



DIT Celebrates 50 Years of Professional Engineering

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Jim McGovern outlines why the Faculty of Engineering at the DIT and all its professional engineering graduates have cause to celebrate from September 2003.

STOP, look around, can you spot something that has not been touched at some level by professional engineering? Good engineering is taken for granted and usually goes unnoticed. Professional engineering graduates of the DIT are so well integrated into society that they blend into the background and their contributions to ordinary life are generally unsung.



Photo: Jim McGovern

Who would bother to take a photograph of a cameraman on a cherry picker above a bed of rooftops? It would be regarded by some as an image of banality, if not ugliness, and certainly not one to bring home from a day at the races. A picture of a bird flying low over a grass field might come closer to most people's sense of what constitutes a scene of beauty.



Photo: Jim McGovern

For many, a day at the races or a round of golf is an escape that has nothing to do with technology or engineering. Therein lies evidence of one of our key successes as professional engineers.

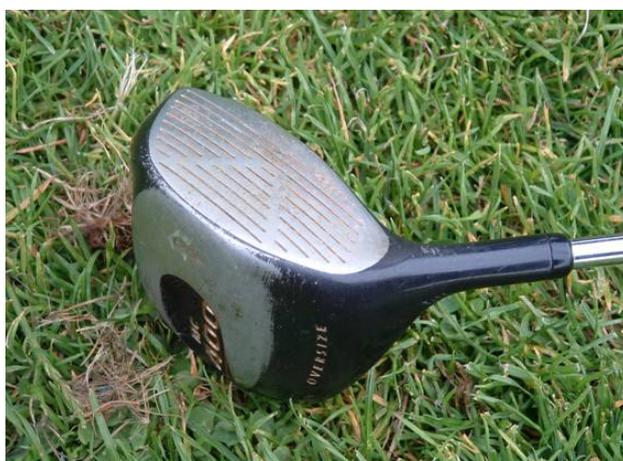


Photo: Jim McGovern

In a publication such as the Engineers Journal there is no need to provide any engineering explanations relating to the very ordinary photographs attached to this article. As engineers ourselves, we could find within them, or supporting them, Civil and Structural Engineering, Building Services Engineering, Manufacturing Engineering, Control Systems Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Automotive Engineering, Aeronautical Engineering, Electronics and Communications Engineering.

There was a notice in the July/August 2003 issue of the Engineers Journal announcing a Gala Dinner to be held on the 24th October 2003 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Professional Engineering at the DIT and indicating that the Faculty was trying to contact as many as possible of its engineering graduates from the past fifty years to join in the celebrations. The e-mail address engineering50@dit.ie has been set up and engineering graduates of Bolton Street and Kevin Street are asked to spread the news of the celebrations and make contact with the organisers. Why the celebrations? Well, fifty years ago a small group of students began a course of study at the DIT that would lead to a professional qualification of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. The following

details relating to this have been taken from ‘The Story of the Dublin Institute of Technology’¹:

‘In Mechanical Engineering a four-year course offered on a sandwich basis led to the examinations of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.’

‘By the mid-1950s higher level courses in the Dublin Colleges covered the following areas [only engineering areas are included here]:

Bolton Street—building technology, mechanical engineering, motor car engineering, marine engineering, aeronautical engineering, heating, ventilating and air conditioning.

Kevin Street—electrical engineering, radio engineering.’

‘Typically, the professional bodies determined and issued their own syllabuses and administered the appropriate examinations. In this way, the colleges provided valuable opportunities for many young people to prepare for technical and professional careers, at a time when full-time third level education was available to only a small minority of the Irish population.’

The contribution of professional engineering education at the DIT is ongoing and evolving. A unique aspect of the DIT environment is that it still encompasses technical education for many of the trades that support professional engineering, while also awarding ordinary degrees, honours degrees and postgraduate degrees in engineering to international standards. The DIT has been and still is a pioneer in the provision of a ladder system of education through its part-time and full-time courses whereby individuals can achieve their potential and whereby the needs of industry for highly skilled trade, technician and professional engineering staff are met. There is a distinct ethos in the DIT and there is a willingness to continue to adapt and evolve as it plays its role in society.

Professional engineering graduates of the DIT are highly respected by employers in Ireland and abroad, and have been now for close to fifty years. The same can be said of engineering technicians and those who qualify through the DIT in the associated trades, where the tradition goes back even longer. A recent event of particular significance was that Jonathan Strang, who was trained at the DIT, won the gold medal for Automobile Technology in the World Skills Olympics, held at St. Gallen in Switzerland. Ireland came first out of 22 major countries including the USA, Japan and Germany. Not only that, but it was clear from the final scores that Jonathan was well ahead of all of the competition. Linkages with industry have traditionally been very strong at the DIT. There is one major area where the professional engineering staff of the DIT is keen to significantly expand its activities: this is in undertaking leading-edge, world-class engineering research. This is seen as vital to the natural progression of the Institute and it is important that it be facilitated and encouraged. Dr. Mike Murphy, Director of the Faculty of Engineering at the DIT, has a favourite mantra: ‘Engineering is fun, challenging and rewarding.’ Let’s not keep it to ourselves. Let’s celebrate!

Written in 2003 by Jim McGovern, Dublin Institute of Technology

¹ The Story of the Dublin Institute of Technology by Thomas Duff, Joseph Hegarty and Matthew Hussey, Blackhall Publishing, Dublin, 2000