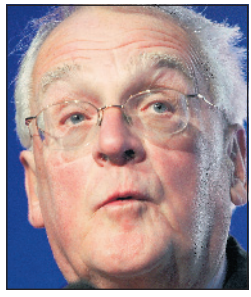


Remembering the centre of that life



After spending 10 years studying medicine in UCD, Maurice Neligan has happy memories of the campus, the pubs and the parties

I enrolled as a medical student in UCD in Earlsfort Terrace in the autumn of 1955. Once I had decided to do medicine, UCD had been the natural choice for a Blackrock boy. Those were the days of the ban on Catholic students entering Trinity. It was a truly illiberal Ireland.

I did not know what to expect on my first foray to the Terrace, where as an undergraduate and postgraduate, I was to spend the next 10 years. It was not without trepidation that I left the cocoon of my boys' secondary school and entered a strange new world.

We registered by faculties and I remember a long queue of

strange faces, handing over their fees and state exam results and receiving their student cards. This latter acquisition I fondly imagined to be the key to university life and to the wealth of pleasurable experiences that awaited me in this student future.

Two things struck me that first day. There were girls, loads of them, and there were clerical students and nuns, loads of them too. In fact, the arrival of the clerical students from the seminaries in the morning was like a crowd of black crows settling on the Terrace. This black crow is now a *rara avis*. Self-consciously, we began to explore this new "liberated" environment. We deferred to older students showing us the ropes and were easy prey for those selling us useless or overpriced books and "must have" lecture notes.

We learned early that most students were habitually broke and that a sort of communistic view of money prevailed. If you had it, you shared it. A dim view was taken of those who failed to get their round, or were adept at producing lit cigarettes from their pockets.

We gradually came to know our classmates from all over Ireland and abroad and came to socialise with our new college groupings from clubs and classes, rather than with the now dispersed friends from school.

Early on, I noticed that there were two basic groups of students – the airy ones and the earthy ones. The latter group tended towards the sciences, medicine, dentistry, engineering, veterinary and, I suppose, the "ags" (agricultural students). Nobody was quite clear as to whether the agricultural sorts really counted as they spent much time away from the centre doing unspeakable things to cows.



Earlsfort Terrace in the 1960s, above, and Neary's pub off Grafton street, above right

The airy ones were centred on the Terrace and kept their brains free for the later complexities of life, by studying arts and law. The drama society and the literary and historical society (L&H) provided the fora for their exhibitionism, as well as the hockey and beagling which exposed them to the open air.

Commerce sat uneasily in the middle, not quite sure of its student gender. Where were the architects in such an arbitrary grouping? It was hard enough in that amorphous duffel coated

group to discern which were male or female.

The earthy group had a lot of their student life located away from the Terrace. Future engineers and scientists were located in the College of Science, Merion Street (now Government Buildings) and we medics, after an initial year there, were redistributed over the years to the various hospitals we had to attend.

Lectures, the library and the ultimate exams were the umbilical cord that bound us to the terrace. The sports clubs and the

societies also fostered the spirit of the college and it seemed a rare soul that was not involved in some extracurricular activity.

It was a constrained space and could hardly be called a campus, but for us the immediate environs were part of it. A back route from the Terrace led through the Iveagh Gardens to 86 St Stephen's Green, where the Students' Union and committee rooms of various clubs and societies were located.

There was also the *Aula Max* where student theatricals and

dances were held. As regards the latter, many students simply would not be seen dead there. The rugby clubs' "hops" and flatland parties provided more attractive social outlets.

The Crystal, Metropole and Four Provinces provided more dubious venues, where some pursued "the other thing", that in all honesty 90 per cent of us would have run from if proffered on a plate. That reality didn't stop us all talking about it; in talk and drink we were mighty men.

Who then amongst us could

forget the pubs and cafes? Hartigan's and the Green Bar, the Golden Orient and above all the Singing Kettle. Further afield, the Inca, the Kilimanjaro and Roberts and, off two-way traffic Grafton St, Davy Byrne's and Neary's. Generations of students skipped Friday lectures for more relevant offerings in the Green Cinema.

Colours matches in those days were conducted with the ferocity of the Battle of the Boyne and for the same reasons – them and us. In fact it was everybody and us,

we were UCD students from the Terrace and the world had better be aware that it was our oyster.

The graduates of my time spread through Irish life leaving their youthful prejudices behind. Even some of the airy group became gainfully employed, which says a lot about Newman's concept of a university. The Terrace is a fond memory to those who studied and played there.

□ Maurice Neligan is a cardiac surgeon and columnist in The Irish Times' *Health Supplement*



Who then amongst us could forget the pubs and cafes? Grafton St, Davy Byrne's and Neary's

Pioneering graduates break through the ages

Scientific innovation has always been important in UCD, writes Claire O'Connell

A low-dose aspirin a day can help keep a heart attack at bay, but it was a UCD medical graduate who was central to figuring out why. And for innovations as diverse as battery-driven trains, the Shannon hydroelectric scheme and a cure for leprosy, we also have to thank pioneering UCD graduates of medicine, science and engineering; disciplines that have had a strong presence at Earlsfort Terrace.

One of the most recent high-profile breakthroughs came in the 1990s when Prof Garret FitzGerald, who studied medicine at UCD, worked out the molecular details of how low doses of

aspirin can make the clot-forming blood platelets less sticky and help protect people who are at risk of a repeat heart attack.

"His work has had a huge impact on our understanding of inflammatory processes," says Dr Patrick Felle, a senior lecturer in healthcare informatics at UCD.

Prof FitzGerald, who is now at Pennsylvania State University in Philadelphia, also pointed out the potential heart-attack risks of taking other types of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which were eventually withdrawn from the market, adds Dr Felle.

Other pioneers of medical science include UCD chemistry graduate Dr Vincent Barry, who set about looking for a cure for tuberculosis (TB) in the 1950s. To this end the Corkman's team made and tested hundreds of chemical compounds. They discovered one that had no effect on TB but could combat the bacterium that causes leprosy instead.

At the time the compound was costly to make and difficult to work with, but today it remains an important component of multi-drug treatment of leprosy.

The most globally recognised UCD graduate is probably Tipperary-born physiologist Edward Conway, who studied medicine and later became professor of biochemistry and pharmacology at the college. He figured out how cells move ions across their membranes to generate electric potentials, a fundamental process that underpins many events in the body.

Conway is thought to have narrowly missed out on a Nobel Prize following his description in 1941 of how cells keep different levels of ions on either side of their membranes.

"Conway did the original work on calcium channels and how things get across cell membranes," says Dr Felle. "He was a pioneer."

And where Conway figured out the currents of microscopic cells, another UCD graduate had plans for generating electricity on a larger scale. Engineer Dr Thomas A McLaughlin was the brain behind the Shannon hydroelectric scheme in the 1920s, explains UCD's current dean of engineering, Prof Gerry Byrne.

Drogheda-born McLaughlin

had gone to work with Siemens in Berlin and, while there, he saw the potential of generating electricity from the Shannon. He convinced his employers and the Irish government to undertake the project, which would cost around one fifth of the national budget. A feat of engineering was born at Ardnacrusha that provided much needed employment and led to the ESB being established.

"He was the brains behind it basically, he was the innovator for the whole project," says Byrne. "At the time it was one of the largest generation systems developed internationally, it was a huge project. And for Ireland in particular it was massive. Even today it's still amazing what they were able to achieve in those years."

While electrification drove the Irish economy forward, another UCD graduate looked to power the much-needed transport system. James Drumm developed an alkaline battery to power specialised, tram-like trains that recharged at stations at the end of each run. "Drumm trains" operated between Dublin and Bray in

the 1930s, and while the second World War and the rise of diesel trains effectively scuppered the technology's growth, Drumm is still considered an important innovator, according to Byrne. "At that stage, the whole development was at the leading edge and he had an international profile in terms of his achievements," he says. "But it takes a whole lot of things for an invention to come to fruition, and the politics of the day is important."

A more recent UCD invention that did blossom internationally is a vehicle suspension system designed by the late professor of mechanical engineering Seamus Timoney. His team's independent wheel suspension approach led to the development of vehicles for the Irish army in



Dr Austin Mascall, left, presenting Prof Garret FitzGerald with the Boyle Medal by for outstanding contribution. Photograph: Eric Luke

1975, and has since been used by militaries all over the world and for specialised emergency service vehicles, including fire tenders at airports. "The main feature is the uniqueness of the suspension system they designed. Each individual wheel has its own suspension," explains Byrne, who took over Timoney's post at UCD.

He notes that compared with former decades, research at UCD has now become more team-based, with a focus on commercialisation. There's a very strong drive for innovation in UCD," he says.

"Most of the projects have an objective. The question is asked: can this be commercialised? The main thrust is much stronger now than in those days."

Dramatic times on stage

UCD's DramSoc was the starting place for many well-known actors, writes Peter McGuire

The dramatic and imposing structure of Earlsfort Terrace once hosted a vibrant student drama society. Here, faces which would later become household names gathered around the DramSoc notice board, eagerly awaiting news of the latest plays and castings.

Nearby, in Newman House, at 86 St Stephen's Green, students staged shows in a small theatre space.

Des Keogh, well known in Ireland for his theatre work, was heavily involved in DramSoc during the mid-1950s. "As soon as I got to UCD, I headed straight for the drama society," Keogh recalls. He won a part in a WB Yeats play, *Words Upon the Window Pane*. This play was directed by a young man named Brian Farrell, who went on to become the well-known broadcaster with RTE.

DramSoc has a long, distinguished history. In 1927, with the involvement of UCD's literary and historical (L&H) debating society, students began staging original and known works. The early days of DramSoc in Earlsfort Terrace produced such actors as Roger McHugh and Cyril Cusack.

During Keogh's time there, he met Lelia Doolin, who later went on to work as artistic director of the Abbey Theatre and as a producer in RTE; Frank Kelly, who became a successful stage and television actor, famously portraying drunken priest Fr Jack in the sitcom *Father Ted*; Ann O'Dwyer, who worked as a presenter with RTE; and Kate Binchy, who became a successful television actress.

Perhaps the most significant friendship

Keogh made at Dramsoc, however, was with Rosaleen McMeniman and Fergus Linehan (Rosaleen and Fergus later married). Linehan began writing material for revues, which consisted of songs, sketches, monologues and satires, often poking fun at prominent people and political figures of the day.

The shows, which had their humble beginnings in DramSoc, were to become so popular that they began a nationwide tour in 1975 which is still running today.

"Rosie and I started touring the country with the show in 1975, and it made a huge difference to our careers. It's probably what we're best known for, but we don't often like to admit it, because we like to be regarded as actors too," Keogh jokes.

He is currently touring the country with Rosaleen, performing his popular revue show, *Des and Rosie at Large*. He also recently starred in a one man show, *The Love Hungry Farmer*, which he adapted from a show by John B Keane.

At DramSoc, Keogh took on different roles with relish. He played Lorenzo in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, starring



Actor Des Keogh

alongside Ronan Keane (later chief justice) who played Shylock. At the Irish University Drama Festival, he played the role of a knight in TS Elliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, while one of his favourite productions was Irish author Oliver Goldsmith's classic play, *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Much of Keogh's time at the Terrace was spent between the DramSoc notice board and Hartigan's pub on Leeson Street.

"We used to spend a lot of time lounging around there and observe everyone passing by," he says.

"The noticeboard was a great meeting place in between lectures. It was beside the main hall, which was always jammed full of life and activity. I suppose you could say I wasted a lot of time in DramSoc, to the detriment of my studies . . . but I don't regret a second of it."

UCD's DramSoc continues to grow strong, celebrating its 80th anniversary last month with a number of plays, performances, workshops and talks, as well as an alumni night, which brought together many of the past and present members of the society. It continues to produce famous names in theatre and film, including Brenda Fricker, Dermot Morgan, Neil Jordan, Jim Sheridan, Conor McPherson, Chris O'Dowd and Gabriel Byrne.

DramSoc moved to the Belfield campus in 1972 and was given rehearsal and performance space in the lower floor of the arts building, where it remains to this day.

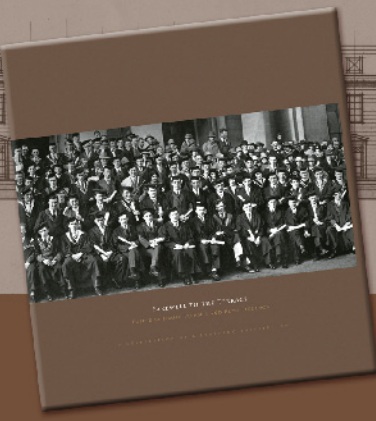
Students can still be found lingering around the DramSoc notice-board, rehearsing their lines and investing huge amounts of time and energy into productions which they hope will rival the professionals.

"DramSoc certainly had a huge influence on my life," says Keogh. "It's where I really learned about acting and the theatre. It gave me a huge amount of opportunities and a lot of breaks in the world of drama."

"Most of all, it's where I learnt that acting is really what I love and want to work in."

A LASTING MEMENTO:

FAREWELL TO THE TERRACE



The *Farewell to the Terrace* commemorative book is a celebration of the many students and staff who were educated, worked and taught in Earlsfort Terrace.

Beautifully illustrated with photographs of life at the Terrace, the book is edited by historian Niamh Puirseil, and Ruth Ferguson, Curator of Newman House. It comprises reminiscences of student days, accounts of academic life and perspectives on the history and architectural heritage of the building.

Farewell to the Terrace captures some of the rich history and folklore of Earlsfort Terrace, and will evoke fond memories for the reader.

Copies can be ordered by sending a cheque, payable to UCD University Relations, for €40, (plus €8 P&P) to *Farewell to the Terrace* c/o UCD University Relations, Tierney Building, UCD, Belfield, Dublin 4