

# 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**

**T**he 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.

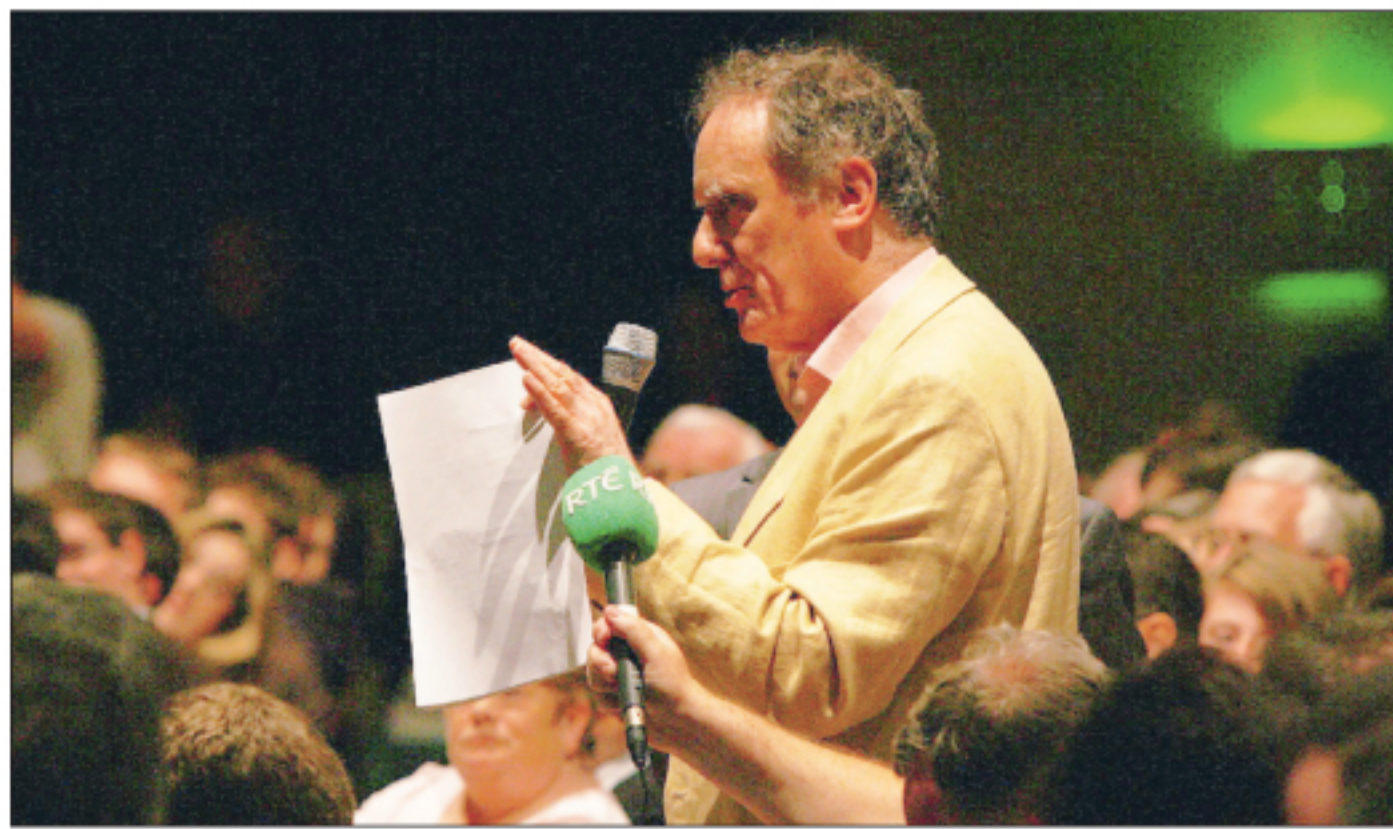
"There was an electric atmosphere in the science theatre when the L&H used to meet," says journalist and broadcaster Vincent Browne. "There were great acoustics and the room was steeped in atmosphere that could not be replicated anywhere else. As a result the debates were more vibrant and alive than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