County mourns
Willie O’Brien

By NORMA PRENDIVILLE

AS hundreds of people paid their final respects to the man who had been their public representative for so long, tributes were paid by politicians of all parties to former Fine Gael TD for Limerick West.

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 eulogy 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 augmented by Fine Gael colleagues formed a guard of honour.

Mary 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 Orreachtas 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 was a great man 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 writiest 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 Orreachtas 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 Granlah.

“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-