

Thomas F. (Frank) Harding 1929 – 2021

Frank Harding, an agreeable, dependable and obliging forester, passed away on 10th June, 2021 at Kilcoole Lodge Nursing Home, Co. Wicklow, in his 93rd year.

He was born on 17th May, 1929 at Clashmore, Co. Waterford to Thomas and Nellie Harding (née McGrath) the eldest of four children.

Frank suffered a cruel twist of fate when he was only 13, with the tragic death of his beloved mother, Nellie. A teacher, she understood and valued education for its own sake and the opportunities it could bring. From her came Frank's love of reading and current affairs.



He received his primary education at Clashmore National School and his secondary education as a boarder at St. Augustine's College, Dungarvan.

Frank began his forestry career at Avondale from 1948 to 1951 and his first assignment was as assistant forester at Glendalough and Rathnew Forests. He was promoted as forester in charge in the mid-1950s in Lough Talt Forest, Co. Sligo. He returned to the east to take charge of Saggart Forest and later Enniskerry Forest. Frank spent a long period in Bree Forest, Co. Wexford in the early 1960s.

He transferred to Delgany Forest in 1968 and has spent over 50 years in Newtownmountkennedy, living out for the remainder of his life there. He took the voluntary retirement package from Coillte in 1993 and had a most enjoyable retirement until very recently, when his health failed him. His daily ritual included buying *The Irish Times* and devouring it from cover to cover.

In 1998 he acquired a new neighbour, as Coillte's HQ moved next door at Newtownmountkennedy, and Frank developed friendships with a new cohort of foresters.

Frank had a mischievous sense of humour and a keen sense of right and wrong. He was quick to identify and call out unfairness. His great quality was patience. It is hardly surprising that Frank was incredibly happy as a forester. Frank developed one of the first and best-known forest recreational sites at the Glen of the Downs.

In his early years, Frank was very active in the Society's affairs and was a member of its Council for many years.

As a friend and mentor, Frank was always most helpful and was loyal and sincere in every way. Frank was an excellent storyteller, and he had a great sense of fun. Although softly-spoken, he commanded attention in any room. He was always welcoming and caring of others, but Frank was no pushover.

He was a proud Waterford man and son of Clashmore, he loved hurling. As anyone having even a passing familiarity with hurling knows, supporting Waterford is not for the faint-hearted. Big wins are to be cherished. Ted recalled one such victory, the 2004 Munster Final. At the end of an epic battle, there was a delicious pleasure in looking across at the becalmed sea of stunned Cork fans at the town end in Semple Stadium, Thurles. Frank turned to his son and said: "I'm so happy, I don't care if we never go home", before adding, and not for the first time, "don't tell your mother"!

His other sporting passion was golf and he played Delgany Golf Club for over 50 years. Often, he would remind people that golf is a game of honour. It is testament to the regard in which he was held that his fellow-members of Delgany Golf Club chose him to be their President - a responsibility he discharged with dignity and distinction.

Frank took great pride in his garden, which he developed as an oasis nestled among broadleaved trees.

Frank need not be enlarged in death beyond the man he was in life. He was a good and decent man, who got on with everyone and everyone got on with him.

To his wife Margaret, his sons Ted and Brian, his brother Kevin and sister Carmel, his grandchildren Blaise and Eve, we offer our sincere sympathy.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam usual.

Tim O'Regan