

Denis Michael O’Sullivan 1916 – 2015

On 19th March 2015 Dinny passed away, in his 99th year, and is buried in his adopted county of Sligo. Denis Michael (Dinny) O’Sullivan was born on 1st October 1916 at Kilcrea, Ovens, Co. Cork, the youngest of four siblings to Denis and Nora (née McNamara).

After his primary education at the local National School in Ovens he attended the Sacred Heart and Presentation Colleges in Cork city. Then via a scholarship to Clonakilty Agricultural College in 1937, whence he progressed to study forestry at Avondale in 1938.



On qualifying in 1941, he was assigned to Kilsheelan Forest and later to Nire Valley Forest. In 1945, he became Forest Manager at Killakee Forest in the foothills of the Dublin Mountains, followed by postings to Tuamgreaney, Athlone and Ballymahon Forests. In 1956, he transferred as a Grade 1 Forester to manage Ballyhoura Forest.

He was promoted to the Inspectorate in 1961 as Assistant District Inspector in Sligo. In 1968 he was promoted District Inspector, Cavan, where he replaced Fergal Mulloy who transferred to the newly created Wildlife Section at HQ, in preparation for European Conservation Year 1970. As a District Inspector, he was a keen advocate of multiple use forest management – not only for timber production but also conservation, wildlife and recreation. In 1971, Dinny had his last official transfer to become District Inspector, Carrick-on-Shannon, based at Lough Key Forest Park. He retired on 1st January 1982, having given 45 years sterling service to Irish forestry.

Throughout his long professional career, he was recognised as a shrewd manager of forest, financial and human resources and spoke the language of commerce and business long before it became fashionable in state forestry circles. Always an active and keen member of the Society of Irish Foresters, he led a number of field days over the years – see *Irish Forestry*, Vol VIII, 1951.

During the 1950s, he was a busy and energetic General Secretary of the State Foresters Association. His crowning achievement was the enactment of legislation in 1954 which gave foresters, for the first time, permanent and pensionable status as civil servants. Previously, foresters had been employed on a temporary, fulltime basis with no permanence of employment or pension entitlements. For this monumental achievement, we foresters owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

Throughout his life, Dinny was an ardent GAA man, both on and off the playing field where he won five county championship medals in hurling and football in counties Wicklow, Westmeath and Waterford. A founding member, and later vice-

president, of St. Mary's GAA Club in Sligo town, his forte was the encouragement of young "townies" to play Gaelic games, giving rise to a famous phrase of his – "keep them in sport and out of court". This encouragement of youth was further expressed by his involvement with *Scór na nÓg*, travelling with competitors to many national venues.

In retirement, he remained active, pursuing his interest in gardening and the growing of vegetables, flowers and plants and the maintenance of St. Mary's GAA grounds. He and Kay polished up their dance steps and tripped the light fantastic on many a ballroom floor throughout the North West. He also developed a penchant for sun holidays and lazy days on Mediterranean beaches with the occasional sangria and sing-song.

Dinny was a Gael in the best sense of that word. He had a wonderful appreciation and love of the Irish language, history, poetry, song, our heritage and the beauty of the native landscape and countryside.

At his funeral his long life was fully celebrated and culminated with the singing by family and friends of *An Chualann* at his graveside, followed by a lusty rendition of *The Bould Thady Quill*, which was composed by a cousin of his grandfather – Johnny Tom Gleeson.

To his wife, Kay and children, Denis, Mary, Nora and John we offer our sincere sympathy.

"Sursum Corda."

Tony Mannion