

## OBITUARY

*Professor James R. Timoney*

It was with surprise and great sadness that we learned of the death of Professor J.R. Timoney on 11th August 1985. After his retirement from UCD in December 1979, he often visited the College and at the end of last June, he attended the customary lunch for the Extern Examiner in Mathematics.

Dick Timoney was born in Belleek, Co. Fermanagh in 1909 and educated at St Macartan's College, Monahan, Blackrock College, Co. Dublin and UCD. He entered UCD in 1927 and in his first year studied both Science and Engineering, obtaining scholarships in both at the end of the year. He then had to choose which one to continue in and he chose to study Mathematical Science. He graduated with a first class honours BA in 1930. Professor P.G. Gormley graduated the same year, also with first class honours. Dick obtained a scholarship to study for his MA, which he obtained in 1931 with first class honours. He obtained a prize in the Travelling Studentship examination which, together with a scholarship from UCD, enabled him to spend the session 1931-32 in Edinburgh, where he worked under the supervision of Sir Edmund Whittaker. On returning to Dublin in 1932, he was appointed Assistant in Mathematics in UCD. His duties involved teaching both Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Physics. He was appointed Statutory Lecturer in 1937 and Professor of Mathematical Analysis in 1966, which position he held until his retirement.

As a teacher, Dick Timoney was very highly regarded by his students. His lectures were presented with clarity and enthusiasm and he managed to convey to his audience the beauty and elegance of the subject. He developed a very good rapport with his classes. Despite his heavy teaching load and multitudinous administrative duties, Dick always found time to help students individually and also to give additional exercise

classes. For example, the Third Science class - a favourite of his which he taught for many years - used to have their examinations in Autumn and it was not unusual to see him giving a series of tutorials to these students in August. His good relations with students extended outside the circle of those studying Mathematics and he was sought after by student officers to be the obligatory academic representative on various student committees. He was a member of countless committees of this type. As a result he was one of the best known members of staff in College.

Dick Timoney became Head of the Department of Mathematics on the death of P.G. Gormley in 1973 and served in this capacity until 1976. However, for many years before that, much of the day-to-day administration of the Department was done by him. During his period as Head, the Department expanded and flourished. He started the holding of department meetings, thus making it possible for all members of staff to take part in decision-making. His approach inspired a sense of loyalty, commitment and co-operation from his staff and worked very successfully. His judgement was particularly sound, not only on matters affecting the Department but in matters affecting UCD as a whole. He was forward-looking in his views and was happy to adapt courses and methods to changing needs.

Dick involved himself very much in the development of Mathematics in the country as a whole. The worldwide movement to reform school Mathematics started in the 1960s. Dick was one of the lecturers at the first course on "Modern Mathematics for Teachers" in UCD - later published in book form. He was a former member of the Irish Mathematics Teachers Association and was Chairman of the Dublin Branch for many years. He also made important contributions to the development of its Newsletter. He was a judge at the Aer Lingus Young Scientists' Exhibition for many years. Also in Third Level, he contributed greatly to the development of Mathematics in Ireland. His relationship with the mathematicians in the other NUI

colleges and also in TCD was excellent. In the early 1960s, he and Heini Halberstam worked closely together to improve the status of Mathematics in Dublin, and the good relations thus established between the Departments in UCD and TCD have continued to prosper. Dick also served on numerous appointment boards in the Civil Service and third level colleges, where his sound judgement has proved a great asset to the country.

In the general life of UCD, Dick Timoney was a major figure. He was a member of the Academic Council for thirty years, having been co-opted in 1949 while still a lecturer. He was a member of the Governing Body from 1964 to January 1979 and of its Buildings Committee from 1976-79. He served the Governing Body as a member of several subcommittees established to resolve specific problems. Some of these problems were of a difficult and sensitive nature and Dick's diplomatic talents and genial manner made him an obvious choice to carry out these tasks. He was Chairman of the Junior Academic Staff Association in 1947-48 and President of the Employers Association in 1953-58. He served for many years on the Senate of the NUI, having been elected by convocation in 1964, 1972 and again in 1977. He had an abiding love for UCD and on his many visits there since retirement, displayed great interest in what was happening there.

Dick always maintained his enthusiasm for Mathematics. He was especially fond of "hard" complex analysis - zeta function, Riemann hypothesis etc. He was always happy to show his colleagues the shortest or most elegant way to solve a particular problem. In his article in this Newsletter, Number 3, he quotes a motto of one of his teachers, Professor McWeeney, on the best way to approach a mathematical problem: "if you attack it judiciously, it will come out in a line". This characterised his own approach also, the "line" usually involved some particularly neat trick.

Dick is survived by his widow Nora and their family of four, two sons and two daughters. The eldest, Richard, carries on the tradition and is a lecturer in Mathematics at TCD. Dick was always interested in engineering as a hobby - his expertise with cars is legendary - and the other son David carries on this interest, being a lecturer in Mechanical Engineering at UCD. The eldest daughter, Nicola, is an economist and the younger, Norma, is a dentist.

On behalf of the mathematical community we wish to express our deep sorrow at Dick's passing. For all of us, it is a great loss; for Nora and his family, it is a particularly sad one and we can but offer our condolences.

*T.J. Laffey, Stephen O'Brien*

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