

Obituary

John O'Leary

1892—1957

News of the death, on November the 13th, of Mr. John O'Leary came as a great shock to his colleagues and friends both inside and outside the Forestry Service. Up to a day or so before this, few were aware that there was anything serious the matter and the fact that he had gone to hospital did not give any cause for concern. It seemed unbelievable then, to hear that he had passed away within the space of a very few hours and the news was received with stunned incredulity.

One might say that 'John O', as he was affectionately called, and forestry in the Midlands were synonymous, particularly in the Slieve Bloom country where his vast knowledge of local forestry conditions left an indelible mark on all forestry operations carried out there.

Prior to his transfer to the chargeship of the midland forest district, Mr. O'Leary served with distinction as Forester at Glenmalure, Clonmel, Clogheen and Cappoquin. It was not, however, until he arrived at Portlaoighise and worked the Midland area that his real worth became apparent. This District is regarded technically by most foresters as probably the most silviculturally difficult of all areas to handle and we cannot praise too highly the work carried out by Mr. O'Leary during his 19 years of office there. His exceptional energy, keenness of mind and devotion to duty enabled him to build up a deep and intimate knowledge not only of each Forest in his District but of each Compartment in each Forest and it was said of him without much exaggeration—he knew every tree in his sphere of activity.

'John O' was a quiet man both in private and public life and in company his voice would be rarely heard. It was his quiet confidence and sympathetic manner that impressed most and induced people to consult him on all possible occasions.

No tasks were too heavy for him and were always handled with speed, efficiency and, above all, utmost good humour, despite the heavy burden of work which rested on his shoulders at all times in this District.

His kindness to others, particularly to the "lame dog" was legendary and his death has left a void in many lives which will be difficult to fill.