

LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE LEITRIM LEITRIM 2019

Michael Moran

THE PICTURESQUE ballroom might well have been the setting for a fairytale wedding: white linen tablecloths, delightful chair covers, lights sparkling and background music. The scene set for something very special. This, however, was a function to celebrate Leitrim and its people.

Almost 250 representatives from over 100 community groups gathered at the Lough Allen Hotel, Drumshanbo, for the annual 'Love Where You Live' Leitrim Awards. The awards scheme has gone from strength to strength in recent years, having replaced the familiar Floral Pride Awards in 2017. A total of 27 awards were presented in categories celebrating environmental and community achievements. The awards are co-sponsored by the Leitrim Public Participation Network (PPN) and Leitrim County Council and are designed to recognise the significant contribution made by community groups, residents groups, businesses, schools and individuals to their local communities and make Leitrim a lovely place to live, work and visit. Nominations are sought in March each year and judging days take place from May

to September, with the judges travelling to meet all the nominees throughout each of the three Municipal Districts- Ballinamore, Carrick-on-Shannon and Manorhamilton.

Renowned environmentalist and biologist Eanna Ní Lamhna judged the environmental awards:

- Cleaner & Greener
- Best business
- Schools
- Best Kept Estate

Leitrim PPN's assisted by colleagues from Cavan, Donegal and Longford PPNs adjudicated in the community categories:

- Social Inclusion
- Community Resilience
- Community Resource
- Unsung Hero

Individuals are honoured for their boundless energy and determination to get things done, very often working tirelessly behind the scenes: these are the Unsung Heroes.

Awards were presented in each of the Municipal Districts to worthy recipients who had been nominated by their peers.

Eanna Ní Lamhna was joined in announcing

the nominees and winners by a man who has Leitrim running through his veins—well-known Leitrim GAA personality and indeed former *Leitrim Guardian Person of the Year*

2004, Tommy Moran. Awards were presented by the Cathoirléach, Cllr. Enda McGloin and Leitrim PPN Secretariat members—Michael McGovern (Facilitator 2019, Manorhamilton MD), Francie Gilmartin (Ballinamore MD), Mary McKiernan (Social Inclusion, Ballinamore MD) and Philip Rooney (Manorhamilton MD).

Conscious of the benefits, communities, residents associations, schools and businesses all play in promoting positive mental health and to recognise World Mental Health Day, Hubert McHugh, also a former *Leitrim Guardian Person of the Year*, and Valerie Cogan, from the HSE addressed the gathering on mental health. Eanna Ní Lamhna also delivered a presentation on biodiversity and pollinators.

All told, the *Love Where You Live Awards* acknowledge all that is good about Leitrim.

The good news is entries will be sought again in 2020. See you there.



Unsung Hero—Carrick on Shannon, Annmarie Boyle with friends and winners from Bornacoola and Dromod at the Love Where You Live Leitrim Awards 2019



Unsung Heroes—Ballinamore, Aidan and Eileen Donohue (front row) celebrating with friends at the Love Where You Live Leitrim Awards 2019



Unsung Hero – Manorhamilton, Shirley Hewston (front row LHS) celebrating with family and friends at the Love Where You Live Leitrim Awards 2019



Members of many groups in Ballinamore celebrating with Ballinamore Area Community Council.

BLIGHT Eileen Gillen

I WAS ALIVE when my fingers knew their place, when they worked their fury into the wool falling over my hands. I was alive when sound was warm and mellow as a clarinet.

I knit now from memory, I am five, I am ten,

I am tired, I am haunted, I am lonely. My fingers know this. My eyes close and the tears fall; grey, for tears come from the battle between black and white where irony lives, where emotion overflows, where life slows, drop by drop into my shadow world. Now my black becomes nuanced; I see charcoal, jet, smoke, smoke—yes; now the wool cables, two to the back, knit two, two to the front, knit two. I am on the top road looking down over the endless rows of smoking chimneys. Yes, my nose knows grey; grey is the safe space where I hide, grey is the smell of winter blankets.

My world is round now; round like an echo in space. My fingers work the blackberries; make three, purl three together, repeat to the next safe knit stitch. Home. I smell tea, deep and earthy. I hear voices from long ago; raised voices, fearful voices. I hide. Tea is a dangerous colour. Now I am Oolong, soft and willowy like a mist over a mountain. Morning will come; light emerging slowly, painfully but inevitably. I am still. Sounds rise from the silence; I hear dew drops, they murmur, I hear the mud, dense and dark. I hear the mountain.

“Now” she cries.

“Now.”

“No” I shout.

She scratches my wounds with her granite, her slate.

“No” I whisper.

I am safer in silence, in almost black, in almost gone; in almost remembering. I am faint now, I am swirling, swirling. I am almost white, smoke white. My body is bone now. My skin, flaccid and weak, lies in ridges on my arms, in ridges on my belly like potato fields from famine days. My famine is silence, I am starved of words, I am starved of meaning. I give birth to the child of the dark, I give birth to the fear under the covers, I give birth to death. Memory is no harbour.

I return to the wool, return to its safety. There are people outside now. The door is banging. I sense their colours, loud like their voices, they assault me. Their smells are green like birth, red like pain—so much pain can't be hidden under a blanket, blue like a stillborn, yellow like my endless fear. I watch them with my eyes closed, my fingers listening; steeling myself in silence. The banging, banging is oily black, dense black, dead black. My fingers know. I am cast off.