

## Leitrim based artist, Johnnie Lawson gets over 5 million views on his YouTube channel

OVER THE PAST two years, people from all over the world have had the opportunity to spend time in some of the most relaxing spots around Leitrim. This has been made possible due to an innovative video based idea by artist, Johnnie Lawson who moved to Leitrim 13 years ago. He provides viewers with the chance to spend a few relaxing moments enjoying a scene from the northwest of Ireland. Capturing the visual and auditory tranquility of the landscape, Johnnie offers viewers the opportunity to view these soothing videos without even having to leave their favorite armchair, or if they prefer they can be viewed on a smart phone via the internet while out and about. *Johnnie tells us how this all came about.*

"Two years ago I uploaded video based art work onto the internet via Youtube. This was filmed in the natural landscape here in the northwest. I received messages from viewers saying how they were using the soothing images and sounds of the video to help them relax after a hard days work or when they were feeling stressed. A number of people asked me if I would consider filming other locations so they would have a choice of scenes and natural sounds. Requests also came in for the addition of relaxing music to some of the videos. These comments encouraged me to think about how lucky I am to live amongst all this beautiful nature, here in Leitrim and the northwest in general. We can too easily take all this for granted and we often do. It is no harm to remind ourselves regularly that there are millions of people all over this planet of ours who for various reasons will never have the opportunity to witness a beautiful natural environment like this first hand".

"I look for the kind of place any of us would go to get in touch with nature and find a few moments of peace and calm. I don't choose the spectacular scenes, but rather the more intimate places we like to sit and relax, like the bend in a river, the shore of a lake watching the ripples on the water, the bank of a mountain stream, focusing on a tiny waterfall set amongst flowering heather, or watching an early morning

mist roll across the surface of a still lake. I select locations we would consider a more private place, one where we can feel alone and in touch with the beauty and simplicity of nature. One such place is amongst a small clump of trees beside a rocky waterfall behind the picturesque town of Dromahair on the river Bonnet.

"The day I filmed this video, I arrived in the soft grey light of an early summer's morning. Crossing the weather beaten concrete bridge over the Bonnet, I turned right onto the river's left bank and followed the flow of the water. Wandering along the narrow meandering path, snaking its way under the shade of tall bare trunked conifers reaching skywards, I feasted on the gentle sounds of morning which filled the cool still air. Water, as dark as stout with peat, washed down from the upland bogs and rushed alongside, tumbling through the rocky river bed towards Loch Gill, and eventually on out to the Atlantic ocean via the Garavogue river. A symphony of birdsong rang out from the leaf laden branches around and about me.

"The path petered out to a mucky track which completed the last few yards to a clump of trees on a muddy bank protruding out into the course of the river, overhanging the turbulent waters rushing noisily over the picturesque waterfall. The rich green of the surrounding trees breathed visual life into the otherwise dark scene.

"I composed the image that I felt portrayed the scene best and set up my camera on its sturdy tripod, overlooking and focusing on the rushing water. Pressing the record button on my camera, I sat back in silence meditating on the wonderful scene in front of me and the sounds that surrounded me, not a manmade sound amongst them. I felt so alive and at peace that morning as my camera greedily drank up the beauty before it.

This has turned out to be one of my most popular videos.

"A sense of each individual place is what I hope to capture and share with anyone, anywhere, who has access to the World Wide Web."

According to feedback Johnnie is receiving



from viewers to his channel, these relaxing videos are proving very popular with students who play them as they are studying. People who find it difficult to get to sleep and like to have the relaxing sounds of nature in the background as they drift off, have found these videos helpful. Johnnie has received messages from people who have used them as a healing aid when they are ill. People have said that they have found them comforting when coming to terms with bereavement. The list of situations in which people are using these videos is endless, however Johnnie says:

"I feel very honored to have been able to reach out to so many people I will never ever meet and yet be able to touch their lives in a meaningful way. It will always amaze me how many people have found a connection with these simple videos, bringing a moment of peace and calm into their lives and all from my rural home on the side of a hill in Leitrim."

At the time of writing over 5,000,000 people had viewed this collection of 120 videos. All of these videos can be viewed for free at the following web address:

[www.youtube.com/johnnielawson](http://www.youtube.com/johnnielawson)

*Johnnie Lawson has designed and provided the photographs for the cover of the Leitrim Guardian since the 43rd edition in 2011.*