just need to learn from them. I don't know. I think my business is very much kind of growing organically. It's always when I started it was very much about being something that worked around my family and give me that flexibility, I suppose I

did waste a lot of time and energy trying to get premises in that first four years. But even that, it's all worthwhile experiences to go through.

It maybe didn't come too much. And so I think it's just been I don't think I would do anything differently. I think it's all happened, it's all happened at the right time when it suits you.

Whether if I've known now what I now know about the Leader project and building the visitors center, (laughs) whether I had a crystal ball, I think I'm just a bit pig headed..

But I probably would still have wanted to do it and would have done it. But at the same time this past two years have been very, very hard, I think. Hopefully it will all be worth it. I don't think I would change anything. And I don't I cannot really say that I've learned. I think it's I sort of wish that I'd had more confidence in myself. But that's come. But I'm not good at that. I wish I was better.

Even when it comes to what I'm making, I get people telling me how much they admire what I'm doing.

I still need to take a step back and look at what I've done, where I've come from and what I have achieved. Naturally, I can be proud of myself, what I've done and think actually, yeah, I could have just crumbled at that point, and not gone any further or whatever. So hopefully it will not blow up to my face the next couple of years. (laughs) But no, but hopefully its been worth it.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

I think you're right. It's that sort of giving ourselves the permission to just take a step back and go, no, actually I've done a really good job here. And what I've achieved has been a success, isn't it? And that's sometimes part of it is just because you get so caught up in that day to day, isn't it sometimes hard to take that step back and actually reflect on the journey you've come on and how it is successful and the next steps in it? And that's where it is bringing back to is sharing with the listeners your elevator pitch and just, you know, just rounding up, you know, what's Glansin Glass is all about?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Aha, ok, well, Glansin Glass is a micro business based in Unst, the most northerly island in Britain. I'm very proud to be a Shetlander. I design and make unique fused glassware inspired by the stunning beauty of my native islands. My glass designs features our rugged landscape, ever changing seas, the archaeology, geology, amazing wildlife and the world-famous music and Knitwear. Can't fail to be inspired by Shetland. And by owning a piece of Glansin Glass you have your own peerie bit (small piece) of Shetland to remind you of this wonderful place.

I know it sounds a peerie bit like an advert for Shetland, instead of Glansin Glass (laughs), but for me the two things are absolutely woven together. Glansin Glass wouldn't be what it is if I was not living here and growing up here. I absolutely have Shetland in my soul. So that's what comes out in my work.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

I think that's what's lovely about it, isn't it that you're really sort of bringing a piece of the islands into everything that you create as well. And as you talk about your inspiration for the pieces and things that I think is if people are there buying a bit of Shetland when they buy a piece from you, aren't they?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah, I was thought that some artists have to travel to get their inspiration, but we don't. Anybody living in Shetland, you just look out your window or whatever. It's just here. On our doorsteps. We're very lucky.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Yeah and it's such a lovely position to be in, isn't it? Where you live, is able to provide you with that inspiration for your creative work. And in terms of the next five years, where, what's your vision for the business and where do you see it going?

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Well, obviously, hopefully the visitor center is completed. (laughs) Somebody said to me the other day, you know, that we're going to another lockdown? Oh, I thought, "Please don't,

because we need to get this visitors centre finished". But we'll assume that happens shortly, hopefully. And then really, it's just expanding on that and we get more and more products online. I hope to maybe employ somebody so that that would be a big change, actually. And even like I said, going forward, it will be less flexible in the sense that I'll have opening hours, but sort of moving forward as a whole, to the next step up in business for me.

And so I just want to make the best success of that, that I can. I want to turn this visitor centre into somewhere that will be in the top five places to visit when you come to Shetland. So that it will attract people to Unst. Unst is this most amazing place you could be. I'm very much involved in the community here. We're always the trying to do things to attract people here. To build something that gets people to Unst and gets people to stay longer in Unst and experience it.

That would just be, yeah. Like when I get people telling me that they've made this long journey just to come and see me in my work, then that's that absolutely blows me away. It would be just to keep doing what I'm doing, produce some quality work that people want to want to buy. Being able to offer that experience. It's such a unique experience. I think just want everybody to leave the business centre with a big smile on their face.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And it's such a nice way then for people to, as you say, remember their visit to Shetland as well, isn't it? Is having that and really creating that that all round experience and what people are looking for now as well.

Cheryl Jamieson, founder at Glansin Glass:

Yeah.

Host of the Podcast, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Well, thank you so much for your time today. And if you want to find out more about Cheryl and Glansin Glass, we will pop some links in the show notes.

More information about W-Power and the support available in your area is included in the show notes as well as links to join the project's local and international Facebook pages and LinkedIn group. With thanks to the Northern Periphery and Arctic Program of the European Regional Development Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise for their support with this project. Until next time.