

Call for Information

50 Years After the Death of Colman 'Tiger' King

Research into the Main Figures of *Man of Aran* (1934)

On 16 October 2026, it will be fifty years since Colman 'Tiger' King died. King was one of the three central figures in *Man of Aran*, Robert J. Flaherty's celebrated 1934 documentary. Filmed on Inishmore, the film offered a (romanticised) vision of life on the Aran Islands and became an international success. The leading roles were played by King, Maggie Durrane, and the young Michael Dillane (later registered as Dorrane).

Audiences worldwide praised the trio for their natural presence. The *Sunderland Daily Echo* and *Shipping Gazette* wrote in May 1934: "This film which, in bringing to the screen the life-long courage and endurance of a brave and simple people, pays homage to the spirit that characterizes the whole of Ireland."

After the London premiere, the three travelled through the UK, Ireland, and the United States on a promotional tour. Maggie eventually returned to Inishmore. Colman and Michael left the island and never returned. When Colman died in 1976, his body was brought home and buried at St. Enda's Cemetery in Killeany. At the funeral, his brother said: "My brother said he would give his two eyes to see Aran again. He sees it now - at least his spirit will."

Graphic Novel Project

Illustrator and researcher Monique van Dongen is creating a graphic novel about *Man of Aran*, exploring the film's impact on the island and the lives of its three main figures. The story touches on broader themes: identity, displacement, longing, and the ways stories can shape a community.

Much is known about the making of the film, its reception, and the promotional tour. But from the start of the Second World War onward, the traces of Colman King and Michael Dillane fade almost entirely. What is known: Colman lived and worked in London until his death; Michael, registered as Dorrane, was wounded in Normandy in 1944, where he served as part of the 1st Battalion (1RUR).

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Van Dongen is seeking information about Colman 'Tiger' King, Maggie Durrane, and Michael Dillane, as well as the film's impact on the island and its local reception. She hopes to hear from anyone who knew them or their families, or who has stories, photographs, letters, clippings, maps, documents, or personal anecdotes about their later lives.

04-09-2026



Irish Press (L) and
Connacht Tribune (R)
October 22, 1976