



My great-grandfather was an odd man by all accounts. He was my granny's father. He fought in the Boer War, and was a docker on Dublin's North Wall. He didn't drink, nor smoke, nor curse - which must have been strange behaviour, if not for a soldier, then certainly for an Irish docker. He had his hobbies. He mended watches; he was interested in megalithic history; he had learned needlecrafts in the army. He was also an amateur photographer.

As a docker and union man, he was one of the first groups out on strike during the Dublin Lockout. On the 31st of August 1913, he took part in the workers rally on Sackville Street (what we now call O'Connell Street). The Dublin Metropolitan Police baton charged the protesters. He had brought his camera (on its wooden tripod) to take a picture of Big Jim Larkin, who though banned, was speaking at the event. When the police attacked, he attempted to protect his camera, and had his arm broken by the baton. His camera remained intact. My father now has it.

These are simply facts.

In 1923, he was the first of our family ever to buy a house - 12 Crescent Gardens, East Wall - handy for a docker. And up until last April, when an old relative died, someone from our family had lived continuously in that house. So, after nearly 100 years, when it came time for us to clear the rooms, the attic, his shed - we found a box - 4 boxes actually. An archive of glass plate negatives, untouched for 100 years.

Meticulously logged, these glass plate negatives are not just the history of a man, but also of other men. Chosen men.

It seems he was part of a camera club. He went on day trips, by train and bicycle, around Dublin, Kildare, and Meath to document old Celtic tombs - our ancient people. His old maps were with the slides of the areas. The Dublin map records a trip to Tara in 1900. His negatives show people digging.





So, as a photographer, I engaged with this family archive - my people. I began to tackle the questions of how is the past remembered? How is the past represented in the present? A re-examination of the places he had been. I travel to these places for the first time with only his images - and yet I am revisiting. I try to see what my great-grandfather had seen. Sometimes, a few fragments of our memories would synchronise - a past, a present. But both our memories were always bound to vanish eventually.

And then we found a letter.

Artist Bio

Born and now back living in Dublin, Spencer Glover [b.1973, Ireland] he has lived in the UK, Italy, the US, and Middle East. Spencer had a career as a publisher before returning to his art practice. He has a Fine Art degree and post-grad qualification from the National College of Art in Dublin.

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