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Our events continue for Heritage Week

Cover image: J.J. Leonard,
from the exhibition on display
from 15th August 2022



National
Heritage Week
A Heritage Council programme

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An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



The
North Mayo
Heritage
Centre

THE WOVEN TRADE

Check out sheep wool spinning as part of our Heritage Week events.



The art of spinning and weaving wool, linen, and cotton in Ireland dates back centuries. Historically, weaving took two forms.

Firstly, in the days of the cottage industry with women and younger children spinning yarn while the men and older sons worked their looms in the home. Secondly, from the 13th century onwards, the more organised urban craftsmen weaved for the larger domestic and export market.^[1]

The manual process of weaving wool began with the shearing of sheep. The wool (known in Irish as *olann*) was scoured to remove its oiliness. Before the introduction of chemicals, natural colourants such as vegetable dyes, blackberries or even beetles were used to give the wool an interesting tint.

It was dried and combed twice with the use of “hand cards”. Once roughly, and then more carefully and finely. This turned out the wool in the form of soft small locks or rolls fit for spinning. Prior to the invention of the spinning wheel, the wool locks were spun by hand with a distaff, a short, forked stick, and a spindle.

They were wound and fastened loosely on the distaff (*cui géal*). The material was drawn off gradually, by the left hand. The spindle, held in the right hand twisted and manipulated the material into yarn. This was wound onto the spindle as it was spun. The yarn ready for weaving was rolled up into balls.

The yarn was then woven into cloth in a hand-loom which had two beams: the larger one (*garmain*) and the smaller one (*lu-garmain*).

The weaving rods or “swords” (*claidim*) were long laths used during the weaving process. The warp (*dluth*) yarns ran lengthwise and were held stationary in tension on the loom.

The transverse weft (*innech*) yarn was fed through and inserted over and under the warp. The weaver used a *feithgéir*^[2], a sleeking stick or “rubbing bone” which was used to keep the cloth smooth.

This thriving industry was almost completely wiped out by the Great Famine, but in some places like Foxford, Co. Mayo, it managed to continue. Sister Agnes Morrogh-Bernard founded the Foxford Woollen Mills in 1892. She saw that the power of the River Moy could drive the mills and prosperity into the region.^[3]

Today, it is one of the country’s oldest working mills that continues to celebrate a trade which is deeply woven into the culture and heritage of Ireland.

¹ www.weavespindy.ie

² www.libraryireland.com

³ www.weaversofireland.com

For all the family!

HERITAGE WEEK SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

To book tel. **096 31809** or

book online www.northmayogenealogy.com/events



All events are FREE but must be booked in advance

**FREE
EVENTS**

Sat. 13 th - 21 st	10 am – 4 pm	The Green in the Gold Exhibition	Reception
Sat. 13 th	2 pm – 3 pm	Launch Event	Café
Sun. 14 th	2 pm – 4 pm	Blacksmithing	Courtyard
Sun. 14 th	2 pm – 4 pm	Sheep wool spinning	Reception
Mon. 15 th		Genealogy Video 1	Online
Mon. 15 th – 21 st	10 am – 4 pm	J.J. Leonard Exhibition	Conference Centre
Tue. 16 th		Genealogy Video 2	Online
Wed. 17 th		Genealogy Video 3	Online
Wed. 17 th	8 pm – 10 pm	J.J. Leonard Lecture	Conference Centre
Thur. 18 th	2 pm – 4 pm	Organic Gardening	Organic Garden
Thur. 18 th		Genealogy Video 4	Online
Fri. 19 th		Genealogy Video 5	Online
Sat. 20 th	12 pm, 2 pm, 4 pm	Tours of Enniscoe House	Reception / Enniscoe House
Sun. 21 st	2 pm – 4 pm	Vintage Vehicles and Trains	Carpark
Sun. 21 st		Ox Mountain Railway	Carpark