

Farewell to the Terrace

A SPECIAL REPORT

From a city centre campus to playing the world stage



From daisy chains to pubs, some notable alumni have their own unique memories. Louise Holden writes

The Earlsfort Terrace campus was always bursting at the seams. Beyond the seams, happily, was all that Dublin city had to offer. Famous former students of Earlsfort Terrace have vivid memories of this charismatic city campus with its eclectic mix of priests, rebels, budding politicians and students from all over the world.

"The place was crawling with priests," journalist Olivia O'Leary recalls. "I came from a convent school, where the nuns believed in rights for women, to a university where I wasn't allowed to wear trousers. One day all the female students turned up in jeans, in protest at the ban. It was lifted that year - 1968, I believe."

Clothing marked the memory of many former Earlsfort Terrace students. "I'll never forget the clerical students, all dressed in black, arriving in pairs on their bicycles," says broadcaster and former history student Brian Farrell. "They were not allowed to speak to the other students. In the Terrace canteen, known as 'The Annex', they never had to queue for their lunch, as it was all laid out for them. I developed a deep anti-clericalism over the matter."

The Great Hall, centre of campus life at the Terrace, formed the backdrop for Dr Garret FitzGerald's richest recollections of the period. "It was the place where all students came together to read the noticeboards, collect exam results and to sit on the radiators. We were always warned that we would get piles. One fine day in May 1944 I and my friends weaved a 63-foot long daisy chain and hung it across the hall. I'm sure we broke a record. The drawing pin that held the last daisy remained in the wall for years afterwards."

Earlsfort Terrace students had a ready supply of flora. No reminiscence of the campus is complete without stories of languid afternoons under the trees in the

Iveagh Gardens and St Stephen's Green. "We sat under the apple blossoms, making daisy chains, gazing at the statues of civil servants and vowing that we would never join them," Olivia O'Leary recounts.

Another life-sustaining organ of the campus was the science theatre, which bubbled with chemistry by day and debate by night. Would-be politicians and law makers fought it out there at sessions of the L&H debating society.

"There was an electric atmosphere in the science theatre when the L&H used to meet," says journalist and broadcaster Vincent Browne. "There were great acoustics and the room was steeped in atmosphere that could not be replicated anywhere else. As a result the debates were more vibrant and alive than they are today."

Every former student of Earlsfort has been irrevocably marked by at least one provocative academic. "Denis Donoghue was absolutely mesmerising," says Olivia O'Leary, who experienced an epiphany in one of her early lectures with the Professor of English.

"I was only 17, barely out of school, a culchie who hadn't read nearly enough. When Denis Donoghue began to lecture on Wordsworth I could actually feel my mind stretch as he spoke. He was arrogant and difficult; he used to say that these sessions were not so much lectures as opportunities for the students to hear him think out loud."

Brian Farrell was especially struck by the lectures of Professor Dudley Edwards, professor of Modern Irish History, an "eccentric character", and Aubrey Gwyn, a Jesuit and Professor of Medieval History. "If the weather was fine Professor Gwyn would move the lectures to the Iveagh Gardens. Once there, he would invariably draw crowds."

Farrell also recalls large crowds gathering for the



Main picture: broadcaster and journalist Vincent Browne; above left: Garret FitzGerald, former taoiseach and economist, addressing an audience in Earlsfort Terrace in the 1960s and right: broadcaster Olivia O'Leary

addresses of Patrick Kavanagh, enlisted as a guest lecturer by Sean Costello and John Charles McQuaid as "a bit of kindness" after losing a libel action and a considerable amount of money.

Dr Garret FitzGerald was also struck by the lecturing talents of the Earlsfort Terrace history faculty, especially those of John Marcus O'Sullivan.

Vincent Browne, a graduate of economics and politics, cannot forget the inspiring lectures on economics by Paddy Lynch - he remembers the metaphysics lectures of Desmond Connell for different reasons, he says.

Anyone that studied in Earlsfort Terrace was very attached to it. I never wanted to leave

THE BANNED TROUSERS, the queues for registration and the files of silent clerical students, keeping the blinkered "custody of the eyes", slipped into the past as Earlsfort Terrace modernised, rationalised and finally closed. As one faculty after another said

goodbye to the terrace, they also said farewell to Hartigan's, Lamb's and Kirwan's pubs, the Singing Kettle on Leeson Street, the Green Cinema, the Iveagh Gardens and other retreats and watering-holes. Feelings about the move were

mixed and to this day, alumni of the Terrace cannot agree. "I was one of the few people in favour of the move to Belfield," says Brian Farrell. "The Terrace was an extraordinary place but we lived in each other's pockets. There was no scope to expand in any direction."

Dr Garret FitzGerald feels differently. "It was a small campus and the students were close. Nowadays you don't get to mingle with students from lots of different disciplines on campus. Anyone that studied in Earlsfort Terrace was very attached to it. I never wanted to leave."

Making the break from the Terrace: JIM SHERIDAN

Studies and political activities disrupted - and a bike out to Belfield

Film-maker Jim Sheridan started his university career in Earlsfort Terrace, studying English, history and philosophy under memorable lecturers such as Jim Mays, Gus Martin and Sister Benvenuta. He spent his idle hours in the Iveagh Gardens or hanging out in the physics theatre, where he met Neil Jordan and Frank Macken.

His first brush with artistic success was his college stage production - a "psychedelic" version of Oedipus Rex which was critically acclaimed and attracted thousands.

"It was 1972 and the production spoke about the North. I was very political in college, and spent a lot of my time at Earlsfort in Gaj's Restaurant, a political hotbed."

"The atmosphere at Earlsfort Terrace was very free, very

collegial, like an old-world college. We were right in the centre of town, drinking in Hartigans, relaxing in the Gardens - it was great."

Sheridan remembers with sorrow the day when, in the middle of his undergrad years, his faculty was moved to the Belfield campus. "I had to buy a ratty old motorbike - no more walking to college from my home in Seville Place. I knew there was no point in protesting, the move was inevitable, but I never made my peace with Belfield."

Sheridan started skipping lectures in Belfield and spending his time in the Trinity College library instead, or mingling with other artists in the arts labs on College Green. You can take the student out of the Terrace...

- Louise Holden



Jim Sheridan: 'I knew there was no point in protesting, the move was inevitable, but I never made my peace with Belfield'

Planning events for the university's future

Four days of events will mark the 124-year legacy of Earlsfort Terrace

To commemorate 124 years of UCD at Earlsfort Terrace a series of events have been organised between May 17th and 20th.

They include a concert of Music and Literature at the National Concert Hall on Thursday. It will include excerpts from James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, Maeve Binchy and Kate O'Brien, and feature Joe O'Connor, Tom Kilroy, Marie Heaney and Frank McGuinness, with a special performance by John O'Connor.

A retired staff celebration takes place at Earlsfort Terrace on Friday. An L&H Challenge takes place at Earlsfort Terrace the same evening, when current student members of the Literary and Historical Society challenge former auditors to a debate.

On Saturday afternoon there will be afternoon tea, music, exhibitions, tours and talks taking place in Earlsfort Terrace.

All of these events are sold out or fully subscribed.

On Sunday a commemorative liturgy will be held at University Church, at 11 am. All are welcome.

For general enquiries contact UCD University Relations. (Tel 01-7161447)

To coincide with the Farewell to the Terrace series of events, UCD is launching the Terrace Graduates' Fund to ensure the

legacy of the Terrace is preserved for successive generations of students.

The purpose of the Terrace Graduates' Fund is twofold. Firstly, to fund the restoration of the famous and much-loved Kevin Barry memorial window; the cost of preserving this historical artefact is estimated at



upwards of €250,000.

Secondly, to establish hospitality facilities for Terrace graduates as part of the new Gateway Project on the Belfield Campus.

It is UCD's intention to recreate the spirit of the Terrace in new surroundings as a tribute to this great era in our history. Hence this is considered to be both a time of celebration and a

call for support.

The Kevin Barry window was paid for by medical students, and designed by Richard King. It commemorates the first-year UCD medical student who was executed at the age of 18 for his part in the War of Independence. (see page 4)

Since its unveiling in 1934, the window has become one of Earlsfort Terrace's best-loved features.

The final move from Earlsfort Terrace into new facilities on the Belfield Campus completes the vision that began over 70 years ago.

The Terrace Graduates' Fund will give UCD the wherewithal to design and plan the Terrace inheritance within the new Gateway complex, the architectural plans for which will be announced in June.

The Gateway will create an iconic image of a 21st century UCD, blending the aesthetic with the functional to create facilities for the future generations of students.

It is considered that the university has achieved to date - and what it hopes to accomplish in the future - has and will continue to rest upon the shoulders of the UCD alumni, benefactors and staff.

For more information or to make a gift contact: UCD Foundation, Tierney Building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4. (Tel: 01-7161447)

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