

## Gerhardt Gallagher 1936 – 2024

Gerhardt Gallagher, forester, researcher, artist, philosopher and devoted family man, passed away suddenly on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 at his home in Ranelagh at the age of 88.

Born on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1936, Gerhardt was the older of two sons of Roland Gallagher and Lisa (née Gerhardt), who had come to Ireland from Germany to improve her English and decided to settle here. His younger brother, Len, is a well-known forester specialising in wood technology.

Gerhardt attended St. Declan’s De la Salle primary school in Waterford, followed by secondary education at De la Salle College, also in Waterford. He pursued his passion for forestry at University College Dublin, where he earned a BAgrSc (*For*) degree in 1958, later achieving a PhD in land use in 1972.

Gerhardt’s forestry career began as an inventory forester for the first Inventory of State Forests. After a brief two-year period in Land Acquisition, he devoted himself until 1984 to research, which became his lifelong passion. A visionary in his field, Gerhardt consistently advocated for a long-term perspective in forest research, emphasising the importance of being “guided by good science.” He was deeply disheartened by the significant reduction in forest research efforts since the 1980s, particularly the loss of long-term experiments. Despite this, he never ceased championing the cause of research in his various roles at Coillte, the Forest Service, and in the private sector.

During his time in research, Gerhardt was an active participant in the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), collaborating on numerous international experiments and becoming a key member of the group.

Gerhardt later transitioned to the role of Divisional Inspector in Work and Method Study, where he focused on Operational Efficiency and Economics. His enthusiasm was evident as he spearheaded the testing of emerging technology in Irish forests and initiated the computerisation of operational data, laying the groundwork for Coillte’s comprehensive computerisation of forest operations data.

In his subsequent role as Senior Inspector North, with responsibility for Wood Supply, Gerhardt’s natural talent for bridge-building and problem-solving became even more apparent.

When Coillte was established in 1989, Gerhardt became a Senior Manager overseeing Lands, Estates, and the company’s Continuous Improvement Programme.



He retired from Coillte in 1993 but continued to lend his expertise to the Forest Service as a consultant until 1999. During this time, his exceptional bridge-building skills were invaluable in resolving numerous complex issues, often thanks to his diplomatic interventions. His focus areas included Management, Environment, Research and Inventory, forestry support, and harvesting measures.

After leaving the Forest Service, Gerhardt served as an Adjunct Professor at UCD from 2000 to 2004, after which he worked as a Forestry Consultant. His clients included COFORD, SGS Forest Certifiers, the Forest Service, EPA, Wicklow Uplands Council, UCD, Teagasc, Abbeyleix Estate, and several private clients.

Throughout his career, Gerhardt was actively involved in numerous national and international organizations, such as Impact (formerly IPCS) as Branch Chair, and NEC, ASA, IUFRO (where he served as Section Co-Chair), NSAI (Forestry Standards), Timber Quality Research Bureau, and the Tree Council of Ireland. He also contributed to various national departmental and interdepartmental working groups.

Gerhardt published over 50 papers in *Irish Forestry* and other journals, as well as in international conferences and departmental reports. In 2004, he co-authored *Forestry and the Law* with Damian McHugh BL, focusing on European Law while Damian covered Common Law. Additionally, he published the Irish Roundwood Forecast and the Forest Service Code of Best Forest Practice.

Gerhardt played a pivotal role in numerous significant initiatives:

- The Leitrim Resource Survey in the 1970s, one of the first major forest land use projects in Ireland.
- The expansion of the forest planting programme in the 1990s, which marked a shift towards private rather than state-led afforestation.
- The implementation of the Concept of Sustainability, including the development of Codes, Standards, and Certification, as well as Irish involvement in EU and global environmental protocols.
- The creation of Growing for the Future, which established a national policy for forestry.
- The development and implementation of the New National Inventory.
- Addressing the carbon issue through involvement with UNFCCC and IPCC, where he helped establish a robust Irish database.

From his student days, Gerhardt was deeply committed to the Society of Irish Foresters, actively participating in various roles within the Society. He served as Editor of *Irish Forestry* from 1961 to 1962, Vice-President from 1994 to 1995 and President from 1995 to 1996. From 2010, he was a member of the Editorial Management Board. Gerhardt also contributed to Working Parties on Research, the Coillte Sale, Forest Policy Review, and the carbon issue. During the 1990s,

he played a key role in restructuring the Society of Irish Foresters to address contemporary challenges. He regularly attended field days and the annual study tours, where he made significant contributions to discussions. His wide-ranging interests were evident when he sketched Mostar Bridge during the Bosnia-Herzegovina tour, as seen in *Vol. 77 (1&2), 2020, p182*. He remained engaged with the Society until the end, having booked to attend this year's tour to Slovenia. His outstanding contributions were recognised in 2013 when he was awarded Honorary Membership of the Society.

Art was a significant part of Gerhardt's life, a passion he nurtured from a very young age. According to his family, he could sketch before he could write. He spent countless hours on Waterford docks, sketching boats, people and seabirds. Gerhardt took art classes at Southeastern Technological University, Waterford and later pursued further studies at NCAD, Airfield House and Black Church Print Studios.

From the 1970s onward, Gerhardt exhibited his works extensively, initially focusing on large oil and acrylic works, then watercolours and drawings and later also specialising in prints. He held over twenty solo exhibitions and participated in numerous open and group shows. His last exhibition, "5 Printmakers," opened at the Mill in Dundrum just two weeks before his passing. Notable venues where he showcased his work include Grey Friars Gallery and Garter Lane Arts Centres in Waterford, the Royal Ulster Academy, Royal Hibernian Academy, Goethe Institut, Glucksmann Gallery in Limerick, Phoenix Park OPW Centre, and Rathfarnham Castle. In addition, he exhibited internationally in Germany, Italy, and Spain. His works feature in numerous collections, including Waterford Municipal Gallery, the Arts Council of Ireland, OPW, Airfield Trust, RTÉ, as well as private collections in Ireland, UK, US, Scandinavia, Germany, Canada and China.

In his later years, Gerhardt followed in his maternal grandmother's footsteps and became a highly respected printmaker. In 2011, he co-authored *Verbindungen - Connections* (Cambridge Scholars), a book tracing Irish-German connections through printmaking.

On a personal note, I had the privilege of working with Gerhardt for many years in the Forest Service, where he was my boss. I found him to be incredibly supportive and encouraging. He had an enviable approach to leadership, viewing his role as a facilitator who created an environment of direction and gave his staff the freedom to carry out their work. He strongly believed in continuous development and encouraged his staff to acquire new skills, often facilitating further study. His management style and the respect he showed to everyone earned him great loyalty from his team. I will miss our occasional drinks and the enriching conversations we shared. He was always interesting and open to different viewpoints.

Gerhardt will be greatly missed by all who had the good fortune to know him. Predeceased by his wife Miriam, he is survived by his children Mia, Donnacha, and Etain, his brother Len, son-in-law Seán, niece and goddaughter Lisa, cousin Ann, and many other relatives and friends to whom we express our deepest sympathy.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

Dermot O'Brien