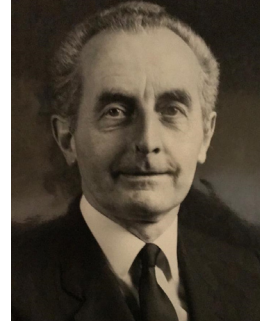


## Diarmuid (Derry) O’Hegarty

### 1927 – 2020

Following a varied and fruitful life, Derry O’Hegarty passed away on 31 March in his 93<sup>rd</sup> year.

Derry considered himself a West Corkman. His father, also Diarmuid, was from near Rosscarbery. His mother Hannah (nee O’Dwyer), later known as Siobhan, was from near Castletownbere. Both parents being national school-teachers, (his father later became a school inspector) they moved to several locations around Ireland. Derry was born in the Curragh on 22<sup>th</sup> November 1927 and lived



in Mullingar, Killarney and Cashel before eventually making it back to Cork in 1944. He and his brother Colm, they were “Irish twins”, were boarders in nearby Rockwell when they lived in Cashel. They both found it hard being banished to a school that was only four miles from home. He frequently recalled to his family the icy dormitories but, for a person who enjoyed year round sea swimming, got little sympathy from his family.

While in Rockwell he learned German from the well-known German priest – Fr. Myers, who had escaped from Germany in the early days of Nazi rule. It was an experience that left an enormous impression on the young Derry. When the family returned to Cork, Derry went to the famous “North Mon” - Munster’s premier academic establishment for aspiring young tigers. There Derry matched the expectations of the school and was placed among the top students in Ireland in the 1946 Leaving Certificate. He won the coveted silver medal for Irish Composition in that year’s Leaving Certificate. His father was active in the revival of Irish and both of his parents had a great love of the language. He was christened Diarmuid Fachtna O hEigceartaigh, which explains why he had at least three different signatures.

Although he spent a couple of terms studying science in UCC he left in 1947 to take up the post of executive officer in the Land Commission, where he renewed acquaintance with another “North Mon” scholar, Liam Ó Murchú.

He moved to the Revenue Commissioners in 1951 and was posted to Limerick. He became an Inspector of Taxes in 1955 at the age of 28, which was considered young. In Limerick he met and married Frances O’Sullivan in 1956. His career in Revenue ended in 1967 when he left to join Bastow Charlton and qualified as a Chartered Accountant. While taxation was his main professional interest, his accountancy qualification and exceptional organisational and interpersonal skills, soon found him at the core of many professional and public interest bodies connected with taxation and public policy. He

was involved in the establishment of the Institute of Taxation in Ireland, now the Irish Tax Institute and served as its President in 1979-80. He also joined its sister organisation, the Foundation for Fiscal Studies when it was formed in 1985. In addition to these commitments, he played a pivotal role in establishing The Institute of International and European Affairs in 1991 and became its Company Secretary for eight years, propelling the Institute into one of Ireland's most influential organisations, particularly now in the context of Brexit. He retired as senior partner in Deloitte and Touche.

His publication in 1991 of *Investing in Forestry in Ireland: A Practical Guide* opened up a whole new interest in his life. He joined the relevant societies: the Society of Irish Foresters, the Irish Timber Growers Association, the Irish Tree Society, became a member of Tree Council of Ireland and actively participated at the meetings and field trips of all these organisations. He was also a Council member of the Society of Irish Foresters for several years and left these organisations richer by his advice, wisdom and erudite contributions. His particularly liked the Society's study tours and enjoyed the arguments and banter between silvicultural gurus as well as the *après ski* evening gatherings. His interest in forestry and the new horizons it opened up, were a practical expression of his lifelong love of the great outdoors. Combining these with a dose of technical knowhow was, for him, total bliss.

Derry played a major role in formulating *Growing for the Future: A Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in Ireland* launched by Minister Ivan Yates in 1996. This recommended an average annual afforestation programme of 20,000ha up until 2030. Derry was central in the Deloitte and Touche (now Deloitte) team which were commissioned to carry out the report alongside Jaakko Poyry. The strategy was the most ambitious ever initiated by the State for the forestry sector at a time when the State transferred the afforestation programme to private landowners, mainly farmers. A great believer in the potential of Irish forestry, he once told me that he believed that it could have been even more ambitious.

He was an active hill walker with his local walking group until well into his eighties and entertained his walking companions with accounts and interpretations of European history from Roman times to the Austro-Hungarian empire or regaled them with vivid descriptions of obscure places in India, Russia or China that Frances and he had visited. It didn't take long in his company to realise that he had an incredible knowledge of a host of specialist subjects around which he could weave a narrative of not just what, but why. His walking companions frequently commented that walking with Derry was like walking beside Socrates or Plato. He had a mind designed to retain minute details and to make sense of them. These qualities made him engaging company. The fact that in his seventies he undertook the gruelling world famous four-day Milford Track in New Zealand, often described as the most beautiful walk in the world, is testament to his outstanding fitness and love of adventure.

Derry lived to an age he never thought imaginable. He was a naturally cheery soul and his long life brought much happiness to many. It was not without sadness however. He found the death of his youngest son Barry in 1991, at the age of 23, and the death of his beloved wife Frances in 2007 difficult burdens to bear. However, he bore the decline in his physical activities with great fortitude.

To his children Michael, Grainne, Diarmuid and Kieran and his sisters Nessa and Margaret, his grandchildren Liam, Rebecca and Kirsten we offer our sincere sympathy.

*Ar dheis lámh Dé go raibh a anam uasal*

Fergal Mulloy