

As a child, Kirsty Lyn Jameson honed her photography skills by lining up her stuffed toys for posed portraits on her granny's sofa, using all the exposures on her mum's camera film.

Fast-forward three decades, and Kirsty (37) swept the board at the Professional Photographer Association NI (PPANI) awards earlier this year for her candid, documentary-style photographs.

From photographing her teddies, she moved to developing photos in her garage, launching her business and opening a studio in Richhill.

Alongside running Kirsty Lyn Jameson Photography as a "one-woman band", she is a busy single mum to Jameson (11) and "Irish twins" Georgie (6) and Tom (5).

Kirsty credits her late mother Moira with passing down her love of photography and giving her the confidence to turn her passion into a business.

"When my mummy was little, my granda gave her a penny every day as pocket money, and she saved up to buy her first camera," she says.

"My childhood was so well documented. Mummy always had her camera out for our holidays and first days at school, way before social media or the digital cameras we have today.

"It was a running family joke that somehow she always managed to get one of her feet in her pictures."

She was eight when she was given the "responsibility" of photographing her parents with their friends on a trip south, and the photo was so good that her mum framed it.

"After that, she really encouraged me and let me borrow her camera," says Kirsty. "I would hold photoshoots with my stuffies posed in a line on Granny's sofa.

"Those were the days when you had to get 24-exposure films developed at the chemist. You couldn't waste a single shot, and I'd be filling Mummy's camera with teddy pictures."

Kirsty did a National Diploma in Art and Design, and a degree in graphic design with a focus on photography. After graduating, Moira helped finance her first DSLR camera and set up a small studio in her garage.

"I worked part-time in retail for a while, and started photographing friends and family, but word spread and it pretty quickly became a business," she says.

She got her studio in Richhill just before her

'My mum would have loved it, she would've been in tears all night'



Photographer who picked up passion from parent sweeps the board at awards, writes Jade Beecroft

eldest son was born, and started specialising in candid, documentary-style photoshoots, with a focus on providing a fun experience for her subjects.

"I get the formal photo of them looking at the camera with a forced smile out of the way pretty quickly," she explains.

"Then I tell people they don't have to look at me again for the rest of the shoot.

"I do a lot of family photos and kids' birthdays, and tell parents to grab their kids, tickle them and just have fun. Little ones run out of my studio shouting that they've had the best party ever.

CRAIC

"At Christmas, I decorate the studio, and we have snowball fights with the kids. Mummy used to love helping me do

my Christmas displays every year."

Kirsty is known for her wedding photography, and offers a "pre-shoot" experience to get to know the couple, so they will be more relaxed in front of the camera on their big day.

"We just have a bit of craic," she says. "I tell them to look at the person they're marrying, not at me or my camera.

"I'm also really involved on the day. I will help dress the bride and be an extra pair of hands, as well as taking photos."

She also works alongside the Lurgan charity The Little Forget Me Nots Trust, offering a sensitive and caring service for parents who have lost babies or children and want memorial pictures taken.

"It's not for everyone, but it can be really spe-



Kirsty Lyn Jameson has been obsessed with photography since she was a child. Above: Drinking from one of her awards

cial," she says. "I might photograph a mummy cradling her baby or wee kids saying goodbye to a sibling."

At the PPANI awards Kirsty triumphed in four categories: fashion and beauty photographer of the year, pictorial photographer of the year, overall creative photographer of the year, and licentiate photographer of the year.

She was also given the Francis Neill Memorial Cup, the evening's overall prize for best photo.

"I couldn't believe it, I was in absolute shock," she says. "My mentor Marie Allen, who gave me work experience when I was 15, was there, which was lovely.

"When I got home and started unloading all my awards from the car, my eldest said, 'Oh my God did you win all those?' It was pretty funny. I didn't sleep a wink that night for the adrenaline."

Kirsty lost her beloved mum to cancer three years ago but knows she would have been so proud.

"Mummy would have loved it. She would have been in tears all night," she says.

● **For more information, visit: www.kljphotography.co.uk or call into the studio on Main Street in Richhill**