WORK ABOUT TO START ON NEW EXTENSION TO ATHLONE REGIONAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE

An impression of the new extension (right) in relation to the existing college (left).

Work is about to start on the new extension to Athlone Regional Technical College. The building work is expected to take about two years and the new wing will be ready for use late in 1980 or early in 1981.

The original building, completed in 1970, was soon found to be too small to accommodate the growing number of students and courses. As a result the World Bank was approached and agreed to finance an extension to the college. Plans for the new wing were then commissioned from the college architects, Noel F. Heavey and Partners, and these were ready early in 1976.

However at that point commencement of the work had to be postponed due to uncertainty over the future role of the Regional Technical Colleges in apprenticeship education which had an important bearing on their accommodation requirements. Finally, in 1977, the government indicated that the scheme could proceed; the plans were then revised and in 1978 tenders were sought and commencement of building work was authorised.

The extension will rationalise the use of space in the college. It is to be a little over 3,000 square metres in area and will include an enlarged library, new plastics and engineering laboratories, and improved accommodation for business studies department courses, including art and design. This will free existing space for additional lecture halls, a new drawing office, common rooms for both staff and students, and enlarged office equipment and data processing laboratories.

Plan showing the position of the new extension in relation to the existing college.

Mr. Noel Heavey
New Staff Member

Simon Healy has joined the staff of Athlone Regional Technical College as assistant lecturer in graphics on the art and design course. Although his father was from Cahirciveen, County Kerry, Simon was born in Yorkshire and studied at Carlisle College of Art and Design and the Central School of Art and Design, London, where he qualified in graphic design in 1974. After this he spent a period in Paris before returning to London as assistant to David White, the well-known designer. Here he worked on a variety of design projects ranging from Burton Menswear to Twinlock (Gasis) planning charts and business forms. He then worked for a time as a freelance design consultant before returning to academic life at Athlone. Simon says that although life in Athlone is less hectic than in London or Paris, he has more opportunity for study and enjoys the challenge of imparting his knowledge and experience to students.

Athlone students score success in National Apprentice Competition

In the National Apprentice Competition of 1978 the college had its most successful year to date. After the preliminary stages of the competition in which there were ten contestants from Bórd na Mona apprentices within the college, four went on to the final. Here, in a hotly contested conclusion, Tony Lyons took first place in Ireland in turning and John Tormey took first place in fitting. The other Athlone finalists also emerged with credit. Mattie Conelly was third in technical drawing and Gerry Masterson was sixth in turning.

Following this success, John Tormey was selected to represent Ireland in the International Apprentice Competition which took place in Korea in September where, although edged out of the medal winners, his work was highly commended.

Athlone Regional Technical College Staff

THE COLLEGE CHAPLAINCY

Longford-born Father Padraig MacGowan is the Roman Catholic chaplain in the college. Canon Langton May, Rector, St. Mary's Athlone is the Church of Ireland chaplain. Canon May is available when needed, and Father MacGowan, a full-time member of the staff, is available throughout the day (9.30 a.m. - 9.30 p.m.). The chaplains see their role as one of pastoral care adapted to the special circumstances and needs of students. In their work, they try to mediate the love and concern of Jesus Christ for the individual. Theirs is basically an outreach ministry which operates through contact made with students both informally and through involvement in student societies and activities, social, cultural and religious.

Important religious events during the year are the Folk Mass to mark the opening of the college year, a pre-Christmas ecumenical carol service, and Christian Week which is held in January. Christian Week is an attempt to provide students with an opportunity to come to a deeper religious understanding and commitment through discussion, shared experience and worship. Larry Hogan was a popular keynote speaker during Christian Week in 1978. Mass is celebrated daily in the college at 9.05 a.m.

Counselling is central to the work of a college chaplain. The presence and availability of chaplains in college is a recognition of the fact that the education of the total person has a spiritual dimension; and, in counselling, the college chaplain responds to the needs which this implies, enabling the student to grow in relation to others and in relation to God. Father Padraig MacGowan also acts as student welfare officer. In this capacity he works closely with the Students' Union in assisting students to obtain accommodation. A list of approved accommodation is compiled each September, and may be obtained by contacting the student accommodation office. Up-to-date information on flats and houses available for rent may also be obtained from this office.

Mineral Science students visit Boart Hardmetals (Europe) Limited

On a very windy day at Shannon Airport Industrial Estate, second-year mineral science students were photographed outside the head office of Boart Hardmetals (Europe) Limited. Shown in the picture are (left to right): Mr. F.X. O'Gorman, P.R.O. Boart Hardmetals (Europe) Limited; Michael Dunne; Sean Aynsley; John Keating; Noel Singleton; Brendan O'Donovan; Dermot Coffrey; Michael Keane; Mr. N. Halfin, Boart Hardmetals (Europe) Limited; Sean Curr; Mr. N.J.C. Foley-Fisher, lecturer in mineral processing, Athlone Regional Technical College.

On 29 March 1978 second-year mineral science students visited the factory of Boart Hardmetals (Europe) Limited at Shannon Airport, County Clare. The company, which has subsidiaries in Norway, Sweden, Germany and the United Kingdom, manufactures a full range of rotary percussive rock drilling tools and accessories for the mining, quarrying and civil engineering industries. Last year the college was very pleased to accept samples of Boart Hardmetals products, bits and drill steels, for demonstration purposes in lectures on rock drilling. The visit, at the college's invitation, was part of the year's programme of works visits and field work which is an integral part of the mineral science courses at Athlone Regional Technical College. From Shannon Airport the group went on to carry out geological mapping in Counties Limerick and Kerry. During the year students have also visited mines and quarries at Tynagh (Irish Base Metals Limited), Silvermines (Mogul of Ireland Limited), Navan (Tara Mines Limited), Kingstown (Gypsum Industries Limited), Anigra (Anigra Colliers Limited), Clonakilty (Micham Ireland Limited), Ballyvaughan (Longford Limestone Limited) and Cork (John A. Woods Limited). These links with industry enable students to assess the importance of the extractive industries to the country, as well as offering the opportunity to gain experience through vacation employment.
Gentex (1975) Ltd. Award

Eugene Morris of Roscommon, a second-year student of graphics in Athlone Regional Technical College’s art department, was the first winner of the Gentex (1975) Ltd. award for design. Eugene’s award was for a tea-towel design, depicting the midland waterways. The printed tea-towel is now available in local department stores. Another design on the same theme by John Butler of Tullamore, also a second-year graphics student at the college, has been used by the company. The Gentex (1975) Ltd. award is greatly appreciated by the college and demonstrates the growing relationship between business enterprise in the midlands and the college staff and students. Gentex (1975) Ltd. has agreed to renew the award this year.

Athlone Regional Technical College offers a two-year full-time course in applied design with the emphasis on design technology in the areas of ceramics and print-making in year one and graphic design in year two. The course leads to a college certificate and employment outlets in advertising, television, commercial art, graphic design and craft-based industries.

National Seminar on Design Education

A national seminar on design education was held in Athlone on 13–14 October 1978. The seminar was organised by the Society of Designers in Ireland in conjunction with the National Council for Educational Awards and the National College of Art and Design.

The seminar gathered together representatives of professional, educational and other interested groups in the field. In his introduction, the president of the Society of Designers in Ireland, Mr. Frank Ryan, expressed the society’s readiness to assess courses in design throughout the country with a view to offering graduating students direct entry to the society, thereby recognising their professional eligibility.

In the opening address, Sean Usal O Conchubhair said that there is more uncertainty about industry’s need for designers and specifically about the commitment to Irish design than about the capability of the Irish educational system to provide them, and he thought that the need for designers outside of industrial product design should receive greater consideration.

Other speakers at the seminar included Pádraig MacDiarmada, director of the National Council for Educational Awards; Patrick Wallis Burke, representative of the International Council of Graphic Design Associations; James King, chief executive, Kilkenny Design Workshops; Kevin Fox, past president of the Society of Designers in Ireland; Peter Davis, president of the Union of Students in Ireland; Richard Ruth, acting director, Limerick School of Art and Design; Hugh McCormick, director, art and design studies, Galway Regional Technical College; and David Sherlock, deputy director of the National College of Art and Design.