Francis John Barrett

Francis John Barrett, known as John through his time at St. Conleth’s, was born to Irish parents in Venezuela in 1960 and lived there to the age of eight when his family returned to Ireland and he joined the school.

He was a serious student who did well at exams, particularly English which he loved and, perhaps surprisingly, Art, which he only took up in Fifth Year. He was a great debater and was usually one of the star attractions in the frequent senior school debates chaired by KDK. He was also an enthusiastic and terrifying fencer whose favourite and most effective move was the flèche.

Francis studied Law in Trinity, where he was secretary of the Historical Society and a bigwig in the Fencing Club, and at the King’s Inns from where he was coming in full evening attire when he was arrested for being ‘drunk in charge of a bicycle’. When called to the bar he gave his time generously to FLAC and took pride in defending many hopeless-case petty criminals. In 1988 he emigrated to rural Catalonia to teach English, later moving to Barcelona and joining the British Council where he was an energetic trade union activist. Over the last few years he had been writing a thoroughly researched online gazetteer of Ireland which, it is hoped, will be made accessible soon.

Francis had a huge and diverse circle of friends from all over the world and was exceptionally good at staying in touch with them all. He visited his family in Dublin at least once a year and liked to hold court in Slattery’s pub in Rathmines. He was a warm, kind, generous and funny person who loved nothing better than a good argument over a pint of Guinness flavoured with several dozen cigarettes. He died unexpectedly at home in Barcelona on 22nd March 2018 and is survived by his sister Mary Lynn and brother (and fellow Conlethian) Dick.

Garrett O’Neill