

OUT ON YOUR OWN

Young guns show they have the write stuff

**Ronan and
Conor
McGarvey**

Company: Donegal Pens

Position: owners

Location:
Letterkenny, Co
Donegal

By Dónal Connolly-Gorman

They say that youth is wasted on the young. Not so in the case of Donegal brothers Ronan and Conor McGarvey who set up Donegal Pens in September 2009. At 14 and ten years of age, the brothers are the youngest members of the Irish Woodturners Guild. To date, they have sent their handmade wooden pens to customers as far away as the US, Australia and New Zealand.

"It started when we were away on holidays in Co Antrim about a year and a half ago at a craft fair," Ronan McGarvey said.

"There was a master craftsman there who was allowing people to turn their own wood pens, so we turned our own pens there and enjoyed it. We kept nagging Dad on the way home in the car, asking him if we could get a lathe."

The brothers subsequently set up a workshop in their garden shed, where they create the pens, making them by hand and packaging the finished product for sale online.

"I do my homework when I come home and then go to the shed for an hour or two," McGarvey said. "First, you have to cut the wood on a band saw - Dad helps us with this because the saw is pretty dangerous. Then we drill a hole in it, insert the tubes and then square the edges. The pens are



Brothers Ronan, 14, and Conor McGarvey, 10, in their workshop in Co Donegal

then turned on the lathe and assembled afterwards."

The brothers receive orders on their website, www.donegalpens.com, and then post the pens out to their customers.

"We have sold several hundred pens so far to people from all over the world," McGarvey said. "The orders come in over the internet and we make them

as people order them."

The handmade wooden pens are doing a good trade with businesses, schools and groups.

Customers typically buy them as gifts or for presentations, as they can insert their own printed messages in the presentation boxes and print logos on the cases.

The brothers use various types of wood for their pens, including bog oak, beech and ash.

"We get our wood from different suppliers, but as some is harder to source than others, we will often go to more specialised woodshops," McGarvey said. "My friends and teachers think it's pretty cool."