

Flax mill TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

spinners, weavers and finishers
of FINE IRISH WOOL
and Linen.

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22nd Open Day and Yard Fest at the Flax-Mill set to draw visitors from all corners of the globe

From everywhere to Derrylane

On Saturday, September 12th, the historic Flax Mill in Derrylane just outside of Dungiven will experience – for the 22nd time – what a Dutch journalist once called “Ireland’s most spectacular private event”. County Derry’s only active linen-weaving-mill is all geared to host a unique mixture of demonstrations by top crafters, a large gathering of designers and textile manufacturers from far and near and an evening concert with an international line-up on stage playing to a selected audience of music- and poetry lovers from at least 15 countries.

Mill-owner Marion Baur introduced the event to a group of journalists from Germany and the USA last Saturday. “After last year’s Open day and Yard Fest with a capacity crowd and unique atmosphere we had to think long and hard as to how we could top this one more time again. Our international group of friends and helpers and a number of artists from far and near were involved in putting this year’s programme together; I think it is the best one ever”.

The Open Day will see German master-blacksmith **Marius Eitelwein** making sparks fly on the big forge. The man from Tauberbischofsheim who keeps 400(!) horses shod in his home is travelling 2000 kilometres to Derrylane for the occasion.

Dr. Lynn Hulse, one of the best known hand-embroiderers in the English-speaking world and tutor of this unique craft is coming from London to run a stall and a workshop. Marion Baur is particularly excited about her first appearance at the Flax-Mill: “As a textile-worker I feel very honoured by the visit of a woman who is so highly regarded. Her coming is creating huge buzz amongst crafters and people who appreciate hand-embroidery as one of the very old and sophisticated textile crafts.”

Lynn Hulse will be accompanied by a number of top-crafters showing their skills:

Jacki Sleator (Derry City) is going to felt wool while people watch. **Eileen Patterson and Linda Kelly** are going to spin yarn on two wheels. The pair from County Down have been supplying high-quality raw material for Marion Baur’s bespoke hand-woven line of products for several years, their spun Alpaca (the animals live in the very town land of Derrylane) has become a sought-after product. Dyeing of cloth with natural ingredients is done before the guest’s eyes, a hand-breaker and scotch-knife will be in operation, processing flax-fibre and designer/tailor **Liz Corrigan** (Antrim) will have some of her unique creations on show and modelled by her daughter Eimear.

A very special guest from Berlin will be working one of the weaving looms at the Flax Mill. **Emma Porter**, a former trainee of Marion’s, is travelling all the way from

Berlin to get behind a loom and exchange some knowledge with local weavers
Maura Mc Kee and Emily Mc Illwayne.

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Other crafts present include hand-made soap from County Antrim, the products of master wood-turner **Jacky Arrell**(Magherafelt), bespoke Jewellery and glass-art by **Ruth Walker**(Wales, now living in County Down), pottery by our favourite manufacturer of earthen ware, **Lindsay Press**, to mention but few.

Marion Baur: “When Flax – Mill – Textiles took over the old Post Office in Dungiven a few months ago, many journalists asked me about the chances of saving local business and local shops. I think our Open Day shows that Northern Ireland has a unique tradition of high-quality products made from the best raw-materials. The manufacturers of those are not getting enough recognition; their products are often swept aside by so called cheap but in reality not at all cheap imports of poor quality, made under appalling conditions. We try to give real crafters a real opportunity to show how things are being made and to sell them. Our growing audience shows that we are on the right track and the list of orders from literally all over the world by people who can't make it to Derrylane this year is huge, ranges from linen cloth to locally made honey, from Lavender soap to a poker....”

The Open day has become a unique gathering of designers, spinners, weavers, knitters and other textile-workers, some travelling huge distances, some within walking distance. Marion Baur: “It's like a melting-pot. Chris Tyndall, internationally reputed designer, Francis Wray, master-knitter from ‘down the road’, a tailor from Canada, designers and manufacturers like Deborah Toner, Heather Eves, Sarah Morrison, they will all be there to enjoy the day and to learn from each other.”

Meet the historian

One of the highlights during last year's Open Day was a talk given by historian and journalist **Bruce Clark**. The son of Ireland's oldest “family in linen”, Wm Clarks & sons (Upperlands) will return to speak, this time he is going to touch on “the division of labour in linen-making”. Marion Baur urges visitors to indicate their interest in his talk before the day: “We had more people last year who couldn't get into the mill-cottage when Bruce spoke. If people let us know before, we will try and convince him to speak twice.”

The Open Day is a home-coming for many and for the new crop of flax which will be transported to the mill on the day. Some of it is going to be hauled by Ireland's oldest commercial vehicle on the road. The 1929 Morris will be driven by its owner Craig Matthew from Garvagh.

Homage to female artists

The concert and session in the evening have seen many of the best musicians, singers and poets from Ireland and from elsewhere on the idyllic stage behind the mill. For 2015 the organisers have put a spectacular line-up together with all the main acts being women.

Marion Baur: “Like in the textile-industry of this world, women get far too little recognition for their contribution to the arts. This year's line-up is top of the range and a tribute to them.”

Mandy Bingham the most up-and coming singer/songwriter in the North of Ireland will take the stage first and is certain to introduce her new highly praised album. Certainly in the centre of interest by both media and visitors is German singer/accordionist/actress **Isabel Neuenfeldt**. The cult-figure on the Berlin-music- --

scene is coming to Ireland for the first time and for the one gig only. In a spectacular fusion she will team up with local harp-player **Dearbhla Mc Taggart** (Dungiven) on stage. The rising star on the Irish harp that had her first appearance during last year's Yard-Fest is very excited about playing with the famous German artist.

The gig of the year will be completed by one of Ireland's best known fiddlers, **Aoibheann Devlin**. The wizard from Toomebridge who usually appears with her husband Declan, Joe Diamond and Seamus O'Kane, has changed her accompanying musicians for the occasion:

"I like the idea of the all-female gig, so I am bringing women to accompany me."
She won't say who, there seems to be a big surprise in the pipeline.

Marion Baur urges people to book ahead for the event: "We had to turn a number of people away last year. We try our best to accommodate everybody but it is a private event and space limited. We also cater for all our visitors and our team of chefs from Berlin has to know how many they have to please.

Whilst we recommend letting us know that you will be attending the Open Day, booking for the evening gig and session is **a must without any exceptions.**"

For details, full programme, directions...ring the Flax Mill: 02877742655 or its sister-company The Old Post Office: 02877741097

Mail: flaxmill@gmx.net.

LAST MINUTE NEWS - LAST MINUTE NEWS –LAST MINUTE NEWS

The organisers have just learned that over 30(!) classic and vintage cars are going to pay the Open Day on Sept. 12th a visit. 2 clubs and several individual owners are making the Flax Mill Open Day a real outing – the organisers and especially our visitors will pay them the welcome they deserve.
