

Máirtín Ó Neachtain 1933-2002



The death took place of Máirtín Ó Neachtain on the 15th July 2002 at his home near Oranmore, Co Galway.

He lived a full and rewarding life and because of his calm manner was liked and admired by all who came in contact with him.

After completing his secondary education in 1953 he commenced his forestry training at Avondale. His first official assignment was as an assistant forester to Kilworth forest in 1956. He then transferred to Glen of Imaal forest, where his twin characteristics of concern and generosity asserted themselves when the forester-in-charge Tom O'Neill died suddenly in 1959.

He was subsequently promoted to forester-in-charge at Killakee forest; some years later he was transferred to Ballyfarnon forest in Co Roscommon before finally transferring to Castledaly forest in Co Galway where he served until he availed of the early retirement scheme introduced by Coillte in 1993.

Máirtín was endowed with a persuasive style of management; instructions were issued firmly and cordially. This approach was adopted when dealing with the various levels of management, timber merchants and trespassers. A reciprocal approach from superiors was appreciated and proved most effective.

Woodlands were spiritual places for Máirtín; the tree stands, riverbanks and old demesne avenues; all had a regenerative power which he experienced in the forests he managed. He often talked about this on the many Society tours in which he participated, especially on the memorable tour to British Columbia, Canada in 2000, which sadly was to be his last.

Change may be the only constant in life and in fact Máirtín's own life was to undergo dramatic changes over its duration. He was a native Irish speaker who spoke very little English until he went to secondary school. Following secondary school he embarked on a forestry career while coming from a locality that did not have a forestry tradition. On leaving Coillte in 1993 he commenced a degree course in Irish literature and Greek and Roman civilisation at University College Galway. Three years later he graduated with first class honours. Finally, he was invited to become a tutor at the university, based on his language fluency and academic qualifications. Sadly, this opportunity and an acceptance as a law student had to be abandoned when his illness was diagnosed.

In a society that increasingly elevates achievers there is sometimes a realisation that the constant need to achieve becomes tedious and ultimately destructive. The achievements of Máirtín Ó Neachtain are in sharp contrast to this trend, Máirtín appeared to have achieved a fine balance between ambition and achievement.

Máirtín's funeral took place to his native Inverin where he was buried at Knock cemetery overlooking Galway Bay.

We extend our sympathy to his wife Phyllis, daughters Blathnaid and Ciara, sons Eoghan, Aodh and Art.

*Fear caoin carthanach ab ea Máirtín
Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam uasal*

Tony Gallinagh