

Patrick Christopher (Christy) O'Donovan

1944 – 2018

Christy O'Donovan died unexpectedly on 9th February 2018 at his home at Glendalligan, Lemybrien, Co. Waterford. The eldest of four children, he was born on 18th November 1944 to John and Mary (née Kearney) at Curraghmore, near Slieverue in Co. Kilkenny.

He was educated at Ringville National School, and he received his secondary education at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny.



He began his forestry career in Kinnitty in 1962 and completed his Forestry Training School course at Shelton Abbey in 1965. His first appointment with the Forestry Division of the Department of Lands was to Clonaslee Forest, Co. Laois. He then decided to pursue a degree course in forestry and completed first year Agriculture at UCC in 1966-67. However, because of his father's illness Christy had to forego his studies to help on the family farm for a year, which prevented him from completing the course. In 1968 he transferred to Mountrath Forest, Co. Laois and then in 1975 to Ballinahinch Forest, Co. Galway as forester in charge. In 1980 he transferred to Ballyporeen Forest, Co. Tipperary and in 1981 he was promoted to the grade of Assistant District Inspector in Dungarvan.

In 1990 he was again promoted to District Inspector in Coillte and became District Inspector in the Cahir District. In 1991 he transferred to the Forest Service and became a forestry inspector with responsibility for Carlow, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Waterford and Tipperary. The 1990s saw a huge expansion in the national forest estate and Christy was very dedicated to this task, working closely with land owners and their foresters. Always an honest broker, he was an excellent mentor for young foresters, teaching them what really mattered on the ground.

In 2000 he was promoted to the role of Forestry Inspector Grade I with responsibility for forest inventory. He led the first National Forest Inventory of Ireland in 2004, delivering results in 2007. Christy was a straight talking, open and direct person who was, at all times, focused on finding solutions. With an eye for detail and a pragmatic approach, he led from the front in the huge task of delivering inventory information for the entire national forest estate for the first time. The steely determination which was first displayed on the hurling fields of his youth served him well in this enormous undertaking.

Christy was very keen on education and in 1979 he received a Diploma in Social Action from UCG achieving first place in the class. In 1998 he successfully completed a MSc (Agr) at UCD.

Christy was a life-long follower of hurling and was himself a hurler of note, having played inter-county hurling with Co. Laois. While working in the Sliabh Bloom Mountains, Christy played with Camross in 1969 when they won five county championships in a row. He went on to win three more county medals with Camross in 1971, 1973 and 1974. In 1974, Christy played full-back and was honoured to be chosen as captain, the first time the captaincy went to an “outsider”. Christy shared his passion for hurling by introducing juvenile programmes to develop the hurling skills of young people in both Cahir and Kilrossanty.

Following his retirement in 2009, Christy largely devoted himself to his family and to farming outside Dungarvan. He had a deep love and understanding of farming and in particular for breeding livestock. As a friend he was sincere, loyal and generous. He was caring and charitable, which was evident in his work for Bóthar in rearing in-calf dairy heifers.

Christy’s working life in forestry was marked by attention to detail, enthusiasm and energy. He focused on results and relished a challenge and innovation. In sport, in work and in life he forged a path that was straight, unambiguous and dependable. Typical of the man, his many contributions to forestry, and in particular to the National Forestry Inventory, were solid and reliable.

To his wife Moira, son Darragh, daughters Niamh and Éadaoin, son-in-law Jon, daughter-in-law Cath, grandchildren Polly, George, Aisling, Lily, Evie, Piper and Kitty, brothers Murty, Eddie and John, we offer our sincere sympathy.

John Redmond