



An exhibition of traditional Aran hand knitting, community creativity and shared stories

EXHIBITION PROGRAMME

**Featuring the stories behind each of the knitted pieces
The Jury Café, The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon
Heritage Week 2026**



Inspired by the creativity of Aran knitters from Kilnagross during the 1950s and '60s, Stories in Stitches brings together local knitters and crafters to explore the heritage of traditional Aran hand knitting.

Within this programme, you will find the individual stories behind the knitted pieces—stories of memory, skill, place, family, imagination and connection, woven into every stitch.

A Leitrim County Council Heritage project led by Patricia O'Reilly, assisted by Mary Kelly, and funded by Creative Ireland.

Introduction – Stories in Stitches

A knitting Project to celebrate Heritage Week, with a central theme of reviving, passing on and protecting the vulnerable craft of Traditional Hand Knitting, while demonstrating the power of Creativity, Memory and Heritage as individual stories get told through stitch.

This project is inspired by the amazing creativity of Aran knitters from Kilnagross during the 1950's and 1960's, and the exhibition marks the long-term community project led by Patricia O Reilly and Mary Kelly.

A group of delightful individuals came together in April of this year and shared experiences, imagination, culture, traditional skills and Stories in Stitches, capturing wonderful connections between past and present.

Stories in Stitches brings to light how the vulnerable craft of Traditional Aran hand knitting has been revived in a contemporary social landscape, creating a social connection where many learned to knit for the first time and others shared patterns, experience, stories and time together.

Using needles, yarn, generations of knowledge, freedom to create, adapt and interpret stitches in personal ways, each knitter connected with a part of their own personal journey to weave their own experiences into the work - they wove their own stories into every stitch, revealing how this unique tradition continues to evolve while honouring its heritage.

I welcome you to celebrate this unique creative exhibition. The wide variety of engaging narratives highlights pivotal experiences of past life, places, love, relationships, human resilience, courage, determination, adventures, journeys, memories, emotions and the enduring legacy of Traditional Aran hand knitting.

I hope you enjoy the exhibition as much as we enjoyed creating it.

I feel privileged, along with Mary to have been blessed with the opportunity to lead this project. Together we shared knowledge, learning, connection, imagination, fun and a sense of shared heritage. I feel this is the beginning of another chapter in our lives.

Thanks to Mary Conlon, director of the Dock arts centre, Carrick on Shannon for facilitating, guiding and having patience in this our first experience of steering a project from beginning to exhibition. Thanks also to Jonathan Harte for looking after us each evening during our classes. We are grateful to Sarah Malone and Leitrim Co. Council and Creative Ireland for funding.



Synopsis of Each Exhibition Story

1. Alone, I am potential – together, we are creation –

By *Patricia O Reilly*

“I felt useless – not because I lacked strength or shape, but
because I lacked company”

2. The ass and cart were our tractor – By *Mary Kelly*

“The simple ways and neighbourly deeds filled our hearts
with joy”

3. The importance of love and the kind - By *Gwen*

Fitzgibbon

“You never regret loving too much, you only regret the
love you leave unspoken”

4. The thatched cottage – By *Monica Mahon*

“Among my dearest memories is watching my father carefully point the scallops that secured the thatched roof”

5. The Shannon salmon - By *Colette Langan*

“I actually managed to knit glass”

6. The knitting together of generations - By *Martina Mc Gowan*

“My mother wrote down these knitting patterns over
eighty years ago”

7. Emigration, return and belonging - By *Martha Smyth*

“Every stitch tells part of the story, but together they reveal
a deeper truth”

**8. My journey from Sligo to Donegal in the 1950's -
Woven in Stitches - By *Mary Mc Granaghan***

“There is something beautiful in that thought: the
landscape giving us the yarn and the human hands giving
it a story.

9. Family is one of nature's masterpieces – By
Marguerite O'Donohue

“One of my earliest memories is watching my Grandad
thatching a roof in a local village

10. Poll an Easa Waterfall [The hole of the Waterfall]
- By *Monica Ward*

“Come with me in Stories and Stitches to Aughnasheelin,
where the winding road guards a place of unspoiled
beauty, a hidden gem”

11. To begin another row – By *Bridie Mc Loughlin*

“In my lap rests a piece of knitting, unfinished”

12. My love affair with denim – By *Kitty Mc Daid*

“I made my first pair of jeans for myself in college when I
studied fashion design”

13. Inter county connections – Leitrim and Galway –

By Catherine Diffley

“It began when my parents moved from Leitrim to
Galway”

14. The story of our shop- The Magnet- Est. 1956 –

By Finola Armstrong-McGuire

“Retail is changing, but our values endure”

15. The bridge of Aisling – By Breda Stenson

“Eslin or Aisling, meaning dream or vision, carries a strong
sense of community and belonging”

16. On the crest of the wave – By Hazel Mulhall

“Surfing has taught me about joy, exhilaration and
resilience”

17. My ancestral tapestry – By *Johanne Lawrie*

“I come from three generations of weavers my mother, my
grandmother and my great grandmother”

**18. The old Courthouse – The Dock – By *Bernadette
Beirne***

“The courthouse’s significance, its decline and its
transformation into a thriving Arts Centre – The Dock”

**19. Childhood memories of Ormond Square, Dublin
– By *Catheryn Regan Mulvey***

“And just like that, the deal was struck, tight and closed as
a honeycomb cell”

Number 1

Alone, I was potential. Together, we are creation



By Patricia O'Reilly

I was born slender and silver,

Smooth as a whisper,

Tapered to a patient point.

I lay for years in the quiet drawer of a wooden desk,
beneath loose buttons and an old measuring tape.

Once I had belonged to a set of four – bright, identical
sisters bound together by elastic and purpose.

But one by one they disappeared, borrowed, bent,
misplaced.

I remained.

A single knitting needle.

Too long to be a pin.

Too blunt to be a sword.

Too Ordinary to be treasured.

I listened to the muffled world outside the drawer:
laughter, rain against the window, children playing.

I imagined the rhythm I had once known – the click and
slide, the soft tension of yarn looping over my neck.

I remembered the language of plain and purl, the quiet
choreography of making.

But alone, I could make nothing.

I could not cast on.

I could not hold tension.

I could not form even the smallest stitch.

A needle without a partner is only potential without
expression.

I felt useless – not because I lacked strength or shape, but
because I lacked company.

Then one afternoon the drawer opened.

Light poured in.

Warm fingers rummaged gently through the clutter and
paused when they found me.

They lifted me, turning me thoughtfully.

I braced myself for disappointment – surely, they would
sigh and put me back.

Instead, they smiled.

Moments later, I felt it: the unmistakable touch of another
needle placed beside me.

Not identical – slightly worn. A shade duller – but strong,
steady.

She tapped against me experimentally.

Click.

The sound rang like a bell through my hollow doubts.

Then came the yarn – a soft ball of deep blue, cool and full
of promise. It brushed against us like a whisper of wind
through tall grass.

And finally, the hands.

Skilled hands. Confident hands. Hands that knew the
dance.

We began

Cast on.

The yarn looped over me, then over her.

We passed stitches back and forth, trading tension like
conversation. Plain and purl. Plain and purl.

A gentle rhythm emerged, a music I had longed to hear
again.

Click. Slide. Loop. Pull.

With every stitch, I felt my purpose awaken.

I was no longer a lonely line of metal – I was a pathway for
possibility.

Together we shaped the yarn into rows.

Rows into patterns.

Patterns into cables that twisted like rivers and ribs that
rose like breathing.

We wove stories in stitches.

A garment began to grow between us – at first tentative,
then confident.

The blue yarn carried warmth within it, as we worked, that
warmth seemed to flow through me.

I realised something profound.

I had not changed.

I was still slender.

Still smooth and tapered.

Still only a needle.

But in the company – of another needle, of yarn, of capable
hands – I could become part of something far greater than
myself.

Good company does not melt you down or reshape your
core.

It does not demand you become different metal.

It aligns you.

It completes you.

It draws out what was waiting quietly inside.

Alone, I was potential.

Together, we are creation.

Number 2

The ass and cart were our tractor



By Mary Kelly

Growing up in the sixties, fond memories come to me,

Of my mother in her armchair with her knitting on her
knee,

Her knitting stayed in a flour bag, to keep it neat and clean,

Safe from dirty paws about the house and smoke from the
chimney beam.

The wool came in hanks back then and it had to be wound
into balls

My father would wind the wool for her as hard as a tennis
ball

With just two stitches plain and purl, she made some
lovely things

With the blackberry, the honeycomb, the cable and
diamond stitch-the beauty each one brings.

Mickey knit a bellyband for the ass with the scraps that
were left.

It was funny seeing the ass with his multicoloured belt.

Our summers were spent in the meadow saving hay or
stacking oats.

The hay ropes were made with a twisters, oh how I hated
pulling those bloody butts.

The ass and cart were our tractor, working hard each
passing day,

From bringing milk to the creamery then carrying home
the turf and hay.

They truly were the good old days with all the family
there,

Neighbours lending helping hands with kindness love and
cheer

The turkey hen met the turkey cock as nature planned with
care.

The sow was brought to Shanley's boar on Meelick's hill
up there

Those simple ways and neighbourly deeds filled our hearts
with joy.

Precious memories of country life that time cannot destroy

How swiftly all those years have flown, I am in my sixties
now,

Yet every stitch still brings me home somewhere and
somehow.

In every row my mother lives, my brother's laughter too

Their love is woven through this work, my story, stitched
anew.

Number 3

The Importance of Love and the Kind word



By Gwen Fitzgibbon

Love is the greatest gift we can give and receive.

It is in our family and friends.

Kind words brighten someone's darkest moment and day.

Love is not measured by what we own, but by what we
give.

Kind words, shared laughter, quiet sacrifices and warm
hugs.

In the end love is the only thing that we can truly leave behind, and the only thing that lives on, after we are gone.

After losing someone special you realize how little the rest of it matters.

You never regret loving too much, you only regret the love you leave unspoken.

Number 4

The Thatched Cottage



By Monica Mahon

My Story in Stitches is a deeply personal piece of knitting
that honours the home in which I grew up.

Through the language of stitch, it's a portrait of my home,
held not in paint or photographs, but in memory, yarn and
love.

My childhood was filled with happiness, laughter and the
quiet comfort of family life.

Among my dearest memories is watching my father carefully point the scallops that secured the thatched roof, each one placed with patience and skill to hold the straw against the wind and weather.

It was a labour of love, and one that has stayed with me throughout my life. This piece is as much a tribute to him as it is to the home we shared.

Our cottage was simple yet full of character, with whitewashed walls that glowed in the light and a traditional half-door that let in the fresh country air while keeping curious children safely inside.

Every stitch in this work holds its own story. The basket stitch around the edges represents the frontage – textured like the gravel around the house.

Garter stitch conveys the strength and reliability of its whitewashed walls.

The stocking stitch divided by a raised stitch, recalls the vertical slats of the traditional wooden half door.

Raised stitches define the window surrounds and sills, and textured stitching in the chimney reflects its weathered brickwork.

Seed stitch captures the soft, organic texture of the thatched roof, bringing to life the craftsmanship that once protected our family home.

The cottage has since disappeared, replaced by modern housing. While those buildings serve a practical purpose, they cannot replace the warmth, character and sense of place that defined our family home.

I remember every detail as if it were only yesterday. Time may have passed, but the cottage remains a place of joy, happiness and treasured moments that I carry in my heart.

Number 5

The Shannon Salmon



By Colette Langan

I was really excited to be asked to take part in this exhibition. It's really exciting to work with a bunch of people. I was particularly interested in learning how to knit because I have never knitted before.

I know how to crochet because I find it very hard to manage a number of stitches on the needle. I'm known for being good at working with my hands, but I just could

never quite handle so many stitches. I'd drop them and lose them, so I always stuck with crochet.

We were asked to come up with a theme, and I love going for my walk in the morning. I walk to the River Shannon bridge, but I decided that the bridge itself wasn't particularly interesting. So, I was thinking about it: how would I depict my walk, the things that mattered to me and what was going on in Carrick, in the Shannon. I feel very grateful to live so close.

At that time, I heard something on the radio about the decline of salmon, which I found very alarming. The person who was monitoring what was happening with the River Shannon said that only thirty-five fish had gone through the counting gate that week, whereas normally, in other years, they would expect there to be at least 250.

So, I thought back to the salmon and the many times that I had come across it through art, through talking to children and through mythology. I had already included it in my own work a couple of times because I loved the story of Shannon, the goddess, and how she made the River Shannon at the Shannon Pot.

In my pieces of work, I included a salmon which was depicting the Salmon of Knowledge. I hope that we learn – and learn to take better care of our environment – and that we manage to get the salmon, and all the fish, and our environment into a better state than it is in at the moment.

Leading on from this project, I was thinking about glass - the medium that I love and use, and I like to experiment with it. I recently learned about being able to turn glass powder into a paste. That paste could be put into a solution, which would then turn into a kind of slightly plastic substance. This made me able to manipulate the glass in such a way that I could make it into a type of string.

From there, I literally knitted glass – and I also attempted to crochet it as well. After it was made, I fired it in the kiln.

So, I actually managed to knit glass!

Number 6

The Knitting Together of Generations



By Martina Mc Gowan

To start off I'll share some background information to this piece.

My mother Rose Ann learned the craft of knitting from her mother Bridget by the fireside in her home

near Belturbet, Co Cavan back in the 1930's.

Her mother was from the parish of Corlough in west Cavan. Unlike many of her generation she didn't emigrate to England or America, she stayed in her native county. She worked as a milliner in a drapery shop in Cootehill, creating hats which were an integral part of the wardrobe for ladies at that time. When she got married and went on to rear her family, she continued to use her creative skills to knit, sew, make sheets from floor bags and patch, as her daughter Rose Ann observed and learned.

My mother wrote down these knitting patterns which are on display in the frame, over 80 years ago, using the graceful and artistic penmanship shown. She followed these patterns many times to produce some beautiful garments.

To pay homage to them both, I retraced the path back to my mother's ancestral home in Gortaquill, Belturbet to that fireside by taking up the knitting needles and wool and attempting to replicate her work.

Stitch by stitch, row by row, I watched with much admiration and gratitude as these knitted pieces emerged.

The rusty pin in the centre of the frame held the pages together. A metaphor in a way for my mother, and for all

mothers, because they keep their families together with bonds of love, warmth and friendship.

The title 'The Knitting Together of Generations' signifies knitting together the strands of wool which are my grandmother Bridget, my mother RoseAnn, my sister Ann and myself.

I hope to pass this piece on to my nieces Clara and Eva so they can have an insight into the generations who went before them and who loved to create by crafting and using their imagination.

Number 7

Emigration Return and Belonging



by Martha Smith

As the youngest in a small Irish family, my life has been shaped by my parents leaving home, returning for important moments, and eventually coming home for good, a story which I repeated finally returning permanently after twenty-six years abroad.

My Story in Stitches begins with simple knit and purl stitches, representing the ordinary rhythms of family life in Ireland before emigration. These basic stitches are the foundation of every knitted garment, just as family, community, and place form the foundation of who we are.

The stocking stitch reflects the long years spent abroad. Smooth and even, it represents the outward appearance of a settled life, new opportunities, and the experiences gained through emigration. Yet, like the reverse side of stocking stitch, there is always another story beneath the surface – the one of longing, memory and connection to home.

Moss stitch symbolizes the many journeys home for holidays. Its alternating texture reflects the back-and-forth movement between two places, two lives, and two identities. Each visit home renews family bonds and reminds us that distance does not diminish belonging.

The cable stitch represents family ties. Strong, intertwined, and enduring. The cables mirror the relationships that connect generations across time and distance. No matter how far family members travel, these bonds remain woven together.

Blackberry stitch, with its rich texture and raised clusters, represents the gatherings that occur during life's most significant moments, particularly funerals. These occasions bring families and communities together in grief, remembrance, and support. Though often difficult, they reinforce the strength of shared history and collective memory.

The completed picture culminates in a final return home after twenty-six years abroad. All of the stitches come together in one fabric, just as the experiences of leaving, returning, celebrating, grieving, and belonging combine to create a life's journey.

Every stitch tells part of the story, but together they reveal a deeper truth: the threads of the family, identity, and home remain woven into our hearts.

Number 8

My Journey from Sligo to Donegal in the 1950's - Woven in Stitches



By Mary McGranaghan

We left Riverstown, Co. Sligo, in the quiet of an early morning, the road ahead stretching towards Donegal.

There was soft anticipation of a journey beginning – the countryside slowly waking as we travelled, my father at the wheel, my mother beside him, my sister and two brothers close by. "It will be a long journey," my father said – and so it was.

But journeys are not measured only in miles. Some remain with us in the colours of a landscape, in the rhythm of a road, in the voices of those who travelled beside us.

For my Stories in Stitches panel, I choose blue and green tweed wool – the colours of the landscape we passed through: green fields beneath an open sky, the blue-grey of the distant hills, and the ever-changing colours of Ireland.

I began with the garter stitch, row upon row, each stitch gently following the one before it.

Ben Bulbin arose from the landscape in blocks of plain and purl stitch. At its centre I placed a diamond, a long, winding shape to represent the road – that ribbon of grey carrying us onwards towards the far north.

For my family, I choose grape stitch, or bobble stitch. They became my family, travelling together, held within one memory.

Then came Bundoran, where the land gives way to the sea. For the coast and its restless waves I used waffle stitch – its texture rising and falling like water, like the Atlantic breathing against the shore.

The journey continued – beyond Donegal town, towards Barnesmore Gap. Here I added the honeycomb stitch, its little cells echoing the pattern of the countryside and the quiet abundance of the land.

And everywhere there were sheep – scattered across the hills, white against the green.

Sheep that gave us wool. Wool that passed through hands, was wound and knitted, ripped and knitted again.

There is something beautiful in that thought: the landscape giving us the yarn and human hands giving it a story.

We travelled through Ballybofey and Stranorlar until at last we reached Rath Bhoth – Raphoe

And the journey came to its end. But in the knitting, it did not really end.

I returned to garter stitch, added row upon row, coming back to the gentle rhythm with which the journey had begun.

Then using cotton thread, I made an I-cord and shaped it into a circle. This is to remember Beltany Stone Circle,

standing on the hill above Raphoe – a much older presence in this landscape, a place carrying the mystery of people who lived here long before my story began. Beside this I placed a church and a dove. The church carries the memory of the early Christian story of Raphoe. St Colmcille is associated with the foundation of a monastery here, and centuries of faith and history have gathered around the place. St Eunan, a kinsman of Colmcille, later became the ninth Abbott of Iona.

And so, somehow, the old and the new meet in the final stitches: the ancient stones – the early church – the hills and sheep, the winding road, the sea at Bundoran. And a family travelling together on a morning long ago.

What began as a journey from Riverstown to Raphoe has become something else now. It has become a journey held in wool. A landscape remembered in colour. A family remembered in stitches. A road remembered in a winding yarn.

And perhaps that is what knitting allows us to do – to take something fleeting and make it last.

One stitch for the road. One stitch for the land. One stitch
for the people we carried with us. And when the final
stitch is made, the journey is still there – quietly woven,
waiting to be remembered.

Number 9

Family is one of nature's masterpieces



by Marguerite O Donohoe

My knitting project symbolises family and childhood memories. I was glad to get the opportunity to be a part of the project, which definitely challenged my skills and really opening my eyes to the creative side of knitting. Whilst I have followed many patterns to create complicated knitting pieces, I have never created a project using my own pattern or creative skills. This initiative has helped me learn how to create something unique and also

reiterated the importance of perseverance, even when things are not easy.

One of my earliest memories is watching my Grandad thatching a roof in a local village (cable weave stitch at the top of the project symbolises this). He was 76 when I was born so was likely nearly 80 at that time. I also remember vividly my grandmother churning butter – I loved the taste of the fresh buttermilk which was quickly used up (X and O stitch at the two sides of the project symbolises the churn). I remember the wooden paddles she used to shape the butter and make the pattern in top. She sold the butter to a health food shop in town and it always sold out quickly.

My grandparents stayed with traditional methods of farming/homemaking and did not move to modern methods, which most people were doing at the time. Nanny made her loaves of bread in a large pot on an open fire – she always made a mini loaf for me. My fondest childhood memories were from my time spent with my grandparents and cousins on the farm and in the countryside. These special memories and moments stayed with me through my life.

Knitted craft is also in my genes! My Grandmother on my Dad's side has just turned 90 and is still knitting daily. She knitted from a young age, selling aran jumpers to tourists. She gets regular requests for knitted items by family and knits for all the new babies born. She was delighted recently to knit some baby items for her new great great grandson who was born in Australia. She is blessed to see 5 generations still living.

Both of my grandmothers taught me the basics of knitting and I taught myself the more complex stitches and taught myself to crochet. My children are all boys and have not yet shown an interest in knitting, but I have a baby niece who I will hopefully be able to teach to knit and pass the skill on.

My childhood was very different to my own children's childhood, 3 of my children are young adults now. I grew up without much technology and surrounded by cousins who I spent most of my free time with. We picked fruit such as strawberries and blackberries to make money, I grew up in Wexford so we had this opportunity (blackberry stitch at the bottom of my knitting project symbolises the fruit). My children grew up in Leitrim with only their immediate family and Grandmother close by,

they only have 3 cousins who do not live in Ireland. Whilst their childhood was very different to mine, they spent their time together and are very close. They love visiting Wexford and visiting Aunts/Uncles and cousins and love hearing my memories of childhood. My children did not experience the same childhood as me but they have their own special childhood memories in Leitrim. They remain close to my roots and Wexford holds a special place in their heart. They feel the magic and importance of family. The tree at the centre of my project symbolises family. To me it symbolises my family, my four children and all my extended family. It symbolises the memories of different generations growing up and how family experiences shape the people we become.

Number 10

Poll an Easa Waterfall “The Hole of the Waterfall”.



By Monica Ward

**Come with me in stories and stitches to Aughnasheelin,
where the winding road guards a place of unspoiled
beauty, a hidden gem.**

The source of the waterfall is the Sliabh an Íarainn – The Iron Mountain, named after its iron ore deposits.

Starting with the **moss** stitch which represents the rugged mountain where the river rises. The bumpy texture of the moss symbolises the wild heather.

The **double diamond** patter illustrates the two cascading waterfalls tumbling over the rocks. The **cable** characterises the upper and lower falls as the water dances endlessly in silver, white or foamy motion.

I choose the **twist** stitch to represent the water-wheel of the old scotch mill. This honours the waterfalls history in refining flax and powering local industry. Once the people here grew flax in narrow fields, pulled blue flowered crops from the earth, retting or soaking them in bog pools and streams until the fibres loosened from the stalk.

The bundles were carried to the mill, and the scutching began – timber wheels turning, water rushing, fibres beaten, free to become linen, destined for homes far beyond Leitrim.

The **honeycomb** stitch, the gathering place, the busy place where locals and visitors down the years have gathered. Many generations have learned to swim here and continue to do so.

Nothing like a dip in the cold water after a hard day's work.

I crafted the **twig** stitch to run the length of the piece. It symbolises the trees and dense vegetation that line the waterfall and riverbanks.

Moving from the rush of the waterfall, through the structured depth of the honeycomb and finally settling into a **basketweave**. The interlocking stitches symbolise containment and peace, a basket woven by nature to hold the rivers memories.

It watched generations arrive with work worn hands and leave with tired smiles. It watched seasons come and go like the ebb and flow of the water.

For my generation it is a place of happiness and relaxation, peaceful surroundings, birds singing, trees blowing in the breeze, nature at its best.

The **garter** stitch reminds us that the rushing water continues on its journey into the Yellow River – “An Abhainn Bhui” symbolised in the yellow colour of the chosen wool.

At the end of every wild and roaring cascade, a place of quiet, predictable peace awaits.

My own story is part of Aughnasheelin too, gently stitched
onto its landscape like thread through linen – woven in
yellow yarn, among waterfalls, birdsong, mountain water
and the enduring heartbeat of the Yellow River.

Number 11

To Begin Another Row



By Bridie Mc Loughlin

I hear the quiet click of needles
and I feel the years returning.

I am older now,

and I want to tell my story in stitches.

Back in the early nineteen-sixties,

when we gathered softly

around turf fires and tilly lamps,

my neighbour Rose

welcomed a group of local women

into the world

of Aran Knitting

in Kilnagross old school

every Monday night.

Women came, carrying wool, stories,

and tired hands from long days.

I came carrying curiosity

There, beneath the old blackboards

And the smell of the turf fire,

I learned the language of Aran patterns –

the twisting cable,
the patient blackberry stitch,
the careful counting of rows.
I learned how beauty is made slowly.
I learned how mistakes can be undone
without ruining the whole garment.

Soon my hands grew clever.
Perfect Aran jumpers and cardigans
Flowed from my needles,
cream-coloured like freshly churned butter,
and I was paid for my work.

Then, life as it does,
began knitting its own pattern for me.
I married Michael Mc Loughlin,
I raised children.

I ran a successful business
through busy mornings and weary nights.

There were school shoes to buy,
meals to cook, accounts to balance,
tears to dry,
birthdays to celebrate.

And threaded through it all
Were the darker rows –
The dropped stitch of sorrow.

One by one
I lost people I loved.
Voices fell silent.
Chairs emptied.
Doors closed for the last time.

I learned to live without them

with photographs, memories,
and the hush that comes after grief.
Yet, life, mysterious as wool unwinding,
has circled back to me again.

Rose is long gone,
but her daughter
has started another knitting group.

And there I sit once more,
older hands holding younger wool,
hearing laughter rise
against the walls of the evening.

In my lap
rests a piece of knitting unfinished.

I turn it over often,
study its uneven places,

its loose threads
its strong careful parts.

And I think:

This is my life.

Not perfect.

Not finished.

Still becoming.

A work in progress,

Stitched together

With love, loss, endurance,

and the grace

To begin another row.

Number 12

My Love affair with Denim



By Kitty McDaid

I grew up in rural Wicklow, the 5th of 10 children with an Irish father and English mother. My father's family emigrated from Dublin to London when he was 17 but he returned in his early twenties with my mother and 2 eldest brothers.

Both my parents were born at the end of World War Two and attended boarding school as teenagers. The post war rationing they were raised with and the discipline of boarding school had an influence on their parenting and

we had a very structured upbringing, the effort of which I only appreciated after I became a parent myself.

They were liberal minded parents and great educators, at home and outside. We were brought to numerous plays, musical performances, art exhibitions, museums and cultural landmarks throughout our childhood. At home we grew all our own fruit and vegetables which were preserved in pits or kilner jars to sustain us over the winter months. Everything was home-baked and nothing was left to waste. Clothes were mended and socks were darned.

As is often the case in large families I was very keen to keep up with my older siblings. I pestered my mother to teach me how to bake a cake. Once I'd conquered that, I set my sights on my next challenge. I knew how to knit and hand sew but I was determined to use her Singer sewing machine. It had a hand crank so required a bit of dexterity to guide the fabric and operate the crank at the same time. As soon as I mastered it, I was hooked.

I graduated from making dolls clothes, bags and a dress for my little sister to clothes for myself. Jeans were a staple for me and I spent many Saturdays in my teenage years traipsing around second hand shops in Temple Bar searching for the perfect pair of Levi 501s. I made my first

pair of jeans for myself in college where I studied fashion design. My third year project was a denim collection which earned me a prize in the Smirnoff Young Designer Awards.

Despite being a relatively modern material, denim is ingrained in every part of society from workwear to high fashion. I love its versatility and the fact it transcends gender and geography.

Even though I was born and raised in Ireland, I didn't have a 'traditional' Irish upbringing which leaves me a little confused about my cultural identity.

In my rural primary school I envied my friends with numerous first, second and third cousins and the constant social occasions that go along with being part of an extended family group in the local community. The majority of my extended family lived in the UK and we rarely saw them.

Where my friends had homemade brown bread in their lunchboxes, I had Victoria Sponge made by my English mother.

With my skewed cultural heritage, I don't feel a connection to a particular place but am a bit of a hoarder when it

comes to items that hold good memories for me. That includes clothing, such as a metallic purple batwing cardigan I hand knitting at 15 and could have sold 10 times over when I was at Irish College in Donegal. Or the top I bought in New York that I was wearing the night I met my husband in a Dublin pub.

My love affair with denim has been a constant in my life. All my jeans have a story to tell and feel like part of my identity. Some I have kept or recycled parts of them and some I remember in photographs. When I see them, I am flooded with memories of adventures from my past. Clothing is my way of cataloguing my own history and creating this panel is adding another piece to that. I love texture and knitting has been something I have enjoyed since I was a child. Creating a panel using Aran stitches and meshing it with my story has been challenging. It has made me question what has made me the person I am and what heritage I will be passing on to my own children.

A description of my knitted panel

I've used a **diagonal basket weave cable stitch** to frame my knitted panel symbolising the waistband of a pair of jeans with some denim loops attached.

The main body is a **herringbone stitch** to mimic the texture of denim.

The brand patch on jeans is represented by a raised section of **stocking stitch** with embroidered lettering.

A zip from a pair of jeans is inserted in to the right side of the herringbone stitches.

In the top right corner a representation of a coin pocket is knitted in the **blackberry stitch**.

The patch pocket is knitted in a **seersucker stitch** and attached separately.

Yellow yarn is used to mimic top stitching thread on denim.

A woven button traditionally used on Aran knitwear and a button from a pair of jeans are attached to represent the mix of cultures.

A keyring hangs from the bottom of the panel with the
letter 'K' as my signature

Number 13

Intercounty Connections Leitrim and Galway



By Catherine Diffley

On our first night of this 'Stories in Stitches' knitting project, Patricia told us the story of her mother going from County Leitrim to County Galway to learn the art of Aran knitting. She then returned to teach these Aran stitches to the ladies in Leitrim. Patricia continued the story, telling us about the wool coming from Galway to Leitrim and the Aran jumpers being hand knitted by the ladies of the Kilnagross knitting group. The finished Aran jumpers were

then returned to Galway to be sold. This gave me the idea for my 'Story in Stitches'.

It began when my parents moved from Leitrim to Galway. My journey similar to the wool became one with connections between the same two counties, Leitrim and Galway. Like the wool I've come back and forth between the counties all my life. The bridge in Carrick always the entry into County Leitrim.

Later on in life, my heart was taken by a Leitrim man and I came to live in Carrick on Shannon. My journey continued between both counties, now in the opposite direction, like the knitted Aran jumpers I return home to Galway. I have crossed county borders many times like intertwining cables.

Now, my three children continue the journey with me. The bridge in Carrick continues as always to be a symbol of leaving Leitrim and our return from Galway. Although this 'Story in Stitches' project has finished, I hope to continue my journey in wool. Returning to Galway to buy some new wool for my next project and continue the Aran knitting journey that this project has awoken in me.

Number 14

The Story of our Shop – The Magnet – Est. 1956



By Finola Armstrong McGuire

Basket Stitch – I see a basket is ready to be filled,
reminding us always to mind the customer.

The Strong Cable at the side represents the strength and
firmness of the business, rooted securely in its place within
the community. There is structure in the form.

The Trinity Stitch within the picture reflects the core of the work of retail and the shared effort between retailer and staff: we buy. We Display. We sell.

The Diamond Stitch – At the centre lies the Diamonds – the true purpose of the business – creating our own income through hard work, service and trust.

In the early years, we handled cash in pounds, shillings and pennies. Wages and Creamery cheques were accepted regularly into the till drawer. Some items left the shop “on appro”, with names carefully written into the red book until items were paid for at the week end or month end.

Then came the Punt and Pence. Hand written personal cheques became more popular, yet “appro” still remained part of the relationship between customer and shopkeeper.

The next great change brought the Euro and the Cent. Debit and Credit cards replaced much of the old Appro system, and transactions rang through registers connected by Electricity and Wi-Fi. Retail modernised, but the heart of the business remained the same.

The Honeycomb Stitch – Through every era, we worked like bees in a honeycomb – busy, connected, and

purposeful. Seasoned changed, styles adjusted, colours trended, and we enjoyed the rhythm of retail life.

Today we continue to evolve. We have joined the online world and are experiencing another season of change. Facebook and Instagram are our “Shop Window” now too.

The Owl – To move forward successfully, we need the wisdom of the owl – the wisdom to adapt while remaining true to ourselves.

The foundations remain unchanged – Buy. Display. Sell.

We continue this work within our walls while also embracing a specialist online presence, focusing particularly on school wear for children and young adults.

Retail is changing, but our values endure. We move into the future with experience behind us, wisdom beside us, and community at the centre of all we do.

Number 15

Bridge of Aisling



By Breda Stenson

My “*Stories in Stitches*” creation is a circle, filled with seed stitch, surrounded by a *Caim* with a bridge in the centre.

This reflects the journey of my life, lovingly enfolding family, friends, community, connection and dreams.

Life is a circle. The end of one journey is the beginning of the next.

Bridges rise from hands that try, they span the gap and are
built with hope and courage, carrying dreams across
uncertainty and turning distant possibilities into paths we
dare to follow.

I was born in Farnagh, the youngest of five children, raised
on a farm where we lived simply and worked together.

Everyone helped – in the house, on the land and within the
community.

Those early years taught me the value of family, hard work
and neighbourliness.

At twenty-four, I created my own circle and crossed that
bridge when I moved to Eslin after my marriage to Enda.

I carried memories of home with me, while embracing new
beginnings, new bonds and the promise of belonging.

At first our circle was small and fragile and it began to fill
with strength and love.

With every birth and every marriage, our circle grows.

Every joy shared, adds more meaning.

Every crisis faced together makes our circle stronger.

Our family roots grow deep and strong within that warm welcoming place.

Our hearts were overflowing while raising our five children and later welcoming nine precious grandchildren.

Family and community are always at the heart of who we are.

The bridge in my creation represents the many crossings in life – from one home to another, from one stage of life to the next.

It also reflects the people who have come and gone throughout my life. Some have stayed for many years, while others are only with us for a short time, but each has left a mark.

Eslin or *Aisling*, meaning “dream” or “vision”, carries a strong sense of community and belonging.

The bridge itself is at the heart of the area and has long been a meeting place beside the church, school, creamery, shop and post office – a centre of everyday life and connection.

The colours I choose, reflect both the parish in the present day and its ancient coat of arms from long ago.

I placed my story within a circle, stitched gently with Seed stitch and surrounded by a *Caim*, an ancient Celtic and Gaelic form of protection where the precious seeds I have planted throughout my life are held and blessed.

The *Caim* is linked to prayers and blessings attributed to St Columba, founder of Iona Abbey, symbolising shelter, guidance and protection during difficult times.

In the circle we are all equal, no one is in front of another, no one is behind, no one is above, no one is below.

For me, bridges are about more than roads or rivers. They represent hope, resilience and the possibility of new beginnings.

The *Caim* refers to a circular prayer drawn around those we care about to invoke a sense of safety, sacredness and protection, even in the darkest of times.

“Circle us, keep protection near and darkness afar”

Number 16

On the Crest of the Waves



By Hazel Mulhall

It's Saturday morning, early and whether the rain is falling in sheets on the roof or the wind is howling around the gable; whether the waves are pumping green and glassy or the sea is flat as far as the eye can see I rise from my bed and make my way to the coast. I leave the week and any of its troubles bundled carelessly with the clothes I discard in the back of the car.

I look over the water, my body tingling with anticipation. I stand with my little tribe of women surfers gathered ready for the challenge and joy of our ocean therapy.

We approach and enter. The waves are lapping our ankles and we are smiling and laughing already as we share the little stories and the big stories of our lives. The waves crash over us; we paddle out resilient against them.

Now I sit watching and waiting for just the right wave; poised and ready for that magical moment when the extraordinary power and energy of the sea lifts me up and carries me forward. The white horses of the breaking waves stretch out either side of me, racing with me and I am flying, exalted; my heart full with this moment, with the beauty of the ocean, with the priceless treasure of these people and this place.

Each wave caught is a reminder that there is joy to be found in every day.

The encouraging voices whooping over the roar of the waves telling me again that I am not alone.

This summer marks four years since I tentatively joined a small group of equally nervous and excited women for our first surf lesson at Rossnowlagh Surf Club in Donegal. I had no idea then how surfing and this community of women would change and enrich my life.

Some of us continued to meet up to surf together on Saturday mornings into the autumn and even through the winter. As the weather grew colder and the beach got quieter we realised how essential it was to carve out the time and space in our lives for this weekly ritual.

Surfing has taught me about joy, exhilaration and resilience; the women have taught me about compassion, strength and community. We all have our struggles and time in the waves with this tribe helps to wash them away for a little while.

My knitted panel depicts a coastal scene - the sand, the waves and the rain in the sky - sitting sheltered under a rooftop symbolising a sense of community and belonging.

The loops that enclose the scene at either side represent my tribe of women surfers and our surf boards but they are also symbols of our connection to each other and to the environment.

Number 17

My Ancestral Tapestry



By Joanne Lawrie

I have lived in Leitrim for twenty-five years.

My Story in Stitches is inspired by a painting my mother completed whilst attending Ck on Shannon active age group.

She had been asked to do a “Coat of Arms”.

She choose to paint the national flower of the countries where her three daughters were born.

I have a keen interest in my family's history.

My mother's family is originally from Cork, and my own daughter was born in Sligo.

My sister Sandra was born in Belfast.

The Shamrock represents this.

The Thistle is for my sister Diane and my father who were both born in Edinburgh, Scotland.

I have fond memories of my family in Edinburgh, where I spent my school holidays.

The Rose of England represents my mum's and my own and my son's birth place of Preston, Lancashire.

A mill town.

I come from three generations of weavers, my mother, my grandmother and my great grandmother.

The Lotus set off to one side is there to represent my paternal grandmother's line who are from Bombay, India.

I consider myself very fortunate to have such a wide tapestry of cultures to draw on.

Number 18

The Old Courthouse – The Dock



By Bernadette Beirne

Going into this building on Thursday 9th April to attend an information meeting on the upcoming event “Stories in Stitches”, brought back many memories for me.

I hadn’t been in the building for quite some time and climbing the stone staircase I wondered to myself how many times I had gone up and down these steps.

You see, I worked in this building for over fifteen years,
from 1978 to 1993.

I worked in the Accounts and Finance section of Leitrim
County Council during that time.

Designed by architect, William Farrell, this historic
limestone building dates all the way back to 1822,
completed in 1828.

It served as the central hub for the administration of justice
in Leitrim.

Following the passing of the Local Government Ireland Act
1898, the courthouse housed the newly established Leitrim
County Council, providing a council chamber for meetings
and administration offices for the council from 1898 until
1994.

A busy place where people came to tax their cars, renew
driving licences, pay rates, attend housing and planning
departments.

Council staff, both administration and outdoor staff were
paid from the finance section and all creditor invoices.

The court systems operated from here, with district and
circuit court hearings.

On court sitting days the foyer would fill with people,
noise, chat and a great air of excitement prevailed.

Leitrim County Council moved out in 1994 due to inadequate facilities and structural decay.

The court service continued to operate from the building until 1997, when they moved to the new courthouse.

The building left unused fell into further decay.

Following extensive debate and discussion on its future the building underwent comprehensive restoration and refurbishment led by Leitrim County Council to purpose the neglected building into a modern culture venue.

It opened to the public on 20th August 2025 known as “The Dock” which now houses a performance space, art galleries, artist’s studios and is home to Leitrim Design House.

This is a snapshot of the history of this building, which I tried to portray in stitches.

The moss stitch edging represents the strong stone foundation of the paved area surrounding the courthouse and its steps leading to the building.

The cables represent the pillars which once stood outside indicating the strong structural element of a courthouse, symbolizing the strength and stability of the law.

The stone structure in the centre of the building represented by the zig zag pattern flanked by the basket stitch representing the different administrative offices of the council and court systems.

The honeycomb stitch represents the staff working in the offices, busy as bees. The honeycomb stitch flows into the tree of life stitch representing the many staff who worked here, some for many years, and the branches represent the many friendships forged while at work.

The Scales of Justice represent the building as it is now known, "The Dock" and its place in the administration of justice down through the years.

The music noted represent the new beginning for the building, offering music, drama, dance and theatre.

This building holds many memories for me. It is where I came to work everyday for fifteen years, worked hard, made many lifelong friends and great memories of the fun and games we got up to back then.

My Story in Stitches represents the courthouse's significance, it's decline and its transformation into a thriving Arts Centre - "The Dock".

Number 19

Childhood memories of Ormond Square Dublin 7



By Catheryn Regan Mulvey

My knitted piece is based on memories of my early childhood home in Ormond Square, nestled between the Law Courts, the City Fruit and Vegetable Market, the Fish Market, and the River Liffey. The river was never simply a waterway, it was a border. It kept us anchored to the Northside, a tight-knit community where everybody knew one another, and life stitched itself together through family, neighbours, and the everyday hustle and bustle of the street.

It is an overview of the community in and around the square. The two lines of cable represent the River Liffey flowing twisting and crossing as it flowed past the markets on its way to the docks. The diamond stitch reflects the market itself, the ins and outs of the produce, boxes and crates and baskets passing hand to hand, in one door and out another, the whole square turning over its goods before most of Dublin was even awake.

Between the cables, the single honeycomb holds the shape of the net, that great, unspoken net of neighbours and family who minded each other's children and each other's business, all interlocking. Running the length of it, the rib stands firm and straight, reminder of the way the cobblestones themselves stood firm underfoot, worn smooth and shiny by the horses and flatbed trailers that travelled over them every morning, bringing produce into the city markets and its community to work.

The mornings were a symphony played out on those cobblestones. Long before the city fully woke, the rhythmic "clap-clat" of horses' hooves and the rumble of trailers over the stones created a soothing musical tune. It was the joyful sound of the market coming alive. There was always someone shouting, laughing, or bargaining, the whole

place buzzing before most of Dublin was even awake. The women were a force of nature, their Silver Cross prams at the ready to buy fruit, vegetables, and fish to sell on Moore Street for a small profit. They had great banter with the country farmers who came in with their trailers loaded from the early hours.

There was warmth in all of it. Everybody knew one another, and even the arguments carried laughter. Many of the women left their own children sleeping at home, minded by neighbours or family, part of that great, unspoken net of community support that held the Northside together. The sounds of the inner-city economy echoed through the streets for all to hear and see. I can still hear the sharp Dublin voices ringing out across the square. The women always called the farmers by their full titles, like Mr Purdy, as a mark of respect, each relying on one another, just one big family. Then, the lilt back and forward would begin when the bargaining commenced. The bargaining went back and forth the way the cable crossed itself, twisting one way then doubling back, never quite settling until the price did.

"Ah Mr Purdy, go wan outta dat, what's yezzer best price?"

"Ah sure woman, yer robbin' me!" "Mr Purdy, yea can do

better than that surely." "Better? I might as well be givin' them away for that price!" "Ah here now, will yeah tro in another box and we'll call it a deal." "Ye're not buyin', ye're beggin', woman!" "I've a wife and family to feed and all, ye know!" "Ah go wan and stop yer moanin', ye'll make it back before lunchtime!" "Ah tanks, I'll see yeah Thursdee, Mr Purdy."

And just like that, the deal was struck, tight and closed as a honeycomb cell, the diamond stitch turning over one more sale, the rib holding the whole exchange steady underneath it all.

The afternoons were softer and quieter. Sometimes the river moved gently, rippling only when a river fly landed or a fish rose briefly for breath, the cable in the piece easing its twist the way the river eased its pace. Other times it seemed to hurry itself towards the docklands, eager to meet the open sea and the cargo ships travelling onwards to faraway lands, the cable running through the centre of the piece like the Liffey itself, always moving toward something further on.

At other times, the river brought us moments of great joy. During the annual Liffey swim, we would stand along the boundary walls, the rib standing just as firm and straight

beneath us as it does in the piece, waving and cheering as the swimmers passed by, their brightly coloured hats bobbing back and forth along the water like beads strung along the honeycomb's net. Those were proud and happy days, memories carried like the river itself, always moving but never truly gone.