# James (Jim) Crowley
# 1933 – 2021

Jim Crowley passed away peacefully at the Fairfield Nursing Home, Drimaleague, Co. Cork on 30th March 2021 in his 88th year and on a beautiful spring evening, 1st April to be precise, Jim was laid to rest in his beloved West Cork.
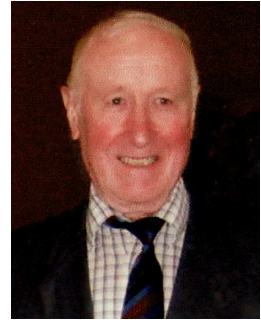
Jim was the sixth child in a family of nine children, born to James and Margaret (née Fehily) at Knockane, Lisbealad, Dunmanway, Co. Cork.

He attended Ballygurteen National School and afterwards, as a scholarship student, received his secondary education at Farranferris College in Cork city. Jim's father had died in the early 1940s, leaving a large family to be reared and a farm to be managed by his widow, Margaret. While neighbours and relatives gave much needed help, the bulk of the work fell to Jim and his older siblings at the weekends and during school holiday periods.

In 1955, Jim left West Cork to pursue a career in forestry. His group was the first 'intake' of forestry students to study at Kinnitty Castle Forestry College in Co. Offaly, which was then under the management of Tom Prior. The group later moved to Avondale House in Co. Wicklow to complete the forestry course because the extensive refurbishment works at Shelton Abbey were not complete. The expansion at Shelton Abbey was necessary as Avondale House was unable to cater for the large groups of forestry students required to manage the expansion of the National Afforestation programme during the mid1950s and into the 1960s. This ambitious afforestation programme was a response to the Cameron Report commissioned by the government in 1950. Its political driver was the Nobel Laureate Sean MacBride, then Ireland's Minister for External Affairs (now Foreign Affairs), who had a keen interest in maximising the afforestation programme.

On graduating from Shelton Abbey in 1958 his early assignments as Assistant Forester were at Belturbet and Monaghan forests. In 1962, he was promoted to the grade of Forester-in-Charge and assigned to Glenisland Forest and Nursery near Castlebar, Co. Mayo. This was one of the many new forests which were established west of the Shannon in response to the greatly increased State afforestation programme. One of the perennial problems encountered by forest managers in many western forests was sheep trespass. Jim's early background in farming now stood him well in his forest manager's role and while he was fair and friendly, he was firm – as many a sheep trespasser learnt to his cost.

Jim lived in Castlebar, the hometown of the then Minister of Lands, his boss in fact. In the locality, there were political *anoraks* who sometimes displayed an unhealthy

interest in forest worker employment matters, but Jim always remained "cool-under-fire" and quietly rode out the storms.

In 1968, he was transferred to Blessington in west Co. Wicklow to manage an extensive and productive forest. The management of this forest called for a different skill set to his previous assignment in that there was some mature forest, different soil types and a lower rainfall regime. But he proved well up to the task, took the necessary changes in his stride and remained as forest manager until his retirement in 1995.

Jim took a keen interest in the Society of Irish Foresters and was a frequent participant on the annual study tours, in particular the oversea tours. His mellow and tuneful rendition of folksongs will be remembered by those privileged to hear him in off-times late night singsongs in many foreign locations from Oregon to Cape Town. To his many forestry colleagues, he will be forever associated with the beautiful Canadian folksong, *Peggy Gordon*.

Jim was both a gentleman and a gentle man, an honest dependable manager with an abundance of integrity. He was also a great friend, unfailingly good natured and courteous. He was predeceased by his siblings including his younger brother, Charles (Charlie), who qualified as a forester in 1961.

Our sincere sympathies go to his nephews and nieces, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, friends, and colleagues.

*Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam usual.*

Tony Mannion