

meal for the twins, helping little Saoirse with her homework (Chinese grammar, of course) – while running a

mums versus stay-at-home mums' war – all it does is make mothers, no matter what they do, feel guilty:

yet another loving, perfect mom, was due to be released on Mother's Day last year. Initially meant to be promoted as

didn't see that as a problem either. So it's certainly nothing to do with her that poor Britney ended up in a psychiatric

Poor Kerry Katona was disgusted when she heard her mother was writing a in which she boasts a

Creative idea was right on the bu

A button tin gave goldsmith **Elaine Sarah Comerford** the idea of a business whereby people can create their own personalised jewellery collection

THE reaction to Thursday night's *Dragons' Den* has been phenomenal – more than 10,000 hits on my website, and phone calls and emails of congratulations. More importantly, I also received business enquiries and provisional orders from jewellers all over the country.

I am pinching myself. How has all this happened so fast for me?

I spent my childhood in

the beautiful, historic Dunhill, Co Waterford, a stone's throw from Dunhill castle and Annestown beach. I grew up with inspirational surroundings and with two very creative parents. It seemed inevitable that I'd grow up loving to work with my hands.

I was also taught from a young age that if I want something, I have to earn it. This created my entrepreneurial hunger.

I hear my nephew say, "I'm

bored!" far too often. I don't think I was ever bored; there was always something to do, something to create.

I contacted my enterprise board and started reading books on various aspects of starting a business.

My fiancé, Mark, has high hopes for winning the lottery. I don't even play the Lotto – I'm determined to make my own fortune!

The first significant step on the road to Button & Co was taking the jewellery production and goldsmithing skills course run in Kilkenny by the Crafts Council of Ireland. Here, I learned my skills under Jane Huston.

Always looking for inspi-



GEM OF AN BUSINESS IDEA:
Elaine Sarah Comerford

ration for designs, I was in my mother's house one day having a cup of tea and chatting. She had always told me to be trendsetter rather than a trend follower.

Then I spotted the button tin, and I thought to myself, "What about a jewellery collection in buttons. Like a charm bracelet, but a more classic design, a design that would have significant meaning."

After the initial concept came all the technicalities of the design. I wanted people to be able to create their own unique memories, to customise their own jewellery – that's where the needle and thread design came from, and the significance of a loved one threading on the bracelet would help create a lasting memory.

I could see a mother collecting the buttons for all the moments in her daughter's life, and giving them to her on her 21st birthday or when she leaves home. It seemed to just fall into place.

It was a lot of hard work and there were many setbacks getting it to where it needed to be, but finally I felt confident that I had a really attractive product.

Whoever it was in RTE who decided to do *Dragons' Den*, I just want to say thank you. It is so difficult creating a product and setting up a business from scratch. The opportunity to pitch my idea in the *Den* was the huge break

my little business needed

The timing was perfect. I had the collection which I'd been developing, called "Buttons", a new take on an idea. My patents and trademarks had come through the website www.buttonandco.com was live. All I was missing was the experience and confidence and contacts to get out there.

The grilling in the *Den* was a long process cut to 30 minutes aired on the show. I have to say the *Dragons' Den* isn't have been nicer to me. They allowed for the fact I started off very nervous. And my jewellery collection was a big hit.

All the *Dragons* praised my idea – they liked the bracelet, ear-rings and cufflinks. It's unbelievable that they chose them – Niall O'Farrell, Peter Newman and Gavin Duggan were interested in investing. I took a good five minutes looking at the back of the set to make up my mind. But with an offer from Niall for what I wanted – and his experience in retailing luxury brands – he was the obvious choice.

'I don't even play the Lotto – I'm that determined to make my own fortune!'

When I left the *Den* I was in pure shock. I couldn't believe what had just happened. I came, I saw and I conquered the *Den*, and I couldn't wait to start working with Niall.

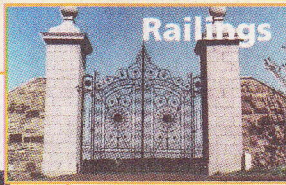
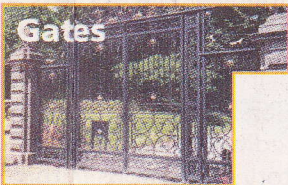
Some weeks on, and I was starting the process of rebranding to Button & Co and we're getting our products into shops. It's an exciting time and I love every minute of it.

Niall is a very genuine person and we work brilliantly together. We're both on the same track and have the same visions for the brand.

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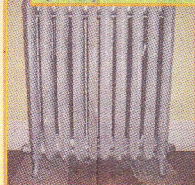
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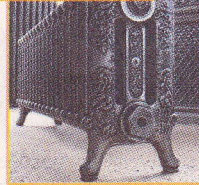
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