

Appeal

We are trying to find a set of recordings that would be of great value to the School of Computer Science and Statistics, TCD; we are trying to find someone who might know who recorded interviews with Prof. John Byrne (sometimes called the father of computer science in Ireland, who sadly passed away recently). We plan a book about him, (see further below) and the interviews would be extremely helpful.

Prof. Barbara Wright found a 1-page list of what was covered in "Track 1-9" (see below), but neither she nor we have these tapes or know who recorded them and why. Despite a fairly intensive search we have not found anyone who knows anything about the interviews.

If you are aware of the interviews and are able to tell us who made them, please let us know. If this is all as much of a mystery to you as to us, please pass this query on to your colleagues. Otherwise any ideas would be welcome, and please feel free to spread this net far and wide.

Update 18-Sep-2016: these recordings have been found, thanks to Prof. Byrne's nephew Edmund Williams, Rosemary Welsh and Chris Horn. They are in Maurice & Jane O'Keefe's collection *Irish Life and Lore*, see:

http://www.irishlifeandlore.com/search-result.php?PageNum=2&DbQuery_TotalRows=23&s=byrne

They are available on a CD and/or electronic file, and copies of both have been deposited in the collection, see:

<https://www.scss.tcd.ie/SCSSTreasuresCatalog/literature/TCD-SCSS-V.20160929.001/TCD-SCSS-V.20160929.001.pdf>

The full set of the *Irish Life and Lore* interview series is also in the TCD Library, see:

http://stella.catalogue.tcd.ie/iii/encore/plus/C__S%28irish%20life%20%26%20lore%29%20%28collectio n%29%20%28compiled%29%20f%3A%20%3Aeng__Orightresult__U?lang=eng&suite=cobalt

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John Byrne b. 1933

Track 1: Background, growing up in Dublin (Rathfarnham), his early education and later entry to Trinity College Dublin in 1952 as an undergraduate, studying French and Classics, prior to beginning his engineering studies. Pays special tribute to his mentor Victor Graham in this regard. Being a Roman Catholic, a dispensation from the Church was required in order for him to take up his place at Trinity.

Track 2: Graduating in Civil Engineering, working in Birmingham for an engineering firm at that time constructing the Hogan Stand for Croke Park. On returning to Dublin, employment with Dublin Corporation for three months, before enrolling for a Diploma in Concrete Technology at Imperial College, London.

Track 3: 1957 – Enrolled for a Ph.D. in Trinity College – in summer of 1958, spent three months with English Electric in Stafford, using the DEUCE (Digital Electronic Universal Computing Engine) computer.

Track 4: Having graduated with a Ph.D., was awarded an ICI Fellowship and was appointed lecturer in Trinity College. His memories of that time, particularly the IBM 1620 computer acquired by the Engineering School. The educational programmes on offer to students in his Department.

Track 5: In 1968, the focus on the need to upgrade the computing system and an anecdote about the location of the computer – the IBM 360/44 mainframe – the size of which dictated its installation in a hut beside the Berkeley library.

Track 6: Summary of his professional career to 1973, when he was elected to a Chair of Computer Science at Trinity College.

Track 7: The 1980s and the relocation of his department to Pearse St and subsequently to the O'Reilly Institute.

Track 8: Discusses the decision to confer academic awards on Dublin Institute of Technology students through Trinity College.

Track 9: The highs and lows of his professional life, and the digitization of the printed TCD Library catalogue (1872), of over 5,000 pages.



Reminiscences of Professor Byrne

In the view of many, Professor John Byrne was an extraordinary asset for Ireland. He was at the forefront of computing in the country, and of educating generations of university students on the engineering and application of computers.

Prof Byrne however had many other interests and influences beyond computing. He was a student of the classics, as well as an engineer. He was a strong supporter of feminism in the male oriented professions. He was keenly interested in politics, an enthusiastic follower of rugby, and always thoroughly enjoyed horse racing.

He was a quiet influencer, and often achieved results despite inertia and resistance in the system. He was a strong but gentle inspiration for so many people, and yet never sought public recognition.

In recognition of his life, a team of his colleagues and friends have taken the initiative to form a collection of memories and of influences of John. The intent is to publish these, in due course, in both a physical and e-book.

We invite you to contribute your best story and reminiscence of John. We are particularly interested in pieces which illuminate aspects of his character and interests.

Your personal contribution should be at least 100 words, but no more than 2,000. You should confirm that you are happy to have your name and affiliation published alongside your contribution. You can make just a single contribution.

Please send your contribution to Chris Horn (chris.horn.at@gmail.com). Chris will curate and collate the submissions, and then arrange publication in due course.

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Team

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