

# CORK PROFILE

## Brian Coughlan Author



### When you were small, what did you want to be as a grown-up?

From the age of nine or ten I wanted to be a writer. I went into the kitchen and found myself a pristine school copybook and from there went into the room in our house that was never used for any purpose - the 'good room' - and I sat down to write a novel.

I didn't have anything in mind as I uncapped the pen, had a quick think about it, decided on a story about brothers who run away from home for no reason, drew a complete blank, wrote down the first sentence, tore the page out of the copybook, put the copybook and pen back where I'd found them, and put the whole business of writing out of my head for another thirty years.

### Tell us about your career progression to your role today:

I was made redundant from a job in Cork (lovingly described in a story from 'Wattle and Daub') and they were generous enough to offer me a retraining grant.

I used the money to enroll in a writing class in Galway and learned what I had been doing wrong for years. I then spent another long time, years and years, trying to get my stories published in journals and online until finally I had enough of these to send to publishers around the world. One such publisher, Etruscan Press, took pity on me and published my debut collection of short stories in November of 2018.

### What is the most enjoyable aspect of what you do?

The most enjoyable aspect of what I do is watching the faces of people reading my book, seeing those faces light-up with joy and pleasure, as the words wash over them, like a warm summer breeze; not that this has ever actually happened, but I imagine it would be enjoyable, were it to happen.

### What motivates you?

Anyone who writes short fiction will tell you the same thing - at the end of the day it's about

the money.

### What advice would you give your 15 year old self?

Same advice I give my 16 year old son; brush your teeth!

### If you weren't in the job you have, what would you be doing?

I would probably be selling life assurance over the phone from a call centre in some isolated industrial estate. It's a Sunday morning and you are sleeping-in when you get a cold call from me, wondering if you have a few minutes to discuss your life expectancy and next of kin arrangements.

### What is your greatest life or career achievement to-date?

My greatest achievement to date is getting the wise heads of Etruscan Press in the USA to publish my debut collection of short stories. Also at the launch event for 'Wattle and Daub', to generate more of a 'buzz' around the book, I released a jar full of angry bees. Afterwards, everyone agreed that it was the most memorable book launch they'd ever attended.

### Who has had the biggest influence on you in your life?

My grandfather had the biggest influence on me in my life. He was angry all the time and liked shouting at people for no apparent reason.

He ate meat off the bone for his breakfast and even in his late 70s would climb ladders that he'd made himself from bits of scrap wood, to get up to the top of his hay shed.

He never had a good word to say for anyone or anything. He drove his car while always looking out the side window to see what was going on in other people's fields. He did not give a flying you-know-what about anything.

### What is the life dream now?

Sell enough copies of 'Wattle and Daub' to allow me to retire peacefully to a multi-million beach house in Youghal and spend every day

walking Little Big Man along the beach while metal-detecting for loose change.

### How do you switch off?

I have a small button on the back of my head. It's very discrete and under the hair line. It would remind you of the button on the old action man figures where you could move his eyes from side to side.

### What is your favourite Cork memory?

Going to see Cork play Tipperary in the Munster Hurling Championship in the old Páirc Uí Chaoimh and foolishly deciding to sit down instead of stand for the match. Being tall and the seats being so ridiculously close together, I had to put my legs over my shoulders to fit into place.

Two hours later I was locked into position and had to wait for the stadium to empty before I could exit my row, shuffling sideways like a crab, in agony, to the nearest osteopath.

### What is your favourite place in Cork?

My favourite place in Cork is The Fishwife on MacCurtain Street, just as the man behind the counter has your bag of chips ready and is asking if you want salt and vinegar on them.

### Do you have a favourite quote or motto?

'Never a lender nor borrower be' (unless we are talking about the library).

### When are you at your happiest?

In my sleep.

### Any regrets?

Yes and no.

### What is your hidden talent?

I have no talent for anything hidden or unhidden.

### What might we be surprised to know about you?

One time I talked a man down off a window ledge by reading him a short story. He was intent on doing something really stupid and

### factfile

**Name and position:** Brian Coughlan, author

**Age:** 102

**Lives:** Within sight of the sea. Cobh, and currently Salthill

**Family:** Yes, unfortunately

**Pets:** One dog - Little Big Man (a cross between a bulldog and a poodle).

**Favourite thing about Cork:** The eccentricity and humour of Cork people. They provided much of the inspiration behind the stories contained in my debut collection of short stories 'Wattle and Daub'

**Least favourite thing about Cork:** The speed bumps on Shandon Street. You'd lose the muffler on one of them fierce handy like

**One thing you'd change about Cork:** I wouldn't change one thing about Cork, not even the speed bumps on Shandon Street. Cork is perfectly fine the way it is

was quite upset about something or other and was threatening to do it.

I just happened to have a short story on me and I read it to him.

He came in off the ledge to tell me the ending was all wrong and when he was on solid ground, we managed to sedate him and ultimately save his life.



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## Wilton mass for Celtic legend

### Ryan O'Neill

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A mass celebrating the life of former Celtic player and

manager Billy McNeill will take place next week.

Organised by 88 year old Blackrock resident Martin Gordon, it will take place at the African Missions Church in Wilton on Thursday 16 May at 7.30pm.

McNeill died on 22 April aged 79 having made nearly 800 appearances for Celtic and winning 31 major trophies as a player and manager. Martin Gordon, who was born in Glasgow, met McNeill during his playing days and spoke with him on

the phone in recent years before his death.

He said he had received great support from Celtic for the event, with the club this week sending a Celtic shirt by courier from Celtic Park with McNeill's name and number on the back. The shirt will be displayed in the sanctuary during the mass. Martin also expects Celtic to be represented at the mass. He said: "I have asked for Lisbon Lions Jim Craig, Bobby Lennox and Bertie Auld to come,

provided their health allows. Martin's niece Margaret, who knows Bertie Auld, intends to speak to him after Billy McNeill's funeral."

A string trio from the Cork School of Music will play from 7-7.25pm, while Welsh tenor Ryan Morgan will sing the solo numbers and lead the congregation in the singing of 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. Celtic supporters attending are encouraged to wear Celtic scarves and jerseys.

### PR • PRESS • EVENT

Photography

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