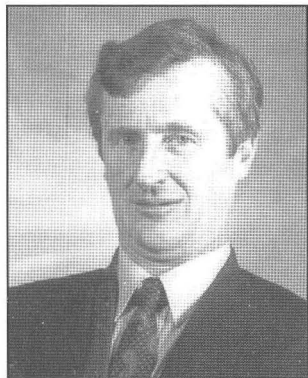


## Patrick F. Berkery

1947-2002



Pat Berkery died suddenly on February 9, 2002, aged 54 while hill walking with work colleagues in the Galtee Mountains. Hill walking provided Pat with an opportunity to maintain fitness after he reluctantly hung up his hurley, but more importantly, it provided him with a regular opportunity to connect with nature. It also allowed him to trek through forests and woodlands and to keep in touch with his forestry past. He was proud of the role forestry played in the changing landscape and proud too of his own contribution to the development of forestry although his career had taken on a new direction a number of years previously. He was well informed on all forestry matters and in recent years attended Society study tours and contributed to journal reports. Before his untimely death he

was carrying out research for a M.Sc., specialising in forestry and planning.

Pat was a native of Rearcross, Co Tipperary and was the eldest in a family of three girls and four boys, one of whom, Billy, followed him into forestry in 1969. He began his forestry studies in Kinnitty Castle, in 1967 where he was a bright and diligent student. After qualifying as a forester he spent four years in Glenealy forest and nursery. He relished the challenge of working in an environment that covered the forest cycle from seed to sawlog. He would carry this enthusiasm to other forest centres he worked in, such as Kilworth and Ballymahon.

He was an excellent hurler and won three Tipperary divisional senior hurling medals for the Sean Treacy club. He also made a major contribution to Wicklow hurling and won an All-Ireland Junior Hurling medal with the county in 1971. What was remarkable about Pat was his insatiable appetite for education in forestry and a range of other subjects. During his hectic work and sports lifestyle he completed – in his own unassuming style – an honours B. Comm. degree in 1974 at University College Dublin.

Unfortunately, during this period there were few promotional outlets in forestry and in addition foresters were subject to transfer, usually without redress. Pat wanted to put down roots in Wicklow and felt that a transfer would be unfair to his family. With some regret he left the Forest Service to pursue a career in the Valuation Office. Here, he worked with distinction achieving promotion to the senior management position of team leader during the restructuring of the agency.

While Pat excelled in his career and sport, he maintained a balance in his life that put these in perspective. He would freely admit his life only took on a true meaning when he met and married Margaret and a sense of purpose with the arrival of his son John and twin daughters Mairead and Mary. His love of family and nature were based on a deep spirituality which only became apparent after years of knowing him. This was the private side to Pat, not the subject of easy banter. The other side to him was that of a cultured man, at ease with life. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of sport and he had a deep interest in a broad range of subjects especially politics and literature. His education in the classics was a reminder of an era when things were learned ‘by heart’ and he used this to

good effect in conversation.

His loyalty to his friends and colleagues was a feature of his life. This was reflected in the attendance at his funeral as mourners gathered from all over Ireland to pay their respects to a friend whose death was all too soon. And it is the suddenness of his departure that is so difficult to comprehend because Pat was a man with such boundless energy, with so much still to give. Those of us who were privileged to know him, can but imagine his thoughts in the Galtees on that fateful February day. Family and friends would no doubt have featured in Pat's thoughts as he told his companions to walk on without him for a while as he savoured the panoramic splendour of south Tipperary: a landscape that would evoke the clash of ash and perhaps a few verses from his favourite poems. Sadly, this time, it would be the stark finality of Keats that would intrude in this idyllic setting:

*Stop and consider! Life is but a day;  
A fragile dew-drop on it perilous way  
From a tree's summit.*

One thing we can know for sure about Pat: there would be no malice, no recriminations in his thoughts. He brought a strong sense of fair play from the hurling field to all aspects of his life. He epitomised all that is best in a good public servant: honest, hard-working and loyal. Pat possessed these qualities in abundance along with integrity and a sense of humour. It is the memory of these qualities that will surely help his family and friends to come to terms with his untimely death and face the future with hope and confidence.

We offer our sincere sympathies to Pat's wife Margaret, children John, Mary and Mairead and his brothers and sisters. They can justly remember him with pride and affection.

Go ndéanfaid Dia trócaire ar a anam.

*Donal Magner*