



RTC. ATHLONE. Vol. i, no. 1. 1988

## NEWSLETTER

# The Success of Athlone in Higher Education

R.T.C., Athlone is a Regional and National Institute of higher education. The College is a mature institution offering degree programmes, professional courses and

a wide range of Certificate and Diploma courses to some 1,400 full-time and 800 part-time students.

R.T.C., Athlone offers a comprehensive

range of courses in Accountancy, Business and Management Studies, Catering, Engineering and Science.

## Our Philosophy

Our approach to education is functional: students gain knowledge immediately relevant in today's environment. Our approach to teaching is eclectic, integrating theory, case studies, projects and practicals involving hands-on experience. The rigour and intensity of our core programmes ensure a comprehensive grounding in the theories and tools that are reshaping the way sophisticated managers think about problems. At the same time we also prepare students to face the in-

tricate questions of value and ethics that permeate the decision-making process in complex organisations.

Overall our approach is holistic. Teaching and research flourish in harmony. Our faculty and curricula together forge an exceptionally rich learning environment. Our graduates benefit from this and are successful — often in front of others — in obtaining well paid, highly rewarding positions in their chosen career path.

## Catering Student of the Year, 1986/1987



*Ms. Barbara Murphy who was nominated Catering Student of the Year, 1986/1987. While a student in the College, Barbara completed industrial experience programmes in the Hotel Europe, Killarney, Beechmount Hotel, Navan and La Morgate, Vannes, France.*

## COMETT Grants

The COMETT programme is an action programme for education and training for technology and is funded by the Commission of the European Community.

In 1987 the School of Engineering was successful in its application for assistance under this programme. A grant of 15,000 ECU's allowed the College to pay travel, maintenance and subsistence to undergraduates from the Polymer Technology degree programme while they were on industrial placement with large multinational plastics companies in West Germany and Holland.

The College maintains extensive links with plastics companies in Ireland and increasingly with plastics companies in West Germany and the U.K. with the objective of being able to secure appropriate employment/industrial placements for its undergraduates. The College is committed to maintaining the reputation for excellence which its plastics graduates have earned for it over the years. The links which the College is now forging with technical universities specialising in the field of polymer education in West Germany are expected to lead to greater exchange of staff and students between respective institutions, and this in turn should facilitate mobility of the graduate.

## Education for Accountancy

Accountancy has always been a specialism in the School of Business Studies. In recent years we developed internal courses which were recognised by the Professional Accountancy bodies and students who now enrol in these courses may continue their studies through to final professional level. The programmes are of four/five year duration and are recognised as being Degree equivalents. The minimum entry standard for these courses is three honours with passes in Mathematics and English, and while this may seem high, regrettably it is no guarantee of success. Students develop expertise in all the usual subjects such as Economics, Taxation,

Mathematics, Law, Accounting etc. Together with these subjects the student also receives a substantial training and education in computing and information technology and will have hands-on experience with the latest software and developments in this field. Examples of successful graduates from these courses are Raymond Daly who is now financial accountant with Odenberg Ltd., Stillorgan and Maurice McHugh who is an accountant with Abbot (Ireland) Ltd. in his native Donegal. Declan Connolly from Ballynacargy gained first place in the world while qualifying and was awarded a prestigious scholarship.

## Chemistry Graduates Have Wide Choice of Career Options

Chemistry and chemists are involved in almost everything we use, wear, eat and relax with — our modern world is built to a great degree on the discoveries and continuing work of chemists and the chemical industry. To realise the importance of chemistry, we have only to think of the range of effective drugs available today, of the increasing use of polymers, the range of paints and pigments available, the uses of petroleum and the impact of chemistry on the production and preservation of foodstuffs.

The range and diversity of career options available to chemists is well illustrated by the success of the graduates from our National Certificate and National Diploma courses in Applied Chemistry. Eugene Nixon from Athlone, who graduated with a Credit in the National Certificate in 1977, is employed in

the Fisheries Research Centre, Abbotstown, and is currently reading for an M Sc in Environmental Science at Trinity College. Colm Brennan from Louth, who graduated with a National Diploma in 1986, is currently employed as quality manager by a company specialising in printing and packaging. Catherine Cronly from Tullamore, who graduated with a Diploma in 1984, is currently working as a laboratory technician in the Institute of Biopharmaceutics, Athlone, which provides sophisticated independent analytical services and pharmacological studies for the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. Anne Connelly from Tullamore, who graduated with a Certificate in 1976, is currently working as a laboratory technician at Athlone R.T.C. and has previously worked as a laboratory technician in Sligo R.T.C.

## Education for a Better Future

Modern industrial manufacturing methods are creating future workplaces for people with technical knowledge and know-how. The provision of selective education programmes geared towards meeting the needs of particular sectors of industry are seen to be an effective mechanism to ensure competitiveness in technologically dependent industries such as the plastics industry.

## Growth of the Plastics Industry in Ireland

The Irish plastics industry comprises some 250 companies producing a range of goods from healthcare equipment, computer consoles, automotive components, packaging to building materials.

The annual output of the plastics industry is growing at 12% p.a. since 1980, this growth rate is twice the average for manufacturing industry as a whole over the same period. To cater for this growth the College has developed a four-year degree.

## B.Sc. Honours in Polymer Technology— 4 Year

The course is designed to educate and train students in the scientific principles and technology of polymers and plastics.

The early years of the course concentrate on the physical sciences, mathematics and engineering subjects. The third and fourth year of the course provide the students with an opportunity for detailed study of plastics materials, processing technology, design with plastics, advanced polymer systems and industrial management.

Practical training is stressed throughout the course by means of work in the laboratory, at the drawing board, case study and a mandatory period in industry.



*Padraic Cooke, Dunmore, Co. Galway and Eimear Clyne, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, 4th year students on the Honours B.Sc. (Polymer Technology) course, pictured in the Plastics Laboratory.*

# Management and the Hotel Industry

The National Diploma in Hotel and Catering Management is an excellent example of the educational approach as outlined. It is concerned with the principles, practices and techniques of management as applied to the hotel and catering industry. It incorporates two periods of industrial placement which give the student the opportunity to see the relevance of the programme and to become familiar with all aspects of the industry.

We also stress the international dimensions of our education and students often complete their work placements overseas. They have worked in England, France, Switzerland and the United States. We organise an exchange programme with the E.C.E.P. Cergy-Pontoise

in the Paris region and we also have links with the Cephor/Cephotel (Hotel School) in Vanves. Our qualifications are internationally recognised as our graduates gain substantial exemptions from the membership examinations of the Hotel, Catering and Institutional Management Association.

Some graduates from this sector who have recently obtained good positions are Gerard Small from Athlone who is assistant general manager, The Limerick Inn; Seamus Lennon from Knock, Co. Mayo, a manager in the Green Isle Hotel, Clondalkin, and Marie Brady from Cavan who has taken up a position in O'Shea's Hotel, Bray.



*Gerard Small.*



*Paul Rowan BE MIEI*

# Civil Engineering and the National Primary Roads Network

The last five years has seen considerable government investment in the construction of new roads and in the upgrading of existing roads. In the immediate future the government intends to bring our national primary roads network up to E.E.C. standards.

Job opportunities for specialist high-level civil engineering technicians will follow the implementation of the planned government programme. Additional opportunities for such specialists will also arise in Europe from the policy of the privatisation of civil engineering with respect to ownership and construction of roads, bridges and tunnels. The newly planned Channel Tunnel is an example of this type of new approach to major civil engineering projects.

The College recognised the developing

need for a specialist higher-level civil engineering technician qualification and introduced a one-year full-time course leading to a National Diploma in Highway/Traffic Engineering in 1985. This course is the only such specialist civil engineering course in Ireland, focussing on infrastructural engineering. Graduates from this course have found employment in areas appropriate to their skills and knowledge. Mr. Christy Roche who graduated in 1986 is now employed by the Traffic Department, Dublin Corporation. Many other graduates have been accepted into civil engineering degree courses here, in Northern Ireland and England.

Students who do well on this course usually obtain the civil engineering degree within two years.

# College Extends Research and Consultancy Activities

The College is continuing to develop its already extensive research and consultancy activities. The Polymer Engineering Department is to the fore in this development with over £100,000 in contract Research and Development being carried out by postgraduate research students for various plastics companies. Staff in the Electronics Department are carrying out a major project on computer simulation of the human ear. This project was awarded a grant of £25,000 by EOLAS. Research on the development of new and improved methods for the detection of food additives is being carried out by staff in the Biology Department.

Dr. Harman Murtagh of the School of Business is currently preparing the Athlone fascicle of the Irish Historic Towns Atlas for the Royal Irish Academy.

To help promote the research, development and consultancy services in the college, a Research and Consultancy Board has recently been set up and Mr. Paul Rowan BE MIEI has been appointed industrial liaison officer.

# Computing Facilities

The College has just completed up-grading its computer facilities. We have now one of the most modern computing facilities in Irish Education. We have two mainframes: an I.B.M. 9370 Model 40 with thirty terminals and a Digital Vax 730 mini-computer. We have also got 40 networked Amstrad personal computers, model 1640, 30 I.B.M. personal computers, Model 50, 28 Apple Macintosh, 20 B.B.C. Micros and 11 Transtecs. The peripheral equipment includes 2 laser printers, 8 dot matrix printers, 1 line printer, 1 I.B.M. proprinter, 5 A3 8-pen colour plotters and 1 A0 colour plotter together with digitisers, scanners and hibeam projection devices. These facilities ensure that every student in the College gets hands-on experience with the technology of the future.

## Success for Toxicology Students

Catherine Boyle and Susan Halligan, who obtained their diploma in Toxicology with credit in 1986, have both been awarded an M Sc in Experimental Pathology (Toxicology) with Distinction, by the University of London. Catherine, who is from Donegal, already holds a National Certificate in Applied Chemistry from Letterkenny R.T.C., while Susan, who is from Cork, has a B Sc in Biochemistry from U.C.C. Both are now working in toxicology laboratories in the

United Kingdom and are registered on Ph D programmes.

Even though it was only established by the College in 1985, the course is proving to be highly successful. While the majority of its graduates have gone straight into industry, mainly the pharmaceutical industry, an increasing number are progressing to degree and higher degree programmes in Toxicology, Biochemistry, Microbiology and Forensic Science.



Mr. J. Coyle, Head of School of Science (left), pictured at the Conferring with Miss Lee Deavy, B Sc, and Mr. Kevin Ryan who received the National Diploma in Science (Toxicology). Miss Deavy is now reading for an M Sc in Toxicology at the University of London, while Mr. Ryan is taking the Postgraduate Diploma in Forensic Science at the University of Strathclyde.

## Mineral Engineering Department Extends its Links with other Colleges

Athlone is the only College in the country offering courses in Mineral Engineering. The Mineral Engineering Department has had a long association with the Geology and Applied Geophysics Units at University College, Galway, and the Geology Department of Trinity College, which offer Degree courses in geology.

Links have also now been developed with Colleges outside Ireland to provide opportunities for further study at primary and higher degree levels for our students in mineral engineering, mineral processing, oil exploration technology, geology and geotechnical engineering and quarrying.

The overseas links were first established with the world-renowned Camborne School of Mines in Cornwall, under the European Community Scheme for the Development of Joint Programmes of Study between Institutions of Higher Education in Member States. This link has proved to be highly successful. Peter Brewitt from Cork, graduated from Camborne this year with an Honours Degree in Mining Engineering. He is currently working in Sweden on a mineral exploration pro-

ject with Boart Hardmetals (Europe) plc, who sponsored his studies at both Athlone R.T.C. and Camborne. Ten students from Athlone have transferred to Degree programmes at Camborne this year. Links have also been established with Portsmouth Polytechnic. Mr. Kevin Longworth, Ballinahown, Athlone, graduated with an Honours Degree in Geology and Geotechnics from Portsmouth this year, and is currently working in Cardiff. The Mineral Engineering Department has, this year, established links with the Royal School of Mines, London, University College, Cardiff, Doncaster Institute of Higher Education, and South London College.

Graduates of our courses have been uniquely successful in obtaining employment. They are employed in mineral exploration, underground and opencast mining, quarrying, mineral processing, in the oil and petroleum industry, and in power and water supply projects in many different parts of the world. The Department offers a National Certificate and a National Diploma in Mineral Engineering.

## Broadly Based Business Education

Our Diploma in Management Finance has been developed to ensure that graduates, while having a strong financial knowledge, will also have had a broad education covering principles of management, marketing and international finance. This broadly based qualification enables the student to keep all options open for a career in any of the many faceted aspects of commercial and business life.

Students graduating from this course are granted substantial exemptions by the Marketing Institute of Ireland and by the professional accountancy bodies. They are also accepted for entry into relevant degree courses and several have graduated with honours from both home and overseas universities. Entry to the course is limited to those who have obtained a National Certificate at Credit or Distinction level.



Ms. Colette Harrington, Cloverhill, Roscommon who was awarded the National Certificate in Business Studies at distinction level in 1987. Colette was also awarded the prestigious internationally recognised Certificat Pratique de Francais Economique et Commercial at distinction level by the Paris Chamber of Commerce. In September, 1987 she took up an appointment as English Language Assistante at the Lycée Joliot-Curie, Rennes.

## Graduate Diploma in Computing

The Graduate Diploma course in computing has been a front runner in higher education since its introduction in 1981. The course gives its graduates a wide ranging appreciation of computer technology together with a competence in programming and the use of commercial packages. Graduates have obtained highly paid employment in teaching, industry and commerce.

**Further information on any matter may be obtained from any of the Heads of School.**