

## Obituary

### JOHN O'DRISCOLL 1937-1990

John and I first met as forest workers in Germany in 1958 and spent the summer in the forest of Zang, occupying a fairytale log cabin in the woods. He had by then completed a term as a forest worker in Glenealy, Co. Wicklow, an area and a county for which he retained a special place in his affections.

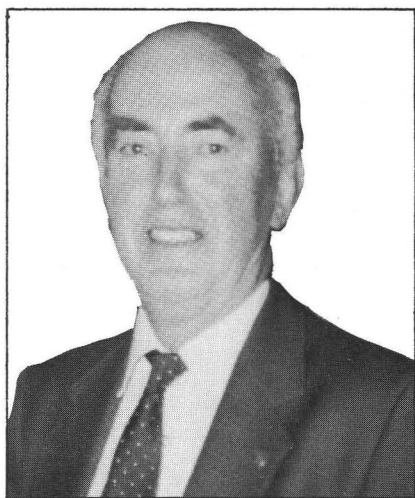
Graduating in 1960, he joined the Forest Service in the fledgling Research Section and shortly became responsible for genetics, which was to be a primary interest throughout his career. He was in due course invited to lecture forestry students at UCD on the subject and this he did with great enjoyment for twenty years.

John's work in provenance trials and plant breeding brought him recognition abroad as well as at home. He became Chairman of the IUFRO working party on Sitka spruce in 1972 and continued in his chairmanship until his untimely death.

He enjoyed travel and was a good ambassador for Ireland and for Irish forestry. He and his wife Fionnuala welcomed many visitors to their friendship and their home.

One of John's first tasks as research officer in charge of genetics was to investigate the provenances of lodgepole pine as a species of especial interest in Ireland. His knowledge of the species became renowned and he was far advanced with his intention to submit his work for a doctorate degree.

John's love for Wicklow reached full flowering when circumstances provided



an area for a research nursery at Kilmacurragh in 1974 as part of the illustrious gardens. There he initiated the nursery and led its development with great joy. A great burden in his last illness was his frustration in not being able to get back to his beloved work.

From 1978 responsibility for the John F. Kennedy Park was added to his charge. His many contacts abroad were of value in expanding the collections and in making them more meaningful for this country.

With the establishment of Coillte Teo in 1989, John, as senior serving research officer bore the care of elucidating a role for research in the changing world of commercial emphasis. He was happy to have a real role acknowledged and his own dedication to research recognised.

John died at home on April 6th 1990 where he had been devotedly attended for several months by a brave Fionnuala and their children, of whom Eoin had

already followed his father into forestry.

Fate ordained that John should die on a day when the Society of Irish Foresters was holding a day's symposium and it was to a hushed and saddened auditorium that the President Bill Wright announced his passing and paid touching tribute to him. In the normal way he would have been deeply involved in the symposium as he had been in the Society throughout his career. He served for four years as Secretary and was in turn Treasurer and he served two periods as Vice-President. He was honoured in becoming President in 1980 for a two-year period.

John's attitude to anything he did was

wholehearted and, as became a good researcher, painstaking in attention to detail. He enjoyed woodwork, again very aptly, and his craftsmanship in everything from model-making to furniture and even to his precisely planned book racks were a joy to the eye.

His wife Fionnuala mourns a loving husband and Eoin, Conor, Roisin and Killian a devoted father. To them his untimely death has been a tragic loss and his wider family and his friends in forestry have lost a good man.

*Ar dheis Dé a anam.*

Jack Durand.