

Obituary: Sir Sean Connery

1930-2020

Thomas Sean Connery was born on 25 August 1930 and was brought up in one room of a tenement with a shared toilet and no hot water in the Fountainbridge area of the capital.

His father Joseph Connery was a factory worker and lorry driver whose family had emigrated from Ireland in the 19th Century and his mother, Euphemia C. Maclean, was a cleaning lady who could trace her line back to Gaelic speakers from the Isle of Skye. His brother Neil Connery, worked as a plasterer in Edinburgh.



SI Neg. 2001-3797.18a. Date: 4/6/2001.

Actor Sir Sean Connery speaking at the National Press Club promoting independence for Scotland.

Credit: Jim Wallace (Smithsonian Institution)

As a youngster in the 1930s and 40s Sean attended the FetLor Youth Club and recalled in his 2008 memoir 'Being a Scot' that it gave him the chance to play sport and "have the rare luxury of a hot bath".

Club chairman Andrew Barrie said: "We were saddened to hear of Sean Connery's passing. FetLor has been supporting Edinburgh's young people for almost 100 years, giving them the skills and confidence to go on to enjoy fulfilling lives. Sean Connery is part of our heritage. I understand that Mr Connery had a real affection for his time at FetLor and his connection with the charity is a source of pride for us. We offer our

heartfelt condolences to his family at this sad time.”

After leaving school Sean had many different jobs, such as a milkman, lorry driver, a labourer, a coffin polisher and an artist’s model for the Edinburgh College of Art.

The artist Richard Demarco, who as a student often painted Connery, described him as “too beautiful for words, a virtual Adonis”.

He joined the Royal Navy, but was later discharged because of stomach ulcers and left the service with tattoos which proclaimed his passions: “Scotland forever” and “Mum & Dad”.

At the age of 23, he had a choice between becoming a professional footballer or an actor.

He played for Bonnyrigg Rose and was offered a trial for East Fife but chose acting then after coming third in Mr Universe in 1950, he began to pick up modelling work, which in turn led to small theatrical roles and chorus appearances.

Around that time Manchester United manager Matt Busby spotted him playing for a showbiz team in a charity match and offered him a contract which he reluctantly declined.

His first film role was an unnamed part in the 1955 movie, *Lilacs in the Spring*, a musical drama starring Errol Flynn.

Roles in British films like *No Road Back* and *Hell Drivers* led to a breakthrough role opposite Hollywood star Lana Turner in the movie ‘*Another Time, Another Place*’ where Turner’s jealous mobster boyfriend Johnny Stompanato famously visited the London set and pointed a gun at Connery who disarmed the gangster.

He married actress Diane Cilento in 1962 and they had a son, Jason Connery, born on January 11, 1963. The couple separated in February 1971 and divorced two years later. In 1975 he married Micheline Roquebrune.

His big breakthrough came when he landed the role of secret agent James Bond in Dr. No (1962). He played James Bond in six more films: From Russia with Love (1963), Goldfinger (1964), Thunderball (1965), You Only Live Twice (1967), Diamonds Are Forever (1971) and Never Say Never Again (1983) and was recently voted the Best Bond by Radio Times readers.

During his tenure as 007 he enjoyed a successful career appearing in films, including Alfred Hitchcock's Marnie (1964), The Hill (1965), Murder on the Orient Express (1974), The Man Who Would Be King (1975), Highlander (1986), The Name of the Rose (1986), Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989), The Hunt for Red October (1990), Rising Sun (1993), The Rock (1996), Finding Forrester (2000) and The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (2003).

He won an Best Supporting Actor Oscar in 1987 for his portrayal of Jim Malone, a tough Irish cop in "The Untouchables."

He received the Freedom of Edinburgh in 1991 and in 2000 he was knighted by the Queen for services to films and received the American Film Institute's Lifetime Achievement Award six-years later when he confirmed his retirement from acting. In 2010, a bronze bust sculpture of Connery was placed in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

Ten-years ago he returned 176 Fountainbridge, a block which was demolished in the 1960s to unveil a plaque which reads: "Sean Connery, Born Fountainbridge, (25 August 1938), Oscar winning actor, International film star"

At that time he said: " "Then, it was an industrial area which left a significant imprint on my life, as well as on the city of Edinburgh. Now it is a much more pleasant area in which to live, visit and work, with new homes, offices, businesses and open spaces replacing the old factories and tenements and I am sure that the community spirit I remember will be maintained

throughout this transformation.”

Despite his world-wide fame he has never renounced the working-class roots having been brought up in Fountainbridge. His calls for Scottish independence and his support for the Scottish National Party are well documented.

At the time of his death he stayed in the Bahamas and said in 2003 that he would not live in Scotland again until it became independent.

He leaves behind a body of work which was enjoyed by millions and he truly was a silver screen icon.