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# Open Agenda

## Descendants of Titanic survivor on emotional visit to Lahardane

A VW transporter van carrying three American women, a mother and her two daughters, trundled down a Mayo laneway, which was rutted by the winter snow and frost, on Easter Saturday.

Bumping along in the van interior were Kathy Lynch-Cobuzzi, whose grandmother, Delia McDermott survived the Titanic despite increasing the odds of not doing so by rushing below deck to secure her hat, and her girls, Catherine and Chrissy.

At a spot where the road to Knockfarnaught, Lahardane, narrowed into a cul-de-sac and the great bulk of snow flecked Nephin reared skywards, the van and cavalcade behind slowed to a halt.

Michael Molloy of Ad-dergoole Titanic Society came to the van window

The windows, doors and roof of the former three-roomed cottage was gone and a young tree sprouted near a spot where the kitchen table probably had been.

Men, women and younger people, the present day residents of Knockfarnaught, broke the spell when they arrived in two's and three's to greet the visitors.

"You're welcome home," said one as if it was Delia, who left the village for the last time almost 98 years ago to the week, who was returning and not her granddaughter. When the pictures had

been taken and the general chatter subsided, Kathy spoke about her granny who had been taken from a lifeboat in to the liner Carpathia, almost comatose from the cold.

Earlier, on the sinking Titanic, she had watched male passengers, who were perhaps trying to rid themselves of their dread, play football with blocks of ice on the deck.

Kathy explained that her grandmother rarely spoke of the tragedy having undoubtedly been traumatised by the experience.

"She probably needed the therapy", Kathy said. "The way she coped was to turn inwards. The children were not allowed to talk about it (the tragedy). It was too traumatic."

Despite the fact that she married and prospered in the U.S. and had a family, Delia never returned to Ireland. "I think she didn't want to make any more journeys after the trauma of what happened", her granddaughter explained.

### Angry

Despite her reticence to talk about the subject of the Titanic Delia did express anger on occasions about the fact that men had dressed up as women in order to get places on the ship's lifeboats.

"She would get angry," said Kathy. "That bothered her."

There were 65 passengers and crew on Lifeboat 13, the vessel which saved Delia. As they bobbed about waiting for further rescue, Delia noted that many of the passengers were men.

Could Delia's anger be explained by the fact that some of her girlfriends maybe even her best friend Mary Canavan - was unable to get on a lifeboat because space had been



WINDOW ON THE PAST. Looking out through the window of the now derelict cottage at Knockfarnaught, Lahardane, where Titanic survivor Delia McDermott lived before her emigration to the United States in 1912 are Delia's granddaughter Kathy Lynch-Cobuzzi and great granddaughters Catherine and Chrissy Cobuzzi.

Photo Ken Wright

taken up men pretending to be women?

Fourteen of the passengers on board the Titanic when it sank off Newfoundland on April 11, 1912, were from Ad-dergoole parish.

Eleven of the fourteen - Catherine Bourke, John Bourke, Mary Bourke, Mary Canavan, Pat Canavan, Bridget Donohue, Nora Fleming, James Flynn, Catherine McGowan, Delia Mahon and Mary McGowan - lost their lives.

The three who survived were Delia McDermott, Annie Kate Kelly and Annie McGowan.

Kathy Lynch Cobuzzi, says she doesn't remember much about her famous granny (who died in 1959) "except for her blue eyes and fascinating brogue."

Delia, like her best friend

who perished, Mary Canavan, was chosen from her family to emigrate.

From other members of her family, Kathy has been able to piece together details of the Lahardane group's last hours on the Titanic.

While Delia was on the deck waiting to get on a lifeboat Delia remembered the admonition of her mother before she left that when she arrived in New York she was to be wearing her hat and gloves as "a lady is not a lady unless she is wearing her hat and gloves."

So, presumably to the dismay of the friends who were with her, Delia risked her life to dash downstairs to retrieve the prized millinery.

So what became of the hat? Has it survived to become a family heirloom?

Kathy replied: "No one knows what happened to it. It would be a wonderful thing to have but no one knows where it is. Knowing her (Delia) and the way she felt about it maybe she deliberately got rid of it herself."

One of the last questions I asked Kathy in Knockfarnaught before her group departed for the nearby St. Patrick's Church where the names of the local Titanic passengers are inscribed on a memorial plaque concerned her feelings.

How did she feel to be travelling the same roads as her grandmother when she left Knockfarnaught for the last time, presumably by horse and trap, almost exactly 98 years ago?

"It brings up all kind of emotions", she replied. "I'm missing my father

(Tom Lynch) terribly. My father did say to me as he heard the end of his life that his one regret was that he never came to Ireland to see this. I said 'don't worry, dad, I will do it for you.' So I'm wishing that he was here, that I could have brought him. It's also making me think a lot about her (Delia)."

Kathy now wants to start a family tree to establish fully the ancestral links with the McDermotts of Lahardane and the Lynchs of Co. Galway.

Above all, she wants to keep the Titanic story alive. That is a task she is also entrusting to her children.

I asked Catherine and Chrissy if they were up for the challenge. They nodded their heads enthusiastically.



KATHY Lynch-Cobuzzi and her daughters, Catherine and Chrissy, inspect the plaque which has been erected in St. Patrick's Church, Lahardane to the 13 passengers from the Lahardane (Aldergoole) area who travelled on the last voyage of the Titanic in 1912. Kathy's grandmother, Delia McDermott, as well as Annie Kate Kelly and Annie McGowan, were the only ones of the Lahardane group who survived the tragedy.



DELIA McDermott Lynch pictured circa 1941. Having survived the sinking of the Titanic, Delia rarely if ever spoke about it, as if she was traumatised by what happened, according to her granddaughter Kathy Lynch Cobuzzi. In 1919 Delia married John Lynch, an emigrant from Co. Galway. They had three children, Thomas (Tom), Julia (Julie) and Margaret (Margie). Delia died in 1959 and her husband died in 1963.



YOU'RE WELCOME. Residents of Knockfarnaught, Lahardane, turned out to welcome Kathy Lynch-Cobuzzi and her daughters back to the homestead and village which their ancestor Delia McDermott, a survivor of the Titanic tragedy, left in 1912 to make a new life in the United States.

Photo: Ken Wright