

Anthony (Tony) O’Keeffe

1939 – 2019

Tony O’Keeffe passed away at his home in Carrabawn, Westport, after a brief illness, on 12th August, surrounded by his family.

He was born on 17th January 1939 to Michael and Maisie O’Keeffe (née O’Halloran), Crusheen, Co. Clare, the youngest of four siblings.

He received his primary education at Crusheen National School and his secondary education at St. Flannan’s College, Ennis. He began his forestry training in 1958 at Kinnitty Castle and completed his studies at Shelton Abbey whereupon he was appointed to Killarney Forest in 1961.



He spent his early years as an assistant forester in Co. Kerry, where he worked in Sneem and Kenmare Forests. In 1968 he transferred to Cong, Co. Mayo and he remained in Co. Mayo until his retirement, managing Nephin Beg forest until he became forester in charge at Glenhest Forest in 1971. This was a momentous year for Tony as he married his wife Marie some months later.

A forester of great foresight, during the eighties and early nineties when timber market prices were depressed, he carried out low cost “thin to waste” operations which greatly benefited the plantations when they were felled and sold several years later.

In 1993 Tony was promoted as a Level 3 territorial forester. He always aimed at high standards in all his undertakings and expected the same from those around him. By conscientious adherence to silvicultural practices he established plantations with lucrative potential in West and North Mayo.

He could enjoy life and banter, good humour with the best, and he could drop a clanger and promote a bit of controversy. He loved the drama of debate at forest gatherings.

Tony always had a great love for Clare hurling, especially his home club, Crusheen. In his adopted county, he played an integral role in St. Patrick’s GAA club in Westport, as an administrator, supporter and member. At his untimely death he was Vice-Chairman of the club. He was also involved in the re-establishment of the hurling club which had been dormant for many years. In later years he was active on the committee that oversaw the clearing of a large debt on the club’s Astro-turf pitches. His unselfish service touched and enriched the lives of many players and mentors.

He was involved in the Westport Housing Co-Operative, an organisation formed to ease the desperate housing shortage for young couples and families. This project was completed within budget. As Chairman of Westport Tourism, he drew people together in the promotion of Westport as a tourist centre. In “Destination Westport” it was all about “*ní neart go chur le chéile*”.

He was predeceased by his brother Fr. Jack, and his sister May. To his wife Marie, sons Michael and Diarmuid, daughters Aoife and Roisin, brother Cronan, daughters-in-law Audrey and Marie, sons-in-law Tony and Niall, we offer our sincere sympathy.

Kieran Mc Loughlin