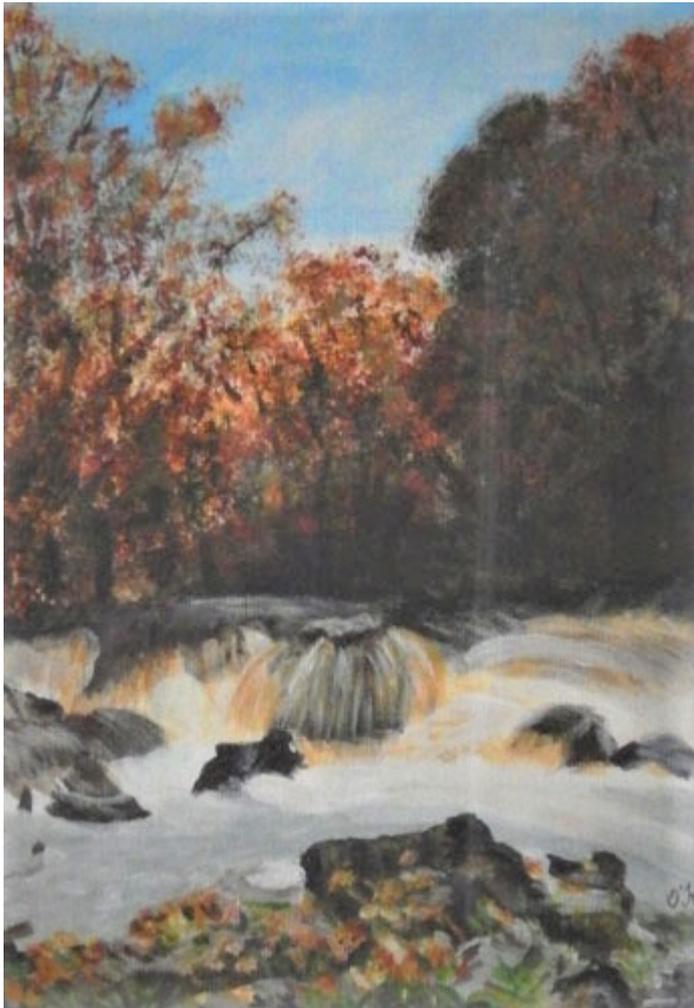


Autumn by the Roe



The leaves are glowing, yellow, red and gold.

The river's laughing through the narrows
Where the rocks are frilled with white.
My path is splashed by giggling waves
Of tea-brown water dashing down the glen.
In spring the salmon climb the high-stepped ladder.
They've spawned and headed for the sea.
The ladder's flooded as the rain-filled river
Follows their path through mountain, glen and field.
The robin sings his autumn call above me.
A skein of geese honks towards the lough.
The pale blue sky is high and clear and cold.
Frost is coming as the night dews fall.
I'll leave this lonely beauty of the wild,
Yet still it lives eternally in me.
I build the fire with flames of autumn colours,
And curl in warmth and picture wet and cold.
Tomorrow I will try to hold the beauty,
Attempt to show this wild and lovely valley
With canvas, paint and brush and loving joy.

Dorothy O’Kane writes:

The River Roe flows from just below Glenshane Pass through Dungiven, past Limavady and out to Lough Foyle. From just outside Limavady the Country Park was created in a forested area along the river in the Dungiven direction. There are paths along the banks which are walkable in most weathers. The river itself can flow quite fast after rain, tumbling over rocks and the salmon leap. People fish for salmon and trout and there is a disabled fishing jetty. The water flows over peat, which usually gives it a reddish brown colour – hence the name, the red river. It often reminds me of tea. In autumn the geese fly over on their way south and in spring as they head north again.

I grew up in Limavady and knew these woods well even before the Park was established. I and my friends played there, and as Guides we set trails through the woods and practised lighting campfires at the Carrick Rocks. Later I took my then fiancé walking there and he has loved it ever since. When we returned from eight years in East Africa we took our four children there and they had fun just as I and my friends had. A real joy was introducing our five grandchildren to our favourite spot – the only difference is that now we take them by car.

Some years ago I began painting classes, which altered the way I looked at things and places I know well. I wrote the poem one wet evening after a walk there, and I painted the scene from a photo which our friend had taken.