

d'Arcy's

Restaurant & Townhouse
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Tom Crean

Kenmare is a planned town and was designed and built in the early 1800s by William Petty Fitzmaurice, (1737-1805), 2nd Earl of Shelburne and Marquis of Lansdowne. As Prime Minister of Great Britain from July 1782 to February 1783, Lord Shelburne helped negotiate the Treaty of Paris in 1783 which ended the conflict between Britain and America.

A large amount of the town and environs was owned by Lord Lansdowne. This extended to Derreen Gardens in Lauraugh on the Beara Peninsula, approximately 15 miles from Kenmare. Lord Lansdowne also owned the Lansdowne Arms Hotel, situated at the top of Main Street, directly opposite d'Arcy's Restaurant & Townhouse.

Originally Main Street was called William Street. The first record of the premises is on the town map of 1819 where it is listed as being leased to Samuel Kingston Maybury on 1st November 1851 for a yearly sum of 2s 6d, on a 99 year lease. Samuel operated a pawn brokers here at a time when a visit to his shop to pawn items of clothing and bedding was the final stop-gap action of those about to enter the workhouse. Samuels's family came from Slatefield, Dromoughty. His tomb is in Killowen and this address is recorded on his headstone.

After this, the premises became a bank. In order to service the new market town the Trenches persuaded the Munster Bank to open a branch in the town in return for receiving premises rent free for five years. As an added incentive the accounts of Kenmare Union were transferred from the National Bank in Killarney to the new Kenmare Bank. It was soon *fitted out in superior style* at Lord Lansdowne's expense. The bank seemed to be doing well in 1870 and farmers were encouraged to lodge/invest their money instead of leaving it at home in danger. However, in 1885 the bank collapsed during an agricultural crisis and it amalgamated, and became the Munster & Leinster Bank and moved to a custom built building in 1905.



After the Bank, Dr Horgan bought the premises. He was related to the Murphy family of Henry Street and it passed to Masie Murphy who operated a boarding house here. Masie married one of her lodgers, late in life. She made a will leaving the house to someone else but her husband contested the will and won.

After this it became a school run by Ms Moore and Bob Connor. There was a reunion of one of these classes recently held in the existing restaurant. After the school, a Dutch Man, Sneeks, who was a professional footballer opened the first chip shop in town here. He served out the window, on the Kilgarvan side of the building. He employed two Dutch girls who were excellent golfers and would be well known in the Golf Club.

The building then transferred to a French couple Remy & Natalie Benoit, who ran a lovely French type bistro and B&B. They still reside in town and run an excellent fish processing business. They leased it to Francis Thoma who opened the Ivy Leaf – restaurant and accommodation.

In 1992 Matthew d'Arcy a Dubliner and his wife Aileen (nee O'Brien from Tralee) bought 25 Main Street and opened up The Old Bank House Restaurant and B&B, subsequently changing the name simply to d'Arcy's Restaurant and B&B. They had two sons at the time – Cian was three years and Morgan three months. A lot of Morgan's formative years were spent in a linen basket or a deep sink as the daily rituals attached to running such a business were carried out. ("I'm sure he has volumes for a shrink to deal with"...)

Matt was previously head chef of the Park Hotel Kenmare, and held the Michelin Star for a number of years there. Aileen also a chef, worked in pastry, starters and fish. This was a recipe for romance and the two were married in 1988. They were not long established in d'Arcy's before Matt's culinary skills ensured their reputation went from strength to strength and accolades appeared. They held the Michelin Red M for a number of years and many other prestigious awards and enjoyed fantastic local trade plus regulars stretching as far as Killarney, Tralee and Cork – all complemented with seasonal tourists.

After Matt's untimely death Aileen ran the restaurant on her own for a couple of months and then leased it to her good pal Pat Gath, who enlisted the excellent chef James Mulchrone, now famous for his very successful "Jam" enterprises. They ran a great show for years. Aileen then renovated the building to increase the restaurant and bedroom capacity. She leased it out and it was opened as an Oyster Bar and Grill.

Due to current economic climate the keys were returned to her in August 2009. So with the help of a few great friends and her sons, they worked like trojans and re-opened on the 4th September 2009.



Tom Crean was born in Gurtachrane, Annascaul Co. Kerry on the 20th of July 1877. In 1893, shortly before his 16th birthday he enlisted in the Royal Navy, leaving Cobh aboard a cargo ship bound for England.

An Unassuming Hero

Tom Crean

Antarctic Explorer

In 1901 while serving as an able seaman on board HMS Ringarooma in New Zealand, Crean encountered Commander Robert Scott who had called into port to refit his ship Discovery while on route to the Antarctic. Crean volunteered to join the Discovery and was accepted for the expedition. It would be the first of three major expeditions to be undertaken by the young Kerryman.

Though his name appears only rarely in the records of the first expedition, Crean made his mark with Scott and the rest of the crew. He was a strong sledger, a hard worker and a cheerful companion. Upon completion of the expedition and on the recommendation of Scott, Crean was promoted to Petty Officer 1st Class and served with Scott between 1906 and 1909.

In May 1910, Crean joined the Terra Nova under Commander Scott on another Antarctic adventure and this time achieved greater prominence. Having trekked with Scott to within 150 miles of the Pole, Lt Teddy Evans, William Lashly and Tom Crean were instructed to return to base camp. Their 800 mile return trip across the Polar plateau in extreme conditions proved a daunting task. Having found their way to the Beardmore Glacier by sliding down hundreds of feet of icefalls they found their way blocked by huge crevasses. They were left with no option but to venture along "the crossbar of the H of Hell" by crossing the precarious snow bridges between each crevasse. As they reached the barrier Lt Evans developed scurvy and 100 miles from base camp was no longer able to stand unaided. Lashly and Crean pulled him on a sledge to within 35 miles of safety whereupon, weakened by fatigue and hunger, Crean left a dying Evans in the care of Lashly while attempting to cross the final 35 mile journey alone in an attempt to reach help. Following an 18 hour non-stop march Evans was saved and he never forgot the courage of the



two men who had as he later wrote "Hearts of Lions". Crean and Lashly were awarded the Albert Medal in recognition of their courage.

In December 1913 Sir Ernest Shackleton announced his intention to sledge across the Antarctic. Crean was selected by Shackleton to be one of six who would make the journey across the continent. Sadly, the plan went awry when the pack ice quickly closed in around their ship the Endurance in the Weddell Sea. In October 1915 the crew were forced to abandon the expedition. After two failed attempts to march over the ice to land, the crew resigned themselves to surviving on the ice floe while they waited for the pack ice to break up so they could launch the ship's rescue boats. The drifting ice remained their home until April 1916.

On April 9th Shackleton decided to launch the three lifeboats in an effort to reach either Clarence or Elephant Island about 100 miles to the North. Suffering from exposure, exhaustion and seasickness they reached Elephant Island on April 15th. It was their first time on land in nearly 16 months. Elephant Island, however, was a desolate rock and offered no chance of rescue to the stranded crew. Their only hope of survival would be to attempt an 800 mile journey in an open boat across treacherous waters to the whaling station in South Georgia. Shackleton chose five others to accompany him including Tom Crean. The others would remain behind awaiting rescue should the journey prove successful.

On April 24th Shackleton launched the largest boat, the James Caird, in an attempt to reach South Georgia. On the 17th day of their journey the men endured constant gales, freezing temperatures and enormous swells. Water ran short and dehydration nearly crippled their efforts.

They managed to make land on the south side of the island but were faced with a trek over mountains and



across an uncharted interior in order to reach the whaling station to the north. Shackleton was reluctant to risk a further boat journey given the conditions they had experienced, so leaving three on the shore where they landed, Shackleton, Crean and Worsley set out to navigate their way across the island. They took three days provisions and no sleeping bags as they intended to march straight through. Weak, poorly equipped and inadequately clothed they travelled for 36 hours without rest and arrived at the whaling station at 4pm on May 20th.

In the next four months Shackleton, Crean and Worsley made three unsuccessful attempts to rescue the men on Elephant Island. Finally at the end of August the ice opened long enough to allow the Chilean Yelcho in and all 22 men were rescued.

Crean retired from the Navy in 1920 and returned to Annascaul, County Kerry, where he married and settled. He and his wife Ellen had three daughters Mary, Eileen and Katie – an unusually small family for the time. Together they bought and rebuilt a public house by the river and named it "The South Pole Inn". He spent the remainder of his days enjoying family life and eschewed the many attempts by visitors to engage him in tales of his exploits in the Antarctic.

Tom Crean died in 1938 of a ruptured appendix. His funeral was the largest ever witnessed in Annascaul. This seemingly indestructible man was finally laid to rest in the tiny cemetery in Ballynacourty, in a tomb he built himself, overlooking the hills of Kerry.

Antarctica (2002) was one of the most successful exhibitions ever staged in the Kerry County Museum and won the Best Exhibition at the Museum of the Year Awards. It was opened on 23rd May 2002 by Sir Edmund Hillary who spoke of Tom Crean as his hero. Funnily enough they shared the same birthday, 20th July, Sir Edmund Hillary being born on that date in 1919.

Aileen d'Arcy, proprietor of d'Arcy's Restaurant and Townhouse is Tom Crean's granddaughter.