

The Alfa Romeo Club pictured with Nicholas' Alfa Romeo car

Alfa Romeo Club Remember Nicholas Clancy

The Alfa Romeo Club once again arrived in Dungarvan. The club members are from the UK, Europe and Ireland. They have been coming here for over thirty years. The trips have always been organised by Nicholas Clancy. Nick who tragically passed away after returning home from last year's trip. This year the club are here again on the tour of Ireland and they wanted to celebrate the memory of Nicholas and all he had done for the club over the many years.

When Nicholas was organising the Alfa tour he always arranged a few nights in Dungarvan.

Nicholas had very strong connections with Dungarvan. His dad Mickel Clancy was one of the well known Clancy family in Island, Stradbally. Although Nick was born in the UK he was very proud of his Irish ancestry and he has been coming here all of his life. The Alfa Club invited the cousins to join them for a dinner in the Park Hotel to celebrate Nicholas's life, and the work which he did for the club over many years. A great night was had by all.

The Car which was Nick's proud and joy and is now owned by one of the club members.



The cousins of Nicholas Clancy at the celebration in memory of Nicholas which was organised by The Alfa Romeo Club and was held in the Park Hotel, Dungarvan.

An Irish American Writer's 1921 Visit To Dungarvan

By Mark Holan

Front-page stories in American newspapers of mid-March 1921 described a half dozen "terrific battles" between Irish republicans and British Crown forces, including the Burgery Ambush near Dungarvan. The New York Tribune reported the County Waterford town "has been thrown into a state of terror."

James Brendan Connolly was among the millions of American-born children of Irish immigrants who read the overseas coverage. In 1896, he became the first gold medallist of the modern Olympics, winning the triple jump on the opening day of competition in Athens, Greece. He leveraged this fame and other adventurers, such as fighting in the Spanish-American War, into a successful career as a celebrity journalist and author of maritime fiction.

At St. Patrick's Day 1921, the same week as the Burgery Ambush, the American Committee for Relief in Ireland appealed to Connolly and other high-profile Irish Americans for money to aid innocent victims of the two-year-old Irish War of Independence. "You know that the women and children are the principal sufferers, thousands of whom are now actually starving," the committee's letter said. "Please contribute, urge your friends to contribute, and continue to help until our work is done."

But Connolly had more in mind than simply writing a cheque. As the British government and other anti-Irish critics attacked the relief effort as merely a front to support the Irish rebels, Connolly convinced the committee to send him to Ireland to make an independent assessment of its work. Connolly's status and report, committee leaders agreed, would "satisfy the American people of our non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-political, and purely humanitarian work."

The committee would not pay Connolly or reimburse his expenses. But he was not worried about money.

"I knew that if I cared to write about my relief experience later, I would have no trouble in finding a paying press," Connolly recalled. "But it turned out so, even before I sailed, a syndicate editor came around to sign me up." The Boston American of Anglophobe publisher William Randolph Hearst advanced $2,000 to Connolly, about $30,000 today, plus later compensation.

Connolly, then 52, arrived in Dublin in mid-May 1921. Over the next five weeks he travelled throughout Ireland, including an early June stop in Dungarvan.

Newspaper coverage

The "Tortured Ireland" series Connolly produced for the Boston American debuted on July 10, 1921, a day after the IRA and British forces announced a truce. The paper published daily instalments through early September. American relief to Ireland briefly halted early in the truce but the flow of money resumed before the December 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Connolly described being unable to hire a driver in Waterford city because "the roads were pretty well cut up, the Black and Tans were in a specially (as published, not especially) ugly mood." It took three hours to reach Dungarvan by train, the 45 km stretch now transformed into the Waterford Greenway walk and cycle trail.

Dungarvan's population in the 1911 census was about 2,000. By the time Connolly arrived a decade later, however, the market town and surrounding Waterford townlands had lost hundreds of men in the First World War and fighting against Britain. Even those families who escaped such personal losses faced economic hardships.

"This Dungarvan is a little port on the Irish Sea; a clean little place with well-swept streets and clear green sea water making up almost to the cottage doors," Connolly told his Boston readers. "A little river flows into the harbour, and a little bridge spans the river. It is a port of ancient lineage."

Connolly checked in at the Devonshire Arms (Lawlor's Hotel). "I was not there ten minutes before I could feel the shadow of the military hanging over everything," he wrote. He was soon directed to a meeting of local residents victimized by the occupation forces.

"That June evening I sat in and heard the stories of men and women who had felt the heavy hand of the Crown," Connolly continued. "The most convincing people I had listened to in all my life were these sufferers in Ireland, I think. They could make you feel like going out and heaving a bomb at the Black and Tan yourself after listening to them."

Subsequent instalments of his series described the Burgery Ambush of five months earlier. He mentioned the death of IRA volunteer Seán Fitzgerald, but not Pat Keating, and reported the republican execution of Royal Irish Constabulary Sergeant Michael Hickey. Connolly praised the courage of local republican women volunteers. He interviewed the widow Mrs. Dunlea of Ballycoe, her home demolished by Crown forces in reprisal for the ambush.

Connelly named 71-year-old Mary Foley as a Crown murder victim. He wrote that troops also killed an "inoffensive young fellow," left unnamed, whom they accused of plotting another ambush. He reported that soldiers stationed at the Dungarvan barracks prohibited quayside market activity, until finally a small group of elderly women protested the ban by stocking their stalls with fish and produce. (Likely the "fish joulters" of Davitt's Quay, though not identified as such by Connolly.) An angry Crown officer had their goods commandeered, grabbed what he wanted for himself, then ordered the rest tossed off the Devonshire Bridge, Connolly reported.

Later recollections

Connolly recalled his visit to Dungarvan in a 1944 memoir and 1953 statement to Ireland's Bureau of Military History. In the memoir, he claimed to be the only guest at the Devonshire Arms at the time, "which surprised me" (but) later I became accustomed to hotels without guests in the South of Ireland." He described the hotel bar as being "locked and barred" against the local soldiery, which had developed the nasty habit of "helping themselves and never paying for what they took."

Four elderly men seated outside the hotel offered directions to the young curate then looking after the welfare of local families who might be helped by the American Committee for Relief in Ireland and its partner organization, the Irish White Cross. One of the old men escorted Connolly part of the way, but soon "scurried back to the Arms" in fear of violating the 7 p.m. curfew.

Connolly found the meeting occupied by a dozen women and the unnamed curate, who "looked like one who could have borne himself well in the ranks of fighting men." He heard their stories "of murders, of looted or destroyed property—houses and contents—and Dungarvan men and women beaten up."

The memoir briefly repeated the story about the murder of the unnamed young man, but did not mention the killing of Mrs. Foley, the Burgery Ambush, or the market episode. Connolly included the Irish pages of his memoir in his 1953 statement to the Bureau of Military History. "Dungarvan then (1921) was like a city of the dead," he wrote separately.

A 1922 Irish White Cross report shows that Dungarvan received more than 870 British pounds of aid via the American Committee for Relief in Ireland. That was more than any other community in County Waterford, which received a total of 3,519 pounds.

Connelly's papers at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, show that from 1921 until at least 1953 he continued to revise his original Boston American series with the aim of publishing the material as a book. This never happened. He died in 1957.

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