



R.T.C. ATHLONE. Vol. iv, no. 1. Hilary term, 1984.

## BULLETIN

### Degree Course in Polymer Technology Approved

Speaking at the annual conferring of N.C.E.A. awards on students of the Regional Technical College, Athlone, on 4 November 1983, Pádraig Uas MacDiarmada, director, N.C.E.A., announced that his council had approved a proposal from the board of the college for a degree course in polymer technology to be conducted there. Stressing that the N.C.E.A. was bound by its statutory responsibilities to ensure that the standards of its degree awards correspond to the standards of similar university degree programmes, he said that it took the view that any development at degree level should be based on proven excellence and specialization achieved by an institution at sub-degree level. Through the years, R.T.C., Athlone, had built up a special expertise in the area of plastics and polymer technology and it was for this reason, together with the favourable reports of the panel of experts appointed to assess the proposal, that the council had consented to the degree programme.

The new degree course will be of four years' duration. It will lead to the degree of B.Sc. (Polymer Technology). The existing certificate and diploma courses in plastics and



*Pádraig Uas MacDiarmada, director N.C.E.A. (left), confers the National Diploma in Business Studies (Management Finance) on Michael White (centre). Michael was the recipient of award no. 20,000 in the history of the N.C.E.A. Also included is Mr. Barry O'Brien (right), assistant registrar, N.C.E.A.*

polymer technology will continue to be offered.

Congratulating the 271 students receiving N.C.E.A. awards at Athlone based on the results of the 1982-3 academic year, An t-Uas MacDiarmada declared that the occasion was an historic one for the N.C.E.A. for, as a result of the day's conferring, the

cumulative total of N.C.E.A. awards conferred since 1972 had passed the 20,000 mark. By any standards this upsurge in newly-qualified personnel with an advanced capacity in business, science and engineering was a massive national development, whose impact on Irish life had yet to be fully realized.

### Sportswoman of the Year



*Eilish McMahon.*

Eilish McMahon, Granard, Co. Longford, received the Sportswoman of the Year Award at the Annual Conferring Ceremony at R.T.C., Athlone. Eilish played county basketball for Longford and represented the college in ladies' basketball, volleyball, athletics, badminton and soccer. She won two silver and two bronze medals and field medals in the Higher Education Sports Federation All-Ireland finals in 1982 and 1983. In 1982 she won the H.E.S.F. All-Ireland ladies' cross country team award and in 1983 the track and field team award. She has also completed her National Certificate in Business Studies. Eilish has now taken up a basketball scholarship at St. Canisius's College, Buffalo, New York, where she will play for the first team. She will also continue her academic career by pursuing a degree course in business organisation.



## Conferring Day Awards



Mr. E. Cowan (left), area regional manager, Bank of Ireland, presents the Principal's Award to Michael Hennessy (centre). On right is Mr. G. Martin, Bank of Ireland, Athlone. This award is made to the student achieving the highest average marks at National Certificate level. It is funded by the Bank of Ireland. Michael completed the National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering with distinction in 1983. A native of Kilbeggan, County Westmeath, he is currently studying for a degree in engineering at N.I.H.E., Limerick.



Ray Gillespie (right) is presented with the 1983 Complementary Studies Prize by Mr. Pat Barry, Allied Irish Banks Ltd., Athlone, who sponsored the award. Complementary Studies is considered by both the college and N.C.E.A. to be an important element of each student's education. Ray researched and presented an excellent project 'Food for thought' in which he analysed the various foods that are commonly eaten throughout the world from the point of view of health and diet. He is a native of Athlone.

## Research and Development

A number of research and development projects are currently being undertaken at R.T.C., Athlone. In the School of Science residues of growth promoters in meat have been monitored and tested for the last two years in response to a national need to assay hormone levels in treated animals. This will ensure that permitted growth promoters are used as recommended and that any toxic residues can be detected in the meat supply. The project involves very sensitive assay procedures which are being developed at the college. Staff involved include Dr. C. Hallowan, Dr. N. Ní Ghogáin, Ms. Y. McGarry and Ms. J. Duggan. The project is funded jointly, in co-operation with County Westmeath V.E.C., by the National Board for Science and Technology, Hoechst (Ireland) Limited, the Irish Livestock and Meat Board, the Irish Meat Exporters Association and the Irish Domestic Meat Traders Association.

Research is also being carried out on pollution levels in the major rivers and lakes in the midlands. The staff involved are Mr. J. Coyle and Dr. M. Knox.

In the plastics section of the School of Engineering research work is continuing on the evaluation of

materials for use in load-bearing surgical implants. For his work on the first phase of this project Mr. Joseph Farrell has been awarded the degree of M.Sc. by Trinity College, Dublin. Several other research programmes have also been

commenced in the plastics section with financial assistance from Wellman International Ltd., Kelly Handles Ltd. and Marley Extrusion Ltd. Staff involved include Dr. A. Brazier, Mr. R. Devlin, Mr. P. Blackie and Mr. J. Hopkins.



Dr. Neasa Ní Ghogáin, lecturer in biology, operating the liquid scintillation counter used to measure the growth promoters.



## Grant of Arms



Following the application of the board of management of R.T.C., Athlone, the Chief Herald of Ireland, Mr. Donal Begley, was pleased to make a grant of arms to the college on 14 June 1983. These arms are now the registered corporate symbol of the college and will be used as much as possible by staff and students on items identified with it, such as flags, publications, notepaper, advertisements, clothing (including sportswear and ties), transport, etc.

The arms are shown (left) in black and white. When fully emblazoned the shield of arms is coloured green (top) and blue (bottom) to suggest the blue waterways and green fields of the midlands. It is divided across the centre by a silver arch in the form of cut stone to symbolize a bridge. Primarily this is suggestive of the location of the college at Athlone, the historic bridging point between Leinster and Connacht. But it also evokes the roles of the college as a link between the counties of the midlands and as a bridge bearing its students to knowledge and maturity. The other devices depicted on the shield are in gold. One is a lion from the arms of the town of Athlone. There is also a cross, with its extremities crescent-shaped to suggest the heads of spanners. This symbolizes the relationship between the tradition of Christian learning in

the midlands, associated with such places as Clonmacnoise, and modern technological education. Finally, two hands are demonstrative of the practical and applied nature of most of the college programmes. The motto *Magna est Veritas et Praevalet* means Great is Truth and Mighty above all Things. It is taken from the Old Testament, Apocrypha, I Esdras, chap. 4, verse 41, and is an appropriate aspiration for an institution dedicated to scientific learning.

The blazon, in the scientific language of heraldry, is *Per fess vert and azure a fess arched argent masoned sable, in chief a lion passant guardant or and in base between two hands apaumée coupée of the third, the dexter hand in dexter and the sinister hand in the sinister, a cross crescented of the fifth, with the motto Magna est Veritas et Praevalet.*

## Calor Gas Catering Award for Athlone Student



Sharon McBride, a student of catering management at R.T.C., Athlone, is presented with a Calor Gas Catering Scholarship by Mr. Barry Desmond, T.D., Minister for Health (left). Also included are Mr. Colm Manweiler, president of the Irish Hotel and Catering Institute (second from left) and Mr. Val Gunning, chief executive, Calor Gas Division, Calor Teoranta. The scholarship is worth £450 per annum over three years and should help Sharon to acquire the training she needs to achieve her ambition of running her own restaurant.

## 'Yesterday's Station': Complementary Studies Film



Mr. John Hamilton, R.T.C., Athlone (centre), director of 'Yesterday's Station', is presented with a mounted signalling staff as a token of their appreciation by Mr. Sean Nally (left) and Mr. Eamonn Lacken (right) both of C.I.E., Athlone.

In the academic year 1982-3 students of the complementary studies film group in R.T.C., Athlone, under the direction of Mr. John Hamilton, lecturer in mineral science, produced a film entitled *Yesterday's station*. The seventy-five minute colour film outlines the coming of the Midland Great Western Railway to Athlone and describes the present C.I.E. station, its layout and workings. This is of particular significance as the station depicted is soon to close and be replaced by a new premises at the refurbished Great Southern station on the Leinster side of the town. The film also shows

the work of various key railway staff. The venture was financed jointly by the V.E.C. and the Old Athlone Society whose president, Mr. A.J. Faulkner, provides the commentary. *Yesterday's station* received its first public showing at a meeting of the Old Athlone Society on 5 November 1983 and was again shown later that month to an enthusiastic audience of C.I.E. staff and their friends at the Foresters' Hall, Athlone. The attendance included Mr. Colm MacGiolla Ri, western area manager C.I.E., who complimented Mr. Hamilton and his students on the quality and interest of their work.



## Catering Awards



Mr. Eric Counihan, manager, Farnham Arms Hotel, Cavan, presents the Management Student (Restaurant Service) Industrial Experience Award to Bridget O'Shea (right), a third-year catering management student. Also included is Miss Anna Carroll (left), manager, school board training, C.E.R.T.



Mr. Eamon Gullane, manager, Harry's Restaurant, Kinnegad (left), presents the Management Student (kitchen) Industrial Experience Award to Michael O'Callaghan (centre), second-year catering management student of the year. On right is Mr. John O'Hara, lecturer, hotel and catering management studies.

## Technology and Scholarship in the Midlands Series

When the Regional Technical College, Athlone, opened in 1970, higher education in the Irish midlands may be said to have formally commenced. However, over the preceding centuries there were many who showed distinction in science, engineering, architecture, scholarship and the learned professions and who either originated in the midland area or spent a significant portion of their careers here. Collectively they laid the foundations of a tradition in technology and scholarship of which the college is in a certain sense the successor. The series which is continued here gives a brief appreciation of the careers of the more distinguished of this group.

8. *William of Prene (fl. 1290), 'carpenter'*. Amongst the largest and most impressive buildings ever constructed in the Irish midlands were the thirteenth century castles of Athlone, Roscommon and Rindown. The best documented of the craftsmen associated with their erection and maintenance is the Englishman, William of Prene. He first rose to prominence in 1284 on being appointed carpenter of the king's houses and castles in Ireland by Edward I. This post seems to have entailed a supervisory function over the construction, maintenance

and improvement of the king's works in Ireland. William is known to have expended money at Athlone Castle in 1284-5 as part of the ongoing programme of improvement and repair of this key strategic structure, first erected about 1211. Between 1286 and 1288 he was engaged in works on the improvement of Rindown Castle, the great fortress built after 1227 on a promontory adjoining Lough Ree. The building of Roscommon Castle had commenced in 1269 and work on its completion was still continuing in William's time. He may have directed the final stages of the work on the walls and his knowledge of carpentry was probably responsible for the construction of doors, drawbridges, portcullises, roofs and a hall. William was also responsible for the repair of the bridge across the Shannon at Limerick, a labour which proved unsuccessful when the structure collapsed with heavy loss of life sometime between 1284 and 1292. William of Prene enjoyed a good salary and acquired several properties in Ireland including a house at Chapelizod near Dublin, land near Drogheda and at Moyvannan, outside Athlone. However, his career ended in disaster. After a brush with the law about 1288, he was finally

charged with embezzlement in 1292, convicted, fined and dismissed from office. The remaining references to him are of his attempts to have the decision reversed but there is no evidence that he was ultimately successful in this, or that he was ever restored to the post of master carpenter. The achievement of William of Prene and his contemporaries in constructing great civil and ecclesiastical buildings, the equal of which was never seen in Ireland before their time, was a major development in the advance of construction technology on this island.



Roscommon Castle.

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