

Bannside Stitchers

Chairperson's Report- November 2023

Another busy crafting year has passed since our last AGM. Our five-year award of financial support from Lottery funding has ended, so we now need to operate with financial independence. To date we're managing to keep our four classes running at full capacity. Obviously, this means constraints, but we are hopeful that we could qualify again if support becomes available.

Our communications Secretary, Lynette, continues to be kept busy managing waiting lists and getting information and reminders out to the different WhatsApp groups.

At the end of November 2022 several members took part in a very enjoyable free-motion quilting workshop with expert tutor Caitriona Mackle, who is also our Tuesday night tutor.

Our Christmas Dinner date was slightly earlier than usual, but the Wild Duck were happy to accommodate us, and it was well supported. We enjoyed a beautiful meal along with Secret Santa in the conservatory.

We had planned a workshop on 'Inktense' colouring by Nancy from 'Nifty Needles' for March, but some heavy and unexpected snow meant that Nancy was unable to travel, so it had to be postponed until April. It was a very enjoyable workshop, though the work had to be finished at home.

To celebrate ten years of Bannside Stitchers we held a display of members' crafting in the Bank at the end of April. Claire from 'Crafty Mammy' brought along her pop-up shop, and all the visitors were impressed with the range of work on show. This wasn't a fund-raising event on this occasion, but members were able to sell items privately. The feedback was very positive, and everyone thought it was worth all the effort.

The summer outing in June was enjoyed by all. Shopping was high on the list at St George's market. We proceeded to Cultra Folk Park where we were taken on a tour of some of the houses, including Portglenone Bank. Our guide, Valerie, left us in the capable hands of Dressmaker Clare who showed us some lace and embroidery she was working on. This wasn't the event Valerie had planned for us as our visit coincided with a car show being held on the same day. By way of apology, she has offered to do a free workshop for those ladies who were on the trip. A date has yet to be arranged.

We held a lampshade-making workshop in June, led by tutor Marion Coupe. All the materials, including 'William Morris' or 'Liberty' fabrics, were supplied by Marion and the participants were delighted with the results.

Our 10th Anniversary Coffee Morning was held at the end of the summer session in the 'Bowlers' Room' at the Community Centre. We had a beautiful birthday cake and home-made scones to share and this was also our opportunity to thank our very talented and patient tutors, Patsy, Caitriona and Rose-Marie for all their hard work.

A Sewing -machine service day in the Community Centre was arranged for 16 members at the end of June and the two machines belonging to the Stitchers were also included.

While our sewing sessions for the year were over, Mary from 'Arthur Cottage' Cullybackey invited any members who were interested to contribute a red -and-white nine-patch square to become part of a quilt. This was to celebrate American Independence Day on July 4th. We were also welcome to come along to Arthur Cottage to try out our hand-quilting skills, once Mary had put the squares together. Several of our members were able to contribute squares and go along to the quilting bee.

Since the Lottery funding has come to an end, PEG has now had to say farewell to Andrea who assisted with the allocation of Lottery finances, and a small event to say goodbye was organised. All the groups who had been supported, including the Stitchers, were represented.

Organising a bus trip to the Stormont Quilt Fayre in September was proving very costly this year without funding, so members were encouraged to arrange to car-pool. Several ladies were able to make their way and enjoy a good day out.

Before our Chair declares all situations vacant, I would like to thank all the committee members for their hard work over the past year. Until you've been on committee you wouldn't realise how much work is involved. They are always prepared to go the extra mile to keep our classes running smoothly.