

The Tale of the Sullivan(s) from the Beara Peninsula

When we visited Ireland in June 2016, the owner of the Bed and Breakfast where we were staying suggested we drive along the Sullivan Mile. So Amy and I did just that and the story goes like this. In 1849, Tom and Bridget Sullivan left Adrigole, Beara Peninsula, for a new life in the United States of America, where they started a family. Years later, their grandson, Tom, married a Mary Agnes Dignan. The couple settled in Waterloo, Iowa, and raised 5 sons: George, Francis, Joseph, Madison, and Albert.

All five sons joined the US Navy and served on the USS Juneau during WW II. In November 1942, during the battle of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, a Japanese submarine torpedoed the ship. Many were killed, including the Sullivan brothers. Extensive newspaper and radio coverage made the family's tragedy a national story, and Hollywood made a film *The Fighting Sullivans* (1944) based on a story of the brothers. In consequence of the suffering brought to the family by a single event, the US Navy altered its policy, prohibiting brothers from serving in action together.

The five brothers were posthumously awarded the Purple Heart Medal, and a United States naval destroyer was commissioned in 1943 and named USS *The Sullivans* in their memory. A replacement USS *The Sullivans* was launched in 1995 by Kelly Longhren Sullivan, granddaughter of Albert and the ship anchored off the Beara peninsula. Commemorative plaques were unveiled in Adrigola, near the site of the original family home. To this day the ship adopts the motto of the brothers: 'We Stick Together'.

Amy and I then traveled through Castletownbere (which is the location of the old English Treaty port vacated in 1938) to Dunboy Castle. While we were walking around the castle grounds, a man introduced himself as O'Sullivan, a descendant of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare clan. He is now the caretaker of the ruined castle by controlling the weeds and vegetation around the structure. This is his story of Dunboy Castle.

Dunboy Castle was the main fortress of the O'Sullivans, who controlled the Beara Peninsula until the early seventeenth century.

After the Irish defeat at Kinsale in 1601, Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare continued to resist English rule in Munster. Sir George Carew, Lord President of the province was determined to destroy Dunboy Castle, which was the main focus of the rebellion.

In spring 1602, the outer wall of the castle was embanked with earth and timber to resist the English cannon. Carew, a skilled tactician, landed his heavy guns and about 4,000 men on Bere Island, across the harbour from Dunboy. A dash across the channel secured a strategic position on the shore and the cannon were mounted in the vicinity of the modern hotel (formerly the Puxley mansion).

Dunboy castle was defended by a small garrison of 140 men, with some artillery. A day's march away, Donal Cam and his army of 1,000 men awaited Spanish forces at Ardea. The expected help

did not arrive and O'Sullivan did not join the battle at Dunboy. The castle wall was breached by Carew's cannon within hours. The trapped defenders included three Spanish gunners and brother Dominic Collins, a Jesuit lay-brother and soldier. A fierce attack forced the breach and the defenders, fighting hand to hand, were driven into the cellar – the shell of which remains. Some who escaped to the sea were shot from boats. The rest, many of them wounded, were barricaded in the cellar.

Under heavy shelling, the garrison surrendered in the morning, despite one man's effort to ignite a barrel of gunpowder. The entire garrison was executed by Carew's forces, and Dunboy castle was destroyed on June 22, 1602. O'Sullivan Beare's rebellion continued for a further six months until he was forced to flee the Beara peninsula, marching north in midwinter.

Amy and I were driving through upstate New York this past summer on our way to Buffalo, NY, where we came across a stone monument honoring General John Sullivan for the Sullivan Expedition.

I said to Amy, google General John Sullivan and find out where he was born. She did and reported, Somersworth, New Hampshire. After a few minutes passed, I said where was his father from? She looked back to me and said Beara Peninsula, Ireland. Here is General Sullivan's story.

The Sullivan Expedition was an extended systematic military campaign during the American Revolutionary war against Loyalists (Tories) and four Amerindian nations of the Iroquois which had sided with the British and were warring against the patriots. The campaign ordered and organized by George Washington in the lands of the Iroquois Confederacy "taking the war home to the enemy to break their morale". The expedition was largely successful in that goal as they destroyed more than 40 Iroquois villages and stores of winter crops; breaking the power of the six nations in New York.

Lastly, this past summer I spent some time with friends at a cookout around the fourth of July weekend. An older person at the cookout was intrigued by my recent trip to Ireland and went on to explain his trips there as a young man. He talked about spending months with family and cousins on the Beara Peninsula. After a few minutes I happened to ask if his name was Sullivan. His response with a firm handshake was 'Lou Sullivan.'

The Sullivan's certainly made a name for themselves on the Beara Peninsula.