AIMS For a better birth...

Knitting as commemoration, knitting for legal change

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In the autumn of 2014, following yet another inquest into a maternal death ending with a verdict of medical misadventure, I felt strongly that something needed to be done.

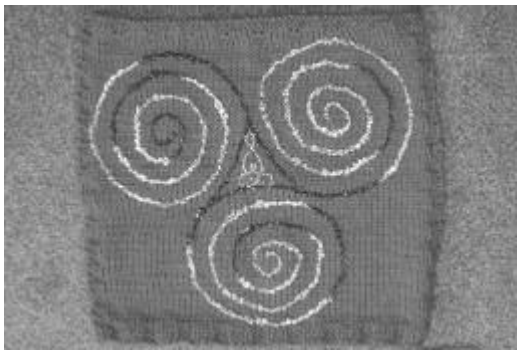
We needed to draw public attention to the number of these inquests since 2007, what they have revealed about dysfunctional maternity services, to the devastating consequences for the families who have lost wives, partners and mothers, and the consequences for midwifery students and newly qualified midwives who have trained underthe shadow of these catastrophic events. We needed to work with some concrete way to honourthe women. Sara Wickham's thoughtful and timely suggestion of a concrete way to raise spirits and get the wider public thinking was a quilt along the lines of Ina May Gaskin's work (also see page 23); while quilting is not an Irish tradition, knitting is, and thus a project began to take shape: a large square to commemorate each individual woman, designed by skilled knitters, set amongst many small squares by knitters of all ages and all levels of skill, the whole to be surrounded by a knitted border of those natural guardians of their own when birthing, elephants. We currently have nearly 100 knitters. Our youngest is 11 year old Grace Wood, whose mother, Catherine, is a second year midwifery student, while our oldest is Bridie Nolan, 87, whose granddaughter, Hayley is a third year midwifery student. The hanging should be ready to launch in the autumn of 2015, along with a short documentary. We will seek to use the launch as a way to gain support for a change in coronial law so that every maternal death is subject to an inquest.



Mary Smyth, knitting for the blanket for Irish women



Squares knitted at the AIMS planning weekend



Square knitted by Suzy Sabo