



## **Bryn's passion to paint the Soller Valley**

To sit in front of the Miramar Hotel in the Port of Soller with Bryn and Liz Hughes was such a pleasure this week. We were surrounded by paints, sketch pads and examples of his prolific work. Bryn Hughes is an inspiration for all those who find a passion and fulfilment in a retirement hobby. His South Wales background in the 'baby boomer' era was one of being a coal miner's son. His Mum was a nurse and had high ambitions for her grammar school educated son. The first of the family to go to university his exam results took him all the way to Sheffield from where he never returned.

Love blossomed across the colleges in the North of England and trainee Nurse Liz met aspiring architect Bryn and love happened. Marriage, careers and family life followed and architectural drawings so beautifully drawn by hand were overtaken by CAD – computer assisted drawing. Bryn loved to draw and after years of threatening to produce a sketchbook of buildings which inspired him to stop and look, the gift of a small box of watercolours, purchased in Soller by his eldest daughter in 2001 was the spark which led him to a whole new world.

A friend's introduction to Fornalutx in 1999 was the Hughes family time when they knew they had found their artistic place in the universe. They arrived in the Port looking for accommodation and as the chambermaid of the Generoso Hotel opened the blind in their hotel room they could not believe the beauty that lay in front of their eyes. The Port of Soller with the sunlight glinting on the boats and the mountains dipping into the sea. This was pure artists' heaven.

Retirement for Bryn and Liz has meant full time painting for Bryn and lately a spot of babysitting wonderful grandchildren. Their home is full of paintings and there is not a spot left on any wall in the house to hang any more. Bryn's problem is that he is passionate about each piece of work and regards his paintings as his children – best looked after by him. He is a prize winning artist and exhibits his work often with a price tag. It is a physical blow to him when someone wants to give him money and then takes the picture away.

His personal technique is to sit facing a building and draw directly in pen, normally without pencil pre-drawing, onto rough A4 size watercolour paper. This method gives spontaneity since mistakes cannot be corrected and the adrenaline produced speeds up the whole process. Then, to keep the mood going at a fast pace, he immediately starts water colouring by painting in the dark windows. He finds putting the first strokes of paint onto paper the scariest step so he always starts in this way. He then continues with the rest of the water colouring dropping in yellow ochre, ultramarine or magenta to give those "happy accidents" that mixing watercolour directly onto the paper can give. Working quickly and with a light touch gives him a sense of immediacy and the best results.

Bryn's usual subjects are frontages and facades of buildings. His draughtsman's eye draws him into painting detail of shape, shadow and texture. He is always amazed at how clever humankind is at creating buildings, works of art and works of use (he tries not to dwell on its faults). Favourite artists include Constable, Van Gogh, JMW Turner, John Singer Sargent, Sturgeon, and the watercolourists John Blockley, David Bellamy, David Curtis and Nita Engle. He also loves the work of Ronald Searle and Quentin Blake. His favourite architects are Frank Lloyd Wright, James Stirling, C.R. Mackintosh, Peter Aldington and Richard Rogers. He admires the builders who work in all conditions to construct the edifices dreamt up by designers. He thinks modern architecture is going through a good period, designed by architects who are a small part of vast teams head by the accountants of modern construction – the quantity surveyors.

For those who admire the detail in his paintings his view is that detail is a relative term. After practising mainly as an architectural draughtsman for the past 26 years, he says his work is not that detailed. He admits to not having the greatest patience but just a determined will of iron. His current drawings are usually a fast sprint and not a marathon. The faster his pen moves the more satisfying the result.

This technique means that Bryn produces at least one finished picture every day he is in the Soller Valley. As he sits observing buildings, boats and whatever takes his fancy he attracts a following. Everyone loves to watch an artist at work and the speed he paints makes people stand watching till the end. They really want to see the finished product and often want to buy it off him there and then. A sale before the paint is even dry is what most artists aspire to but Bryn is not most artists.

Liz is trying to be the business brains behind this enterprise. There are many people who eventually acquire a Bryn Hughes masterpiece by commissioning a work from him. This means he leaves his usual format of an A4 sketch to work on whatever size his client has in mind. The amount of details in a work of size means that his attachment grows even stronger and it is with tears in his eyes he eventually accepts the money and lets the painting go.

Bryn paints and exhibits in the Soller Valley and his next exhibition will be sponsored by [www.sollerweb.com](http://www.sollerweb.com). The opportunity to buy original art of this beautiful area at a reasonable price is just too good to miss. His A4 watercolours sell for 150€ and many people find they are a unique reminder of wonderful holidays and golden moments of their visit here.

Bryn is often asked how long does a sketch take? His standard reply is 'three or four hours plus around fifty years of practice and experience'. He sees so much around him that he wants to paint and enjoy and feels blessed that in retirement he has the time and also the patience of his wife. Liz spends time enjoying their frequent time here in the Soller Valley exploring and catching up with friends while Bryn sits in his painting zone getting his daily fix.

As the day ends with another completed work he enjoys the other good things of the experience here. The company of family and friends, mountain walks, good food, wine and socialising with old and new friends. His work in Majorca begins and ends in the Soller Valley because this is where he lives when he is here. This does not mean that he paints exclusively 'Solleric'. His pictures of Lluch and Valldemossa and many other parts of the island are amongst the current portfolio of over 200 works which can be accessed online.

Bryn Hughes is a working artist telling the story of our wonderful valley in his sketches and watercolours. The success of his work is that he has the 'eye' for the quirky, unusual and interesting which reaches out to people when they know they are on the same wave length. There are many people in this valley who have changed the direction of their lives on retirement. A new business idea, the writing of a book, the start of a radio career, life as an artist, sailor, fitness instructor are all happening here to people that I know . What they have in common is that are all over 65 with minds open to the possibilities that this glorious place in the universe inspires.

I will treasure my Bryn Hughes original painting and set aside a corner of my sitting room to assemble a collection. These paintings will not remain undiscovered for long assuming you can get Bryn to part with them...