


# Granny Green's Big Night Out

Words and Photos by Jane-Ann Purdy

I was reading an extract from the latest volume of Nella Last's rationing-inspired diaries at the weekend and it struck me that my friends at Edinburgh craft group Granny Green's Big Night Out would find her homespun strategies for dealing with the austere post-war years very familiar. Now that we are post "economic meltdown" and living through our very own period of austerity, making handmade gifts, cakes, clothes and decorative items has never been so fashionable, or so necessary.



I was particularly amused when I found Nella\* noting that she was making a monkey for her grandson. I make monkeys from socks (don't laugh), which make great presents for newborns, and as my friends keep delivering I've been getting through rather a lot of hosiery recently.

 I joined Granny Green's as a way of motivating myself – I lack Nella's strength of will, and those socks won't transform into cheeky woolen primates on their own. When I say "joined" I mean turned up one Monday. One of the great things about Granny Green's is that it is open to all: you can literally pitch up anytime between 6pm and 9pm on a Monday night and be sure of a warm welcome.

What generally happens is a group of, mainly, women sit around a large table with cups of tea, coffee or the odd glass of wine. They chat whilst they work on sewing, knitting or other crafty projects. Sometimes the talk seems distinctly 1950s as it can centre around cake baking and other domestic chores, I even eavesdropped on a conversation about twin tubs once, but more often than not the gossip is more contemporary. I love to sit near the two knitting vets who talk about the delights of

having your arm parked up a cow's behind for hours on end. Okay, I may have made up the bit about "hours on end".

Some of the conversation throughout the evening is moderated as, rather brilliantly, Granny Green's is also a book and film club. If you wish you can take part in the discussion of the current book or film while you sew/knit/glue, but it is not compulsory to do anything crafty at all.

Once a fortnight (or so) Granny Green's hosts a workshop session where you can learn how to make anything from a paper-based Christmas decoration to a properly wired-up robot. These may be charged for, to cover costs, but otherwise turning up is free.

Try it for yourself:-

Granny Green's Big Night Out meets on Monday nights 6pm-9pm at The Lot, 4-6 Grassmarket, Edinburgh. Get more information from [their website](#). Follow them on [Twitter](#) too.

\* Nella Last is a publishing sensation more than half a century after she first put pen to paper for the Mass Observation archive. The Cumbrian housewife kept a journal from 1939 to 1965. Her wartime diary was dramatised by Victoria Wood in 2006 as *Housewife, 49*. The diaries have now been published in three volumes.

## **More about Jane-Ann Purdy: writer/editor**



"I guess you could say I'm the force behind [GeordieMac](#). In fact, Geordie Mac has always been my "pseudonym in storage" for when I finally write that novel. Well, one day. If you're wondering, the name comes from being half Geordie, half

Scottish – thanks Mum and Dad.

I've been a writer and editor since 1996. Before that I worked in film and television for five years where I learnt that you can make really great things with a group of talented and dedicated freelancers. All of the GeordieMac team are freelance, but we work really well together. Our overheads are low so we are able to offer very competitive prices on all our products: [content](#), [publications](#), and [websites](#).

I should also mention that two years ago I went back to college to study photography part time and it's my pictures you can view on the site. I finished my course in June 2009, but I still consider myself to be in training."

Now you would think that this would keep you busy enough but Jane- Ann is also heavily involved with the swimming website, [Swim Shaw Method](#), which applies Alexander Technique principles to swimming.....