

## Fredrick J. (Freddie) Shekleton 1940-2016

Freddie Shekleton passed away peacefully in his sleep on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 in his 77<sup>th</sup> year, at home with his beloved wife Elizabeth at his side.

Freddie was born in Ferns, Co. Wexford on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1940, the elder of two boys to Edward from Co. Cavan and Margaret (Née Copeland) from Co. Wexford. His only sibling Robin, predeceased him in 2011.

The Shekleton family moved to Dublin in 1944 where they purchased the house in which Freddie lived most of his life and where he died. He attended primary school at Kingstown School, Dún Laoghaire and continued his education at Avoca Secondary School, Blackrock. After completing his secondary education he enrolled at Trinity College Dublin to read forestry. Having completed two years study there, he transferred to University College Dublin to complete his degree in forestry. During this period he completed his practical work at Killakee Forest. In later years Freddie often spoke of the educational benefits and the very enjoyable time he spent there with the late Mairtín Ó Neachtáin. Freddie graduated with a degree in forestry in 1966.



In 1967, like most people qualified in forestry at that time, he joined the Forestry Division of the then Department of Lands. His first appointment was to Research Branch and he was assigned to the JFK Arboretum near New Ross, Co. Wexford. Together with the late Tony Hanan, he was involved in the planning and establishment of what is today a world class arboretum. In 1969 he married Elizabeth Brady from Sandymount and in the same year, due to the untimely death of his father, Freddie left to manage the family nursery business as his only brother was still at school and too young to take over the business.

In 1973 he decided to return to the Forest and Wildlife Service. However, this was an era before career breaks and Freddie had to re-apply for the post and sit an interview. He was successful in the interview and was appointed as assistant district inspector in Thurles. In 1981 he was transferred as assistant district inspector to Wicklow. In 1986 he was promoted as utilisation inspector in Mullingar. Following the setting up of Coillte in January 1989, Freddie was promoted as manager of new business and was based in Dublin. His final assignment in Coillte was as group health and safety manager. Freddie retired in June 2002 having availed of the early retirement package.

In retirement Freddie pursued a diverse range of educational disciplines from photography to learning Chinese, to woodwork and archaeology. In 2009 he received a Masters degree in maritime history from the University of Limerick. In 2011 he

decided to continue his research in maritime history leading to a PhD degree at King's College, London but sadly his untimely passing did not allow the completion of his research. Freddie was a wonderful example of how to utilise one's retirement years to the full.

Freddie had varied sporting interests which ranged from supporting Wexford in hurling to Glasgow Rangers in soccer. He also had a keen interest in politics; he was an active member of Fianna Fáil and canvassed for that party in recent general election campaigns.

Coming from a nursery background Freddie understood better than most the science of plant breeding and production. He produced prize winning chrysanthemums for the Balmoral Show in Belfast a few years ago. He continued to enjoy experimenting in his greenhouse as recently as this spring.

He was a long-time member of the Society of Irish Foresters and attended many field-days and study-tours.

As a friend Freddie was sincere, loyal and generous. He was caring and charitable and always concerned for the less fortunate. He was particularly sympathetic to people affected by sickness or loss. Regardless of political persuasions or affiliation, he never allowed this to interfere with friendships. He had a strong religious tradition of which he was proud. He loved good company and was himself very entertaining when relating personal experiences.

Above all, Freddie was a great family man, his beloved Elizabeth, his daughters Tanya and Sarah and adored grandchild, Olivia meant everything to him and to them we offer our sincere sympathy.

I know Freddie would share the sentiments of Michelangelo who wrote:

*"If we have been pleased with life, we should not be displeased  
with death, since it comes from the hand of the same master."*

Michael O'Brien