

# Obituaries

Terence Lindsay Sandes

## Courageous pilot fought Nazis and opposed apartheid

TERENCE LINDSAY Sandes, or Ben Sandes as he was always known to family and friends, who has died at the age of 89, was a South African who became by adoption in the early 1960s a Co Waterford farmer but who in a courageous and dramatic previous life had fought both the Nazis and apartheid.

As a Royal Air Force pilot at the height of the aerial offensive against Nazi Germany in 1942-1944, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his achievement in bringing home safely his damaged Wellington bomber from an air raid, crash landing but saving all his crew. He was 23 at the time.

Later in South Africa, he took an active part in the political struggle against apartheid, particularly in the United Party and the Torch Commando organisation. This activism led to harassment

from the police from the late 1950s onwards, and he eventually left South Africa with his wife and their two children in 1961.

Sandes had been farming in the Karoo mountains of the Cape Province, and he and his wife, Diana, were present as exhibitors at the National Rand Show in Johannesburg in April 1960 when the first of two assassination attempts was made on Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, the so-called "architect of apartheid" – the policy of segregating people according to their race and giving preferential treatment to whites.

The Sandeses were seated within 10 yards of the then South African prime minister when a gunman shot Verwoerd in the head. (The nationalist leader survived, only to succumb to a knife attack in the South African Parliament in Cape Town in 1966.) The event is vividly captured in

a private memoir written by his widow, who recalls that the atmosphere at the show prior to Verwoerd's arrival (he was due to open it officially and present the major prizes) was "electric".

But an indication of how low the expectation of violence was, even then, in South Africa, can be gauged by the fact that when Ben Sandes saw the would-be assassin, pistol at the ready, he thought at first it was merely a joke in poor taste.

Diana Sandes wrote that after the shooting there was pandemonium, with the Afrikaans-speaking announcer in a panic. But he was soon relieved by a man who "in a rock-steady voice" urged everyone to remain calm, which they did.

The political upheavals of that year in South Africa included the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960 when police shot dead 69 black people, and wounded over

180 others, protesting against laws designed to restrict the movement of black people. The country was also declared a republic and left the British Commonwealth.

These events came after an increasingly difficult few years for Ben Sandes. After settling in the Karoo in 1947, Sandes had had at first a relatively happy time, joining with other farmers in a Soil Erosion Committee to fight one of the biggest problems in the Karoo, an area prone to semi-desert conditions.

However, the area had an Afrikaans-speaking majority, and many of these Boer whites viewed the Sandes with suspicion. One neighbour, with whom he had a working, but never warm, relationship, once remarked: "I hate all Englishmen, from Winston Churchill to Terry Sandes."

When the nationalists, victorious in the 1948 general election,

removed the traditional voting rights of the coloured (ie Asian) people, Ben Sandes joined with an Irishman, Edward Kelly-Parterson, and others in a group called the Torch Commando to fight the measure. Despite its name, the organisation was purely political. Ben Sandes also became involved with the United Party, ferrying people to polling stations, a vital task in an area where one's nearest neighbourhood booth could be many miles away.

Despite his obvious respectability, the police increasingly subjected Sandes to petty harassment, such as stopping him at night on the roads in remote areas for awkward and meaningless questioning.

Fearing that they had no future in such a country, the Sandeses left South Africa by ship in 1961 with all their possessions in a horsebox, and eventually settled in

Co Waterford. They were expert equestrians and became judges at the annual PuncHESTOWN three-day-eventing horse trials. Ben Sandes became chairman of the West Waterford Hunt, a position he retained for 15 years. They last judged at PuncHESTOWN in 2007, when Ben was 88.

Ben Sandes, despite the attribution of Englishness by his Afrikaaner neighbour, was English only in name. He was born in England in August, 1918, to an Anglo-Irish father and a South African mother, and brought out to Cape Town as a baby of a few months.

His father, Dr Tom Sandes, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, with origins in Co Kerry, was one of South Africa's outstanding surgeons of the inter-war period, with a worldwide reputation as a clinician. He had been awarded the OBE for tending to severely-disabled soldiers

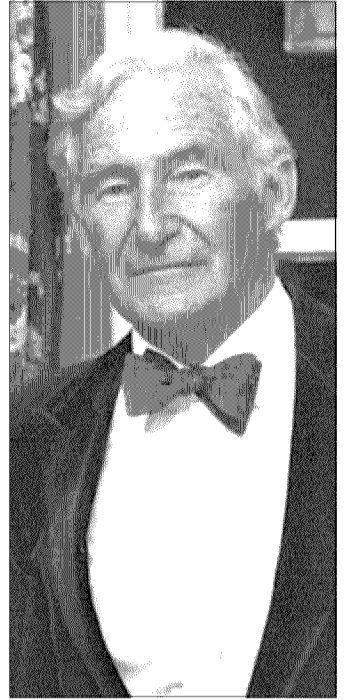
wounded in the first World War.

Ben Sandes was educated at St Andrew's College, Grahamstown, and narrowly failed to win a Rhodes scholarship. He nonetheless went to Cambridge University in 1937 where he read engineering. He never took a degree; having joined the University Air Squadron, he learned how to fly, and was called up on the declaration of the second World War in September, 1939.

While in Scotland, Sandes married Diana Wildman-Lushington, the daughter of a senior Royal Marines officer, Godfrey Wildman-Lushington, who was a close confidante of Lord Mountbatten.

Sandes, who died peacefully at home, near Lismore, is survived by his widow and two sons.

Terence Lindsay (Ben) Sandes: born August 4th, 1918; died March 12th, 2008



Ben Sandes: subjected to petty harassment by police in South Africa

Maureen Kenny

## Renowned bookshop owner and promoter of Irish writers

SEAMUS HEANEY once described Maureen Kenny, who has died aged 89, as "the Madonna of the Manuscripts", an accurate description for a woman who devoted most of her life to the promotion of new Irish writers and artists.

Maureen was born in Glebe Street, Mohill, Co Leitrim, the eldest of three children. Her father died suddenly when she was four years old, leaving her mother with three young children and a business she knew nothing about.

Next door was a Royal Irish Constabulary barracks which was taken over by the Black and Tans. On a couple of occasions they took the infant Maureen and used her as a human shield on top of their truck while driving around Mohill, randomly shooting in through windows.

Her mother was an extraordinary woman who saved every penny to give them the best possible education. Maureen went to school locally in Mohill and then attended St Louis Convent, Monaghan, on a scholarship. She went on to win a scholarship to University College Galway in 1936 and on her first day there she met Des Kenny. As Des often said later, "that was that".

They married on graduating and rented two rooms on High Street in Galway, setting up a bookshop in one and living in the other.

On November 29th, 1940, they opened the doors of what was to become the internationally renowned Kenny's Bookshop. Hundreds of people claim to have been there on the first day although Maureen remembered it as being very quiet. It was during the war and people had little money for food, let alone for the luxury of

books and so the early days were all about survival. They stocked the shop by borrowing books from their friends and relations and buying new books with what little money they had. They tried many different ideas such as selling second-hand school books, running a lending library and placing book stalls in hotels and factories.

Maureen was ahead of her time and employed the strategy of direct marketing before the phrase had been heard of. She put handwritten cards in hotels and B&Bs with "a suggestion for a rainy day". The suggestion, of course, was to visit Kennys.

However, despite their efforts, Maureen and Des could not survive by the bookshop alone and so Des went out to work elsewhere, leaving Maureen to run the shop.

Their eldest son, Tom, was born in 1944 in the bookshop on High Street and shortly afterwards they were able to move to a house in Salthill where their other five children, Jane, Dessy, Gerry, Monica and Conor, were born. Maureen's six children were virtually reared on books and so it was no surprise that five of them joined her in the business.

In the mid-1960s her husband Des rejoined the family business and from then on it expanded. They knocked down part of their house in Salthill and opened an art gallery in 1968. They built a book bindery in the back garden and rented additional premises to cater for their expanding stock of books. A great emphasis was placed on exporting and they instilled in their family a love of everything Irish, especially books.

The bookshop began to gain an international reputation. Maureen was the one constant in all of this growth and artists and writers



Maureen Kenny: artists and writers from all over the world came to her Galway bookshop to meet her and to avail of her vast knowledge of Irish interest material

from all over the world came to meet her and to avail of her vast knowledge of Irish interest material. As John McGahern once said: "Mrs Kenny misses nothing."

One of her great gifts was her phenomenal memory. She would report the arrival of out-of-print books to people who had asked for them years before. As one customer said: "Who needs amazon.com when you have Mrs Kenny?"

She loved to encourage young writers and rejoiced in their success. Aspiring authors would delight in the fact that Maureen had taken the time to read their books and was now promoting them. The large collection of signed photographs of writers who had visited her was testimony to Maureen's popularity.

Maureen never regarded the

shop as work. To her it was a genuine pleasure to stand behind the counter in High Street, which she did for 66 years, only retiring when it was decided to transfer the books business online. Even in her 80s she wasn't afraid of change in business, indeed she was quite visionary and when the bookshop closed its doors to go online in 2006, she remarked: "You have to look forward. You have to move with the times."

Maureen was a founder member of the Leitrim People's Association in Galway. She was very involved with Our Lady's Girls Club and the Soroptimists. She was honoured many times for her extraordinary contribution to cultural life in Ireland and especially in Galway.

Bord Fáilte made her an honorary ambassador for promoting

Ireland in 1990. Maureen and her husband Des were the first honorary life members of the Galway Chamber of Commerce. Maureen was also awarded two honorary degrees – one from UCG and another from the NCEA.

She had a strong faith, was great company, had a keen sense of humour and loved life. She passed on important values to her children, such as charity, perseverance and a love of things Irish. For her the family was the nucleus of civilisation, which was illustrated by the fact that so many of her children and grandchildren were around her in her last moments.

Maureen Kenny is survived by her six children, 21 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Maureen Kenny: born April 28th, 1918; died March 25th, 2008

Prof Paul O'Higgins

## Exceptional Cambridge academic and mentor

PROFESSOR PAUL O'Higgins who died on March 13th, 2008 at 80 years of age, was an internationally renowned academic, as well as a teacher and mentor of incomparable talent and achievements.

For much of his professionally active life, he was based in Cambridge University in England – initially as a research student at Clare College (1957-1959) and thereafter as a fellow at Christ's College and as a lecturer and then reader in the university. Many of the great and the good in English public life were inspired by him as students before going on to careers in politics and the law, as well as into academia around the world.

What perhaps for many of those who studied under him, and their friends and companions, is most memorable was the unstinting hospitality he showed. Tutorials invariably were embellished with tea and cakes. Every Sunday afternoon, during term time, he and his wife Rachel, hosted afternoon tea for what at the time could be up to 20 or 30 students and others, who had not departed for London at the weekend.

Occasionally these sessions ran into the late evening and, when a largely Celtic fringe group would stay on, the "drop" was produced and the "rare old times" in Dublin would be poured over.

His parents were from the west of Ireland. They moved to England, where his father worked as a vet and, having fought with the British army in the first World War with distinction, winning two MCs, he served in the Irish Army during the second World War.

His mother lectured in Italian literature at Trinity College, Dublin. Having attended a boys preparatory school in Pinner in Middlesex, he went to St Ignatius in Galway and then to St Columba's in Dublin, where he had an outstanding Leaving Certificate.

He studied medicine at Trinity College, becoming heavily involved in left-wing student politics but, disapproving of his views, the medical school authorities would not permit him sit his final year examinations in 1951. He thereupon switched to law, was called to the bar by the King's Inns and graduated in 1957 with a high first class honours degree. That secured him a scholarship to Cambridge.

His PhD at Clare College is one of the most exceptional works in

English legal literature, showing a deep knowledge of history and of international affairs, and was written in a most attractive no-nonsense style. The subject was political asylum, especially in the context of extradition. It was never published as a book but chapters from it and adaptations of it were published in several internationally-renowned legal journals. On the strength of this work, in 1959, he became a research fellow at Christ's and later a full fellow of the college.

As well as his teaching responsibilities at Christ's, he was director of studies at Peterhouse and also taught at Clare, at King's and at New Hall.

From the mid-1960s his principal focus was on legal aspects of employment, trade unionism and social security. Along with Bill (later Lord) Wedderburn, he established an undergraduate course in labour law.

Paul was an enthusiastic collector of old Irish legal books and documents. For his mammoth bibliographies of Irish trials and also of Irish legal periodical literature, he obtained an award from the American Association of Law Librarians.

Among his contributions to Irish legal history are his essays on Arthur Browne and on William Sampson – both TCD graduates who became eminent in US legal circles at the beginning of the 19th century. His contribution to Ire-

land's legal scholarship was recognised by TCD and by Cambridge, from which he received LLD degrees, and by the Royal Irish Academy, which in 1986 elected him as a fellow. He was an avid supporter of trade unionism and the labour movement, and also of adult education.

A great disappointment to him was the refusal of TCD to appoint him to the Regius Chair in 1970 when Bueno McKenna SC retired. The general consensus was that he was the most outstanding candidate for the job but was not acceptable on account of his past political views and activities – which included having campaigned for TCD to cease flying the Union Jack over its front gate.

Fifteen years later, Trinity made up for that and appointed him to the chair. But for health and personal reasons, as well as frustration with the paucity of resources for the Law School, in 1987 he returned to England, becoming a professor at King's College, London as well as Vice-Master at Christ's until 1995.

In 1952 he married Rachel Bush, daughter of the composer Alan Bush. He is survived by Rachel and by their son Niall, three daughters Maeve, Siobhan and Niam, and three grandchildren, his brother Maurice and his sister Anne.

Paul O'Higgins: born October 5th 1927; died March 13th, 2008



Paul O'Higgins: an avid supporter of trade unionism and the labour movement, and also of adult education



Edward Farrell: His last high point was having his production of Moll performed at New York's Town Hall Theater

Edward Farrell

## A lawyer's lawyer and an actor's producer

EVEN THOUGH he had not been well for a while, the recent death of solicitor and impresario Edward Farrell was greeted with shock by his family, friends and the theatre community, the latter having lost a great champion.

His death, aged 56, marked the ending of an illustrious career as theatre producer and promoter that spanned the last four decades. He was still a teenager when he first started to bring *Big Maggie* to the Dean Crowe Hall in his native Athlone.

After the death of his father at a young age, his mother, Angela (nee Keane), ran the well-known Forty One public house in Church Street, Athlone, while Edward, the

eldest of three boys, was sent to Newbridge College at the age of nine.

By all accounts, he liked his time in Newbridge and excelled academically. While he had been actively involved in theatre from an early age, Newbridge College's drama society saw that love of the theatre develop, and it would continue to be a big part of his life.

However, it was the legal profession that proved his first calling and after completing his BCL in UCD, he graduated as a solicitor in the Michaelmas term 1982. After working briefly in the practices of McKenzie's and Liam Lysett in Dublin, he returned to Athlone to set up his own practice in 1984, serving Athlone town and the mid-

lands. He was a remarkable solicitor and was well-liked and respected in the community, and this was reflected in his practice.

He was also a life-long rugby admirer and this was probably no accident, as he was a nephew of the late Dr Jim Keane, who was a former president of the IRFU and gave his name to Athlone's Keane Park.

If he was a success as a solicitor, he was equally successful as an impresario. Under the umbrella of Big Top Productions he staged many charity events in aid of St Hilda's Home, Athlone, of which he was chairman in 1984. The many stars who took part included Maureen Potter, Tony Kenny, Colin Baker, Ann Bushnell, Candy

Divine and many others. As a shareholder in the Olympia Theatre, he produced the musical *Grease* with an all-star cast. At the Tivoli Theatre, he successfully staged Fergus Linehan's adaptation of *The Streets of Dublin* with Oscar nominee and Golden Globe winner, Ron Moody.

He formed a great bond with members of RTE's drama *Glennie*, and in 1994 toured with cast members in John Murphy's great play *The Country Boy*.

In the late 1990s he produced revivals of John B Keane's great comedies, including *Moll* and the highly successful *The Chastitute*, which played for an unprecedented 11 weeks at the Gaiety Theatre. He had little problem

enticing well-known names into his productions and the actors who starred for him were a who's who of Irish theatre, including Mick Lally, Maureen Toal, Anna Manahan, Frank Kelly, Eileen Colgan, Pat Leavy and Adele King.

He had a great love of musicals, in particular Stephen Sondheim shows, and staged *Side by Side by Sondheim* with Rebecca Storm at the Tivoli and *Follies* for one night at the National Concert Hall with Irish and West End stars together on stage. His last high point was having his production of *Moll* performed at New York's Town Hall Theater, which gave his immense satisfaction.

He possessed an extraordinary wit and you could not wish to be in

better company. His late night phone calls were legendary, as are the many stories about him. For those who knew him, he was never one for time-keeping, apart from a few occasions, one in particular being in 1987 when he married his beloved wife Mary.

He was born to serve both his careers. Described by a friend as the lawyer's lawyer, he was also the actor's producer, always generous, always loyal, a true friend to all who knew him.

He will be missed sadly by wife Mary, sons Eddie and Frank, brothers John and Thomas. I lonta Dégo gearast sinn.

Edward Farrell: born November 19th, 1951; died March 10th, 2008