

London Mathematical Society 150 year celebration

ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY

On the 16th January 1865 the London Mathematical Society held its Inaugural Meeting at the University College London with 27 Founding Members. All of these except one were from University College: the exception was Horatio Nelson Grimley. What was so special about him? Seven years later, when in October 1872 the University College of Wales opened its doors, he was, amongst other things, the first Professor of Mathematics.

That started a long connection of the Society with Aberystwyth. His successor, Robert William Genese, appointed in 1879, was professor for 40 years. Although he published some interesting papers in the Society's Proceedings, there is little evidence that he had any further involvement in the Society. However, his successor for the four year period up to 1923 was the most illustrious mathematician to be connected with Aberystwyth, namely William Henry Young. He had already been awarded the Society's De Morgan Medal in 1917 and he became President of the Society from 1922-1924.

In 1961, William Barry Pennington was appointed Professor of Pure Mathematics. This began a period when mathematics at Aberystwyth flourished. He was already the Editor of the Journal of the London Mathematical Society since 1955 and he continued until 1966. He was Vice-President of the Society from 1967-1968. With one or two others, he was responsible for modernising the Society during his period on its Council. He very sadly died suddenly in 1968 at the young age of 43.

I succeeded him in 1969, and was in post until 2000. In 1972, when the College and Department celebrated its centenary the Society held its Council meeting here, a rare occasion then for it to venture outside London. I was a member of the Council of the Society from 1976-1978 and Noel Lloyd and I were Joint Editors of the Journal of the London Mathematical Society from 1983-1988. Later, I was Vice-President of the Society from 1992-1994, and then Treasurer from 1994-2002. This turned out to be a crucial time in the history of the Society. Up to that time, the Society's Office was two rooms on the top floor of the Royal Meteorological Society staffed by one full time Administrator, Susan Oakes, and an assistant. The Society took the bold decision to purchase its own premises and to employ a Chief Executive and a number, grown over the years, of other professional staff. I think that those of us who were involved in those decisions can feel proud of our choice and decision, De Morgan House in Russell Square is a worthy home for the Society. May the Society and Mathematics flourish for the next century.

Alun Morris