



Aran Woollen Mills

THE AUTHENTIC SPIRIT OF IRELAND

FOUNDED IN 1965 THE STORY BEHIND ARAN WOOLLEN MILLS IS COMPELLING.

Padraig and Maura Hughes of Westport, County Mayo had a conundrum: what to do with 13 energetic kids during the long school summer holidays in an era of no mobile phones or social media - or television for that matter. Already successful business people and with a deep love for the West of Ireland and its time-honored traditions, Padraig and Maura came up with a great idea: why not open a shop on the Aran Islands to cater for the throngs of North American tourists that visit every year and hungry

for that most iconic of Irish products, the Aran sweater. Pat and Vincent Hughes, co-owners of the business today, agree moving much of the family to the Aran Islands for a few months of the summer had its attractions besides making solid business sense.

Pat and Vincent together with their siblings made great use of their Aran experience not only learning much about life and establishing friendships that have lasted a lifetime but also





You're never too young to make a stylish statement!

dealing with customers and knitters alike, acquiring a deep knowledge and love of the Aran Islands, it's people and the history and above all, it's iconic knitwear. They developed a deep appreciation for the extraordinary craftsmanship evident in every piece of Aran knitwear and how the people told their stories in the different patterns, with each stitch configuration steeped in symbolism. It was the foundation stone for what was to become Ireland's leading knitwear brand, Aran Woollen Mills.

Life on the Aran Islands remains unchanged to this day in many respects. Still speaking Gaelic, the locals continue to use their simple way of life

for inspiration when it comes to their knitwear. For example, cable stitches are a reminder of the fisherman's rope, wishing safety and good luck; the basket stitch is reminiscent of the fisherman's basket and the hope for bountiful catches; the honeycomb wishing a just reward for all one's hard work; hugs and kisses represent love and the warmth of family life, the diamond for success and wealth and so on. Rarely is there such a strong and direct link between a product and one's national identity. Aran knitwear is truly a part of Ireland and the island's people. It is little wonder we are so passionate about it.

Aran knitwear, while loved the world over for many generations, continues to evolve with



changing times. Gone are the days when much of the product was only available in coarse woollen yarns. Aran Woollen Mills leads from the front in this regard, being amongst the first to offer softer merino wools including best-selling super soft merino wool; so soft it almost feels like cashmere. Scratchiness is truly a thing of the past - and as for colors, equally gone are the days when Aran knitwear was only available in the undyed "natural" or 'Báinín' colors, today Aran Woollen Mills offers every color under the sun from deep earthy tones to vibrant red's and blue's, not to mention 40 shades of green!

Aran Woollen Mill's product range has also grown from not much more than a few classic pieces in the early days to having something for everyone who appreciates the value of Aran knitwear today and for almost every conceivable occasion. Accessories in particular have seen a huge jump in popularity in recent years. To cope with increased demand in markets as diverse as North America to Japan, a second factory was opened recently in Westport, County Mayo, bringing total numbers to 100 employees.

Westport was voted best town in Ireland in which to live and the Huges family fully appreciate how blessed they are to call such a beautiful place home, surrounded by rivers, mountains, lakes,



Taking hue cues from Mother Nature, the color palette captures its dramatic contrasts.

and the wild Atlantic Ocean - not to mention Croagh Patrick on their doorstep, Irelands most famous mountain and upon which our national saint, St. Patrick, spent 40 days and nights fasting. The mountain is climbed every year by countless thousands of pilgrims. It is little wonder the Aran Woollen Mills designers feel they are living in a creative paradise which is clearly reflected in the work they do and in every new design, stitch and color.

Aran Woollen Mills is much more than just a part of Irish heritage. It is always fashionable, made from the best and most sustainable natural yarns, knitted in Ireland, and designed with you in mind. Aran Woollen Mills is available wherever quality Irish knitwear is sold.

www.aranwoollenmills.com