

NIALL O'DONOGHUE RIP

Niall O'Donoghue died on 8 May 2022 doing one of his favourite activities, swimming in Killiney Bay.

His funeral service was held in the RC church of Sts Alphonsus and Columba, in Ballybrack, Co. Dublin, on Friday, June 13th. It consisted principally of four eulogies which shed light on Niall's life and the love and esteem in which he was held by all who knew him. It also revealed a man whose life had been full of adventure and who was defined by his loyalty, honesty and integrity throughout his life.

The eulogies were delivered by: Maeve, his sister; Dave, his friend; Pól, his webmaster; and Philip, his son.

You can read them below.

MAEVE

Niall was born in Dublin and at the age of 4 moved with the family to live in Athlone where our father had been appointed a Judge on the midland circuit.

He and our brother Daithi were sent to boarding school with the Dominican Nuns in Cabra at the ages of about 7/8. Later he boarded in Mount St Joseph Cistercian Abbey in Roscrea. An uncle of ours had been a monk at the Abbey.

At boarding school he was always hungry and this led to him raiding his tuck box in the middle of the night. Unfortunately he was caught and was punished. A monk nicknamed "The Mire" had it in for him at every turn. He ran away from school on about 3 occasions as a teenager and our parents had to drive around the country roads near Birr and Roscrea in an effort to locate him in the middle of the night. He spent a night in a remote phone box on one occasion and then hitched a lift to our Aunt Maire's house in Dublin where he was always given refuge. Eventually Dad removed him from Roscrea and he attended the local Marist College in Athlone for the rest of his education.

Niall was a great swimmer; as a boy he fell into the Shannon in Athlone at the lock gates while drawing in a fishing line and had to be rescued by the lock keeper who fished him out with a long pole and hook. He was none the worse for this experience and went on to be a great swimmer. He did deep sea diving and trained as a life guard. He partook in the Liffey swim on a number of occasions. Our family were members of the Lough Ree Yacht Club and Niall knew the lake like the back of his hand. It was nothing to him to swim out into the middle of the lake to the buoy.

During summer holidays he cycled to the club and on the way home with Daithi who was hitching a ride on the handlebars, on one occasion, he was cycling so fast that he could not negotiate a sharp bend, both of them became air borne and ended up in a field none the worse for the experience. When teaching our sister Barbara, how to swim he held her in the water on a rod with a hook and once she was in the water he removed the rod and told her to "sink or swim"; she swam!!

He honed his skills at underwater swimming and had a great lung capacity for staying in the water for long periods. This trait did not leave him in later life while swimming in Killiney all year round. For several summers, he was invited by the Salesian brothers in Ballinakill Co Laois to teach swimming and life saving skills to the students. The college had their own swimming pool which was unusual at the time. He said he was treated like a king there and the food was great. In Athlone he was a scout leader at the age of 17/18 and trained teenagers in swimming diving and life saving techniques. He perfected his

scuba diving skills in Killary Ffiord Connemara and travelled to foreign parts including Egypt, Mauritius and the Red Sea on diving expeditions.

At the age of 23 he helped save the lives of a man and 3 teenage boys who were overcome with gas fumes in Burrow beach Howth at a Corporation pumping station. Niall was offered a bravery award and refused to take it.

Niall came to the rescue again, when Orla and her classmates were on a school train trip from Athlone to Dublin. Orla and her friend Margaret missed the train home and ran to Niall's office for help knowing they would be in trouble for breaking the rules. He jumped into his car, CNI 650, and drove at high speed to Athlone passing out the train now and then. They arrived at the station just as the train was pulling in thinking they were "safe". Unfortunately the head nun Madam Fideles was already on the platform and spotted them. The game was up. They were hauled out in front of the school the next day and given 6 of the best.

One of his other pursuits was rock climbing. He trained in Dalkey Quarry with his great friend the late Des Leonard. They had many a hairy moment but always made great leaps of faith and reached the top!

Career

Niall started his career in Estate agency with James T Deegan, later with Keane Mahony Smith and Morrisseys. He set up his own company in Grafton Street, later moving to South William Street where he ran a successful business for many years until his retirement. There was one amusing incident when visiting a lady to carry out a valuation of the house. On arrival at the front door he was greeted by the lady and a parrot in the hall. Before he could enter the house the parrot cried "wipe your feet and blow your nose."

In between, he lived on a farm in Kilmore House County Meath and became skilled in farm activities. He kept pigs, sheep, ducks, geese and other animals. He had a recording of céili music set up in the barn to scare away foxes and it worked. However after a number of years, missing family, he sold up and returned to Dublin.

The Tower;

His friend Des Leonard had purchased the Martello Tower from Dun Laoghaire Corporation who used the property as a municipal dump during the fifties sixties and seventies - believe it or not! When Des left the area, Niall bought the Tower from him and commenced his wonderful project of restoration to full working order. More of this later from others. Niall loved the Tower, the sea and it is in a way appropriate that he died on Killiney beach last Sunday in a place he loved, among friends.

To sum up Niall as a person, he was strong, determined, single minded, reliable and brave. Like us all, on occasion he could be stubborn and infuriating but can be forgiven for that!!

He dearly loved his children Sovay, Emma and Philip.

To quote Robert Browning from his poem *Prospice*

"yet the strong man must go, for the journey is done and the summit attained and the barriers fall though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained, the reward of it all, I was ever a fighter, so – one fight more, the best and the last"

Niall has finished his race on this earth and reached the final fence. May he rest in peace knowing he was loved by his family and will be sorely missed.

DAVID

Well, this is not a gig I was looking for and as I'm up here I can hear Niall saying, "if I'd known you were going to talk at my funeral, I would have kept going". Many friendships and relationships begin in inauspicious circumstances. Myself and Niall's is a case in point where we remained friends despite knowing each other and living in different countries for much of the time.

It was in 1979 I found myself climbing a rickety staircase in an unprepossessing building in South William Street to meet Niall for the first time. How inauspicious were the circumstances? Well I was the VATman and he was the victim, or Taxpayer to use the official title. My file said *Donevin Estates* and the appointment was with one Niall O'Donoghue. This was not the nice building that Niall bought afterwards but a rather dark office at the top. There may be more inauspicious meetings than that, but I think it sets a certain benchmark.

Now people prepare for VAT Inspections in different ways - they leave the country, employ an accountant or, in extreme cases, read the VAT Regulations. Niall had done none of these things but as always he had a cunning plan. He explained to me in great detail, the 6000 index cards on the desk in front of him and how his every property transaction in Dublin, the prices, the owners and so on and, in the days before computers, this was the database that gave him his edge. Not for the first time in Niall's presence I felt my brain turn to mush as I tried vainly to get onto Niall's VAT records!! His plan was working. Looking back it demonstrated two aspects of Niall's character, his intense focus and his confidence in his ability to see things through.

A couple of months later, Niall called into the VAT office to see me, check he was doing things correctly and said I'd been very helpful and that he had acted on my advice. For those who knew Niall, this was a very unusual event! He told me I had been very helpful. I said please don't say that again I could lose my job! For one reason or another I would often call in to his office when I couldn't find an address because I was doing audits on rag traders and they tend to move around a lot. South William Street was very much a rag trade village that Niall made his own and businesses would close, businesses would open, people would move but there was always the same people around the place.

Between one thing and another, we became friends, kept up a friendship and some years later, when I left Revenue, I rented an office off Niall in 28 South William Street, which was the lovely building which he bought along with number 27. He realised, and Niall always had an angle, he always had a cunning plan, he realised that if you wanted to be in the rag trade that people had to walk around that block when they came up from the country; if you weren't in that block you didn't exist in the rag trade. The rents were higher than office rents were in Dublin, so, he did very well there and made it his own village. As the years progressed he became the go to person for the Fashion Trade and a trusted operator for individuals and Banks who wanted their property affairs dealt with honestly and efficiently. But the path of commerce is not always smooth and Niall kept his head in difficult times showing acumen and resilience .

I had a long chat with him on Saturday night, about 40 minutes, and he said he would have answered the phone earlier but he was cooking steak, chips and onions. We had a laugh about how the dietary habits hadn't moved on since the days of '*The Old Stand*' which was the canteen in South William Street.

Niall, when I first met him, was living in Havelock Square where he provided a good home for his family at a time when it was difficult being in business in Dublin. He was so proud of his three kids, Sovay, Emma and Philip, he always had their back. Indeed he even had their back when they didn't want him to have their back. When Philip and Emma were living in London I remember getting a call once. He hadn't

heard from Philip for a few days and obviously came to the logical conclusion that he had been abducted by aliens and I was sent down to Kingston upon Thames to sort it out with the aliens or whatever. I knocked on Philip's flat and a somewhat hung-over Philip, who had been enjoying a succession of excellent student parties, was very surprised to see me! Another time I was sent on a mission to Emma in Baker Street and after that I had to tell him - look, Niall, they're like yourself, they're finding their own truth, they're living own lives and doing very well at it and they just don't need you to have their back all the time. But to Niall, his three kids and, forgive me for calling them kids, looking out for them was everything to him.

As Maeve said in her wonderful reminiscence, he moved down to Kilmore House and as my wife's parents had retired to Edenderry, we used to meet him at Kilmore quite often. This is during his 'Squire O'Donoghue' stage where he became a country gentleman. We used to sit on the steps at Kilmore and admire the stars, no light pollution, no noise pollution and I think that was the problem in the end - it was just too quiet. But, even there had its problems and they were called Pinky and Perky - they were two piggy's that Niall had bought, without realising, with Kilmore House, which was a fine Georgian box on 40 acres. He became very fond of Pinky and Perky; Niall was always a sociable character. He fed them, and they fed themselves from the apples and from the acorns and then Pinky and Perky got a bit like Pinky and Perky on steroids - they got a bit bigger and bigger and bigger and Niall hadn't the heart, he got a bit sentimental about them, until one day they knocked him over and the local farmer said they can break your leg - you want to be careful. So Pinky and Perky had to go to the local abattoir but at that stage they were too big for the standard procedure and he had to pay extra for them to be "processed.". They came back in pieces vacuum packed and he put them into two freezers he had in the basement. For many years afterwards, he didn't have the heart to go near them and the new owners of Kilmore House were no doubt surprised when they opened two freezers in the basement and I hope they came to the logical conclusion that Pinky and Perky were past their sell by date and they passed on the stir fry!

But, there was a thing about Niall, that when you met him, he was hugely intelligent with focus. But then he would go over to the far side, go over to the mystic and I sometimes think, Niall had stresses and challenges in his life, as we all had and that if he had been the total logical person - totally Ying, and didn't have the Yang, didn't have the mystic, that he wouldn't have been the survivor that he was. He wouldn't have done as well as he did because Niall became a very trusted person by banks, by property professionals, by solicitors in the property game. He acted for some very high profile individuals who could rely on him for his discretion and straight dealing.

Sometimes, and we can tell this today, sometimes that trust was misplaced. One time, he was acting for a bank, that shall be anonymous, who were incorporated by royal charter and used to have their own militia. Because Niall was trusted he had the contract sent over by the Solicitor and he was getting it signed by his clients, the purchasers. He was selling a place called The Oscar Theatre to the Sikh Community in Dublin as their Gurdwara as he had very good contacts with rag trade and the Sikh Community. He asked the question, 'okay, time to sign, happy days, is Guru Nanak here' and the committee in front of him started pointing towards the ceiling. They explained that Guru Nanak was the founder of the Sikh religion and that, as he had been dead sometime and so wouldn't be there to sign. So Niall rang the solicitor for the anonymous bank and said, 'err', its' a bit like JC signing a contract - he won't be here today you know.' The Solicitor on the other end of the phone, sort of paused, and said, 'oh my God, we'll be the laughing stock around town, is there a bank draft there? Niall said there is - and he said lets' push it through and have this forgotten about!' So to this day Guru Nanak owns a bit of prime Ballsbridge real estate. I tell you that in secret so please don't pass it on.

Then, there was the ultimate kind of madness of Niall O'Donoghue - the Martello Tower No. 7 at Tara Fort on Killiney Hill. Being a bean counter, I would have first asked what's the budget? Niall obviously never asked that question. He literally bought a waste ground, he spent a fortune on it and because of his madness, his vision, his mystic he created something amazing there, something that enhances the

community. He had VIPs going to his door, he hosted wonderful Bloomsday events creating many happy memories. He was part of Dun Laoighre Heritage Week and he did all this out of passion, he did it out of love, he did it out of obsession in a country where much of our heritage and history has been lost. It is a huge achievement bringing heritage back to life, restoring a unique part of Military History and the story of Killiney which he truly made his village and added so much to the community. All this was done out of a sense of altruism and from his own pocket which makes it even more remarkable. My fervent hope is, that among his many other legacies, that this legacy will survive and be there as he wanted it for posterity.

He was an amazing character from a family steeped in Irish history. His grandfather was secretary of the first and second Dáil and was Michael Collins bagman. He was the banker for the Irish revolution, cited as one of the nine people that basically made Ireland free after 1916. As Maeve said, his father was a judge and he came from a big family of mainly girls but he was always his own person - idiosyncratic and at times maddening but always a great friend with a gift for friendship. If you know of any other friendship that's began during a VAT inspection then please keep it to yourselves!

Niall passed in the place he loved doing what he loved and today we are reminded that grief is the price we pay for love. But, what else can we say today? He was unique, wonderful and maddening in equal measure and I'll miss him like hell as I'm sure his partner Maria and Sovay, Philip and Emma will. He lived his own life, found his own truth, he made some money along the way for himself and for other people, he was a very trusted person and he achieved a great deal.

May his legacy and his memory continue to be a blessing to us all.

PÓL

You have heard a lot of testimonials to Niall as a person from people better qualified to comment than me. I want to talk about the Tower. I want to talk about Niall and his magnificent project just up the road here.

I first met Niall around the year 2000. I had some maps and photos and we met in the Mont Clare Hotel during my work lunchbreak.

I had some familiarity with the site as it housed the Legion of Mary Hall where dances and other social occasions had taken place. In fact some couples married out of the Legion Hall, so to speak. The hall burned down in the early 1980s.

Anyway back to Niall.

I heard nothing from him after my meeting in 2000 until 2008 when I got an invite to come to the inauguration of the Tower. It was an amazing sight, a gleaming new tower and guardhouse where the previous out' piece of rubbish had been. The occasion was garnished by a troop of Napoleonic era Connaught Rangers in full gear and with loaded muskets which they fired. The cannon, which Niall had commissioned and installed on the crown of the Tower, was also fired. The ground shook and every house and car alarm in the Bay went off. It was magic.

Then over time I got to know Niall and was ever so impressed at his sense of purpose in taking on and seeing through this mammoth project. This was an achievement not just of national but of European importance.

And so it turned out to be when the Tower got a *favourable mention* from the European Jury in the *Europa Nostra European Heritage Competition*. When Bill Clements suggested to Niall that he enter the Tower in this prestigious competition I was a bit sceptical, given the huge size of some of the projects. But in the event Niall's brother in law, Doug Rogers and myself set about trying to put some sort of an entry together. The questions on the entry form were very exacting, particularly on the European significance of the project. We managed that bit.

Then they wanted a report of the phasing of the project with costings. The only person who could answer that one was Niall. Niall said there had been no phasing. It was all done simultaneously in a mish mash sort of a way. Sure, it was all first class quality, but no phasing. However it was a case of no phasing, no entry.

It took Doug and myself days of solidly beating Niall over the head before we got him to come up with some stuff. It was, of course, fiction in terms of phasing but it meticulously set out the hard graft involved in all aspects of this magnificent project. Then, in the run up to the adjudication we had a visit from the European inspector, presumably to make sure we hadn't just entered a makey-up project created on photoshop. He was very complimentary of the entry, saying that a good entry was when the inspector arrived to check out the real thing and felt he'd already been there before. He was also fiercely impressed by the project itself. Niall was so proud of the European jury's reaction to the entry.

I mentioned Doug Rogers, without Doug and Sylvia, that's Doug's wife and Niall's sister, there would have been no project. Among other things they did, they turned the UK Public Records Office in Kew inside out, digging out material and assembling briefs for Niall. Without them there would have been no Tower and no European recognition. Doug died two years ago, but not before he compiled an account of

their work which then featured in the first virtual celebration of Bloomsday at the Tower in 2020 in the early days of the pandemic..

Bloomsday had been celebrated in-person at the Tower for some years previously, starting with readings from Joyce's Ulysses by David Hedigan. After David's death in 2015, my friend Felix Larkin was persuaded to give a talk on the Aeolus chapter in Ulysses and I thought if he can do it so can I. So, a year later I shamelessly pressed Joyce into service in my presentation of aspects of the history of Killiney and Ballybrack.

Back to the Tower itself. There is a list in the Europa Nostra entry of the lengths Niall went to in order to have the highest quality and most appropriate materials used in the restoration and of the care he took to get the right people to do the work.

I went through this aspect with Niall and he estimated that some 250 people were involved in the restoration.

You can get some idea of those involved from the following listing of functions and activities:

- an architect and Martello Tower expert, scoping and advising on the project; [Paul Kerrigan]
- a retired international bank auditor and his wife undertaking extensive research in the UK National Archives and other UK archives, and searching out people to manufacture the cannon and guncarriage; [Doug and Sylvia]
- a UK cannon specialist organising the provision of the cannon and carriage;
- a professional gun company undertaking project management in the cannon module, involving procurement of draughting, foundry and proofing facilities;
- specialists in armaments and fittings for listed fortifications making the cannon's traversing carriage;
- the Royal Armouries, permitting copying of a King George 3rd Blomfield cannon and allowing the proofing of the cannon at the Armouries at Fort Nelson;
- the Birmingham Proof Master, proofing the cannon;
- a professional gunner providing training in gunnery and authorising Niall's gunnery certificate. Yes, Niall himself was qualified to fire the cannon and proudly displayed he certificate in he guard room.

There were also inputs in the following categories: Archaeologist, Architect, Rubbish-and-material-removal expert, Stonemason, Sculptor, Carpenter, Electrician, Officials in the Government, Department of Justice, in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, and in the Garda Síochána.

And finally, my report of that inauguration in 2008 has now turned into a whole website on a wide variety of matters related to the Tower. Not forgetting the amazing model of the Tower which Niall's son-in-law, Terry Murray, presented to Niall on father's day. Niall was thrilled with it and brought it along to show people anytime there was a talk being given on the Tower. So all this magnificence is here for current and future generations to appreciate and hopefully carry the work a stage further.

I'll miss Niall, he was also a friend.

PHILIP

I would like to thank everyone who has spoken so far for their kind and sometimes humorous words. And thank all of you for being here and all of you that are listening around the world.

And a heartfelt thank you again to all of the first responders and the swimmers that were there on the beach on Sunday, along with all family and friends who have been so incredibly supportive.

You often don't get to say this for a man in his 80's, but we all feel Niall passed away, way too young.

I knew Niall had a lot of friends and people that admired him greatly, but I didn't know of quite how many until this week. So many of you sent messages and came to the tower to share your stories of in how many different ways you knew Niall. And look how many of you are here today !

Just like in his business life, one thing everyone seemed to respect was Niall's integrity ...

Niall was in our lives as a family from the late 1960s to the early 2020s, decades that have seen much changes in our lifetimes.

We grew up in Havelock square, from the early 1970s along with my two sisters, Sovay & Emma and our loving mother Alison. As siblings we were always very close and for our age were given the gift of much independence. The square had a wonderful sense of community with family's that went back generations. People never had to lock their doors and always watched out for one another. A place of greenery and flowers in the backdrop of Lansdowne road with a large Celtic cross design spanning the entire square. The kind of place where it had enough grass to play football on but you weren't supposed to. But of course we did.

With one foot in the analogue age and with the other slowly stretching into the digital age, it was a time of great change everywhere. I remember having the first Casio digital watch in primary school and everyone was amazed by the liquid crystal display and the single light button.

It wasn't always easy for Niall to make ends meet back then, but we always had enough. He used his sheer will and determination and knowing that he could carve pathways in order to look after and provide for his family. Even in the 1970s oil crisis he managed to get access to a working petrol pump from a client on Drury St. He always found a way. Overall a completely self made man.

He became famous in the square and the local area for his ultra bright orange track suit that he would wear jogging to the pigeon house before returning to do rather animated stomach crunches and sometimes push-ups afterwards for all the neighbours to see. He would then, after a big breakfast, zoom out to work in Dublin and take on the world around him, to land business deals with his company *Donevin Estates* founded in 1968.

His growing business success was a combination of sure will and brute raw force born out of a deep need to provide for his children along with the love for landing business deals and working with the local business community in particular the rag trade in and around South William St. He wasn't always easy on people but this is a common theme with most Viking warriors.

His own unique path essentially began after running away from boarding school in Roscrea in the mid 1950's. His great friend Mossy Harnett told me of how he covered for him when he left. He told me that after that on the way up to Dublin City he spent the first night sleeping in phone box, in Rathfarnham I believe.

I remember when I was coming to the end of primary school as if to prove a point he drove me to the gates of a boarding school with high railings all round. To me it looked like a prison. He asked me if I would like to go there, I gently nodded a definitive no and he reversed the car and we drove away. Perhaps for him it was some form of revisitation, but he gave me the freedom of choice that he may not of been afforded. He never pushed the matter, in fact he never really pushed any of us on to any pathway we didn't feel happy to be on.

Back again in the day, he would sometimes be kept up at night trying to figure out how to break through and earn enough for his family. He once told me that he was so deep in thought and contemplation on this that when he went to sleep one night, he travelled in a very vivid state to the other side of the Universe where he was, in some way, given answers before returning on the same route back again.

In some ways he had quite a scientific mind, although one of his best and oldest friends Des Leonard a physicist would argue strongly against this. In fact that was all they did together in Dalkey over the years, go for dinner and start to argue about science or politics by the time the main course arrived. There was Des science versus Niall science. Some times it would get to the stage at the cottage where Des would say "I'm Leaving Niall" and he would rather quickly. It was always so entertaining to watch. Even though they appeared to be fighting all the time, they actually had so much love and respect for one another.

Niall also had an obsession with politics as you all probably know. He loved powerful countries and strong leaders. In the Reagan years he used to love America. In more recent times there was other strong leaders Niall admired... .. By the way, He sends his regards.... !

There were two cities that Niall always wanted to visit but didn't - Buenos Aires and St Petersburg. We did though have two amazing gatherings with our Argentinian relatives at the tower. So the next best thing happened. Argentina came to Niall, all whom were descendent of the stoic bearded figure of Niall's great grandfather, Laurance O'Donoghue of Wexford, who I feel deserves a mention here.

A great lover of nature, Niall used to study the behaviour of the plants and the animal kingdom. As well as swimming he was also an advanced scuba diver and went on many deep dives around Ireland and places such as Mauritius, Mexico and Egypt where he got to tour the Pyramids. Something we should maybe all do in our lifetimes.

Even today he has pet crows, a fox and robin, and they are all wondering where he is. His most favourite pet of all I have to mention was his cat called Busy. He loved her so dearly.

Back in the mid 90s he also tried his hand at farming when living in Kilmore house, Enfield. There he had pigs, hens, chickens, geese, cows and of course one year about 100 sheep. I think that's when he realised that farming was quite an epic undertaking. There was a time when he was completely overwhelmed with looking after lambs in his kitchen. He pushed him self so far on the farm that he ended up with a hernia, which was however easily repaired.

I remember hearing remarks from I believe locals or local farmers when they had seen Niall herding cows through the bumpy fields in front of the house with his metallic blue *Mercedes 190 E*. This was one of the few examples ever witnessed of a city boy estate agent country farmer. I think he got a new car fairly shortly afterwards.

Getting back to the day and nature again, he once told me that over the years he started to try and expand his business to a broader part of the city. This was taking up more and more of his time and energy.

He told me once that one day he was watching a nature program about the relationship between a spider and a scorpion. As far as I recall the spider was hunting the Scorpion across the desert but eventually the spider discovered that instead of chasing the scorpion it was more successful if it hid in the sand and captured the scorpion as it passed. Niall used this knowledge to rework his way of business. An individual can only cover so much territory. So he decided to simply spend more time in the office and let the business come to him. He found that he then ended up with the same amount of profit at the end of the year while using much less time and effort.

If anyone here remembers the South William St area back in those days they would see the RED, BLUE and YELLOW “to let” or “for sale” signs there and on surrounding streets. With those colours he became known as the king of South William St.

He loved to come up on the steps of 23 Havelock square and announce “I got a deal “. That was his passion, waving his brief case in the air in a celebratory manner, for all of the universe to hear.

One of the most unusual deals he got was with Oscar theatre in Sandymount, an Indian Sect now known as Guru Nanak, who purchased the theatre for a temple. When Niall went to validate the contract and asked for the ID of the signatory, the man in the turban responded by pointing upwards. Niall asked what he meant. The religious man responded that God has signed it and again pointed upwards. Niall at first didn't know what to do. But the contract had gone so far that he just went with it. Maybe now he can check that signature.

As the years rolled on Ireland started showing more and more green shoots, and along with it Niall's world expanded.

Back in Havelock square, next to Lansdowne Road, with the wall of the north terrace in our back garden, the ever more confident roars of Irish fans rang out over the wall. You always knew when a goal was being scored. A feeling of success was in the air. The difference between Jack Charlton's mantra just over the wall of “put em under pressure” and Niall's, was that Niall's was a very slightly different “put me under pressure”.

He loved to be tested and, just like a jet aircraft, he could only leave the runway with enough pressure under the wings. He thrived in high pressure environments. He liked the raw basic fundamental parameters of physics in this world - Pressure, Force, Momentum, Power ... Throughout his life he always tested his limits either by finding himself in situations that tested him thoroughly or by pushing him self physically and beating his last running time.

There was no bigger test for him than in 2008 during the financial crisis, where he had to prove to himself that he could navigate the most hostile waters imaginable.

After helping him by calculating 12 year projections on a significant loan repayment, Niall dwelt on the situation, and somehow predicted that if we just stayed the course the momentum would carry the ship through to the end in a dead straight line. We were dealing with a very hostile bank that was out to torpedo anyone they could possibly hit with any excuse. They hustled and tried all sorts of tactics, but a payment was never missed. He would just hold the ship in the same direction and we would look at creative ways of getting tenants or raising the difference.. Sometimes ice would hit the hull or an iceberg would melt in right front of us, but the ship kept on sailing. The payment date was the 8th of every month. The 8th was never missed.

We should also thank the late Gerry Gannon & David Kurker for there friendship and support during that time and for many years after.

The 8th of the month was a towering number, and ironically the 8th was the day of the month he passed away.

While living in Killiney, which became Niall's domain, swimming became his ritual and religion. He loved the sea. It also helped him cope with stress. At one point he decided that the best thing to do was to declare Killiney a kingdom and him self the king and issue a new currency and to hell with the banks.

That may be when he became the high king of killiney.

Looking back again at what one might call the old days. We loved our family trips to Kerry. Back then everything in Kerry was from Kerry - the kingdom, donkeys, turf carts, men in brown trousers and caps, no modern buildings, old cottages on tight windy roads. Traveling across the north of the county down into a valley in the cream coloured *Peugeot 504*, the wheels of the cassette tape were rolling with motion of the car and you could hear the *Sound of Silence* coming through the speakers.

Magical reactions from our father and my sisters, Emma and Sovay, as we saw the magnificent Kerry mountains rise up before us. As '*I am a rock*' rang out. Very simple and beautiful times, with a Simon and Garfunkel sound track. We had many trips to the south west and the west...

Our first sun holiday was to Portugal where went without a plan, mainly picking random places on the map. An exciting adventure but a lot of carrying luggage here and there. And the sun chairs that we carried all over the country are still sentimentally hanging in the shed.

We also took many trips on row boats fishing around Lough Rea, near his native town of Athlone.

It has to be said that he was sometimes not that easy going. But he loved his family. Didn't say it, but often showed it. And we knew it.

We love you too..

If we fast forward to Saturday December 15th last year when I was on the other side of the globe in Bali, Indonesia, I was just about to go to bed and I said to Claudia "I think we are going to Ireland". It was the first time I had felt that in the almost 2 years of being there. I decided to plug in my phone which I didn't normally at night and switched it on.

Ten minutes later I got a phone call from Sovay saying that Niall had collapsed after a swim. Emma was with him. It didnt sound good. She was witnessing a very traumatic scene. That was very difficult for her.

Somehow while pacing up and down our round stone villa I felt he would make it. The next day we packed our things and brought our cats to safety from Uluwatu to Ubud and on the Tuesday took off to Jakarta and then homeward bound via Istanbul.

In 1996 he similarly crossed the globe to spend a week with me after I had a river rafting accident in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains when working in California. Then I was pulled out of the water. He flew over after I got out of hospital to look after me. We even did some small road trips with my legs up on the back seat. I remember driving up to LaHonda listening to *California Dreaming* and smelling the eucalyptus in the air. It was nice to share some of my favourite places with him, even in that state. Now it was my turn - to head west to Ireland .

When I arrived it was surreal , a country completely changed from when I had left in March 15th 2020.

My father in the hospital which was becoming more like a fortress by the day.

We could get in ok for the first week or so. But then they closed it completely to guests. He was on the inside and none of us were allowed in to see him. We didn't know how he was really doing - a highly frustrating time for all of us.

He eventually got out. He had lost two stone in weight. He was so hungry when we drove him home that he ran straight over to the cooker to fry his own bacon and eggs. Slowly he started to recover and wanted to resume work on the house after a two year pause. We took him for little walks, and then he started to do his own walks. He was getting stronger by the week and was loving being in the flow of activity again.

It all felt fine until we got the message " I went for a short swim today ".

He started to again gain in strength, and then got into moving rocks again. I never understood his love of moving rocks and boulders . It was one of his favourite pastimes. I think he might have got inspired by one of his very best friends Val Timon . You would often see the two of them in the past rigging up large wooden lever systems to move half ton slabs of rock, like the construction workers of ancient Egypt.

If you are going to the tower afterwards you might notice the mound of rocks closest to the tower. That was partially Niall's work. He would insist of lifting them himself. Four weeks ago or so he started to plant a series of fruit trees, and lettuce, kale and other vegetables around the grounds.

We then got the message we really didn't want to see "three minute swim today". We just knew that he was back on the path to testing him self again and increasing his time, maximising force and putting himself under pressure. Testing the boundaries of possibility

The weeks before he passed he was feeling very happy, like a young man again, getting involved in the construction and engineering, going for walks to the sea, seeing more people. He was also planning to take some trips to Wicklow with Maria and to Wexford to stay with Meave.

Niall really liked to be in the process. He didn't necessarily have to complete everything. He just liked to be doing it. that was when he was happiest. For him that was life, always working, always moving. He never would have taken to being looked after by anyone.

That day, last Sunday, on May 8th, he went for a walk down to the beech and spoke to a neighbour *en route*. He was going there to do what he loved the most. We would have liked him to stick around a decade or two longer. But he went there to do what he loves with a backdrop of activity in his life that he relished.

For us it was a tragic event. For him it could of been one of the easiest transitions to the next life. He went from one stroke of the arms in this world to one in the next, propelling him forward. A blissful day of sunshine, and warmth. No suffering to his self and he really never wanted to be a burden to anyone else, with such grace.

When I got the news and rushed to the beach, from Dalkey village, I was surprised to see he was still on the beach with paramedics working on him. It seemed clear that there was just a very low chance that he would make it. As I got there he was somewhat resuscitated and for a while started breathing with his own pulse. I held his hand as the helicopter came down. He started to fade again. I think that might be around when he left us...

You could feel a small ripple in the ether.

The helicopter took off without him turning more sand into the sky around us. What a gift for us that that one of his family was there with him as he so quickly moved on. But how sad to lose him when in a way he was still so young. Again he was doing what he loved, on one of the most beautiful days of the year.

At home his breakfast was sitting there waiting to be cooked and his weights were positioned for bench presses in the guardroom.

He unfortunately didn't make it back until three days later, but its where without question he would have wanted to be.

The king of his domain, resting peacefully in his castle. The legend has moved on and we will all miss him dearly.

Lets all take a moment now to send Niall our love with appreciation, gratitude and blessings.

It is said that everyone has the power to deliver a blessing in some capacity if they so wish, and everyone has the ability to receive one if they wish. Let's close our eyes for a moment and send our love, energy and blessings to Niall to help power him along on his journey, and at the same time love and blessings to everyone here and beyond.

NIALL

We are all still holding your hand and as we begin to let go, may you pass so gently onwards.

We will always remember you ! We love you !

Thank you.