

County mourns Willie O'Brien

By **NORMA PRENDIVILLE**

Willie O'Brien.

He died last Saturday following a long illness.

Mr O'Brien was buried on Monday at the New Cemetery, Patrickswell, and a moving oration was given at his graveside by Fine Gael TD for Limerick East, Michael Noonan.

Mr O'Brien's coffin bore the colours of Patrickswell GAA of which he was a founder member and former player.

Members of the club aug-

mented by Fine Gael colleagues formed a guard of honour.

Many senior members of party from Limerick and the rest of the country attended the funeral as did many other distinguished members and former members of the Oireachtas and of the public service.

"Willie was a great character, a self-made man and an extremely hard worker," said Senator Dan Neville, a close friend and colleague.

"But above all, he had a great feel for what ordinary people were thinking." It was a trait and gift which his former party leader, Garret FitzGerald, very much valued and appreciated.

"But," the Senator continued, "he was also one of the wittiest and funniest men I knew. He was always the soul of the party—any party of whatever kind."

Deputy Michael Finucane said that Mr O'Brien gave outstanding service as an Oireachtas representative and member of Limerick County Council.

"He was totally dedicated to West Limerick," he said. "And as a full-time public representative, he was accessible and approachable at all times."

"What impressed me most about him was that he had a great human touch in his dealings with the public."

Willie's great sense of humour was often brought into play at difficult times in political life, Deputy Finucane said.

Cllr Jim Houlihan said that Mr O'Brien's most outstanding characteristic was as a family man.

"He was a most committed family man," said the councillor, who could recall Willie arriving to make speeches on a butter box outside the church in Granagh.

"He was a very warm personality, very strongly committed party man who approached everything he did with the same dedication—whether that was his politics, his religion or his family."

Fine Gael constituency chairman, Willie Regan stated: "He symbolised all that was best in Fine Gael."

"He was one of the most respected and well liked members of the party both locally and nationally and his death represents a tremendous loss to the par-

ty." Members of other parties also paid tribute to Mr O'Brien.

Fianna Fail MEP, Deputy Gerard Collins, said that Mr O'Brien had served the people of County Limerick to the best of his ability and successfully so for a long period of time.

"Very regrettably," he went on, "he did not have an opportunity to enjoy a long retirement with his

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bye. "It will be a celebration of Laura's life," one of her friends, Siobhan Dillon, explained to the Limerick Leader this week. "Everything that we relate to Laura will be brought in."

There is undoubtedly something tragic in celebrating a life cut off so soon. And Laura's friends feel that sudden cutting-off very deeply. Even still, they say, they expect her to walk into the pre-fab and carry on as she always did.

Accepting, they admit, is hard. Still hard. Still too hard.

But they are determined to pay full tribute to their lost friend. They want passionately for everybody to know how great she was.

In clear, simple language this small group of Laura's friends—Aisling de Hooge,

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