

# 'Woman of the Knee' wins heritage award for Emma

By David Connors

A SKEHANA woman has been announced as the 2022 County Galway award winner by the National Heritage Council for her project *An Bhean Ghlúine*, which showcases the courageous work of midwives during the early 20th century.

Emma Laffey, a local historian and member of Skehana and District Heritage Group, spent hundreds of hours gathering interviews, photographs, documents and old video footage, which culminated in the successful *An Bhean Ghlúine - Woman of the Knee*.

The exhibition was on display in Portiuncula Hospital - where she also works as a healthcare assistant - during this year's heritage week, scooping the top prize at National Heritage Week 2022 County awards at a virtual ceremony.

On top of the exhibition, Emma received funding from the National Heritage Council and this allowed her to produce a film and ebook illustrating the difficult work of the midwives during that period.

The mother of six told *The Tuam Herald* that she is absolutely delighted to receive this year's top honour.

"Some people have sport or running, but heritage for me is my little go to place. If this was GAA, this would be winning my county final and I'm very proud to have won," said Emma.

"I want to thank my family, work colleagues, other members of the Skehana and District Heritage Group and Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer with Galway County Council, for all their support."

Emma said that she wishes to continue delving into the topic in the future and hopes other heritage groups across the country will come on board



EMMA Laffey, whose *An Bhean Ghlúine* project claimed the Co. Galway Heritage Award.

alongside her in researching the subject.

"These women deserve to be in the spotlight and be documented for their diligence, bravery, commitment and continued care for the women of their communities."

"They have been largely overlooked by historians and their wonderful work has remained unrecognised for a long time."

"Hence, this project aims to put at least some of it right," added Emma.

Both the project and short film on the life of Ballinasloe Community Midwife Mary Kate Jennings can be viewed at: <https://www.heritageweek.ie/projects/an-bhean-ghluine/C3%BAine-woman-of-the-knee-midwife-handywoman>

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