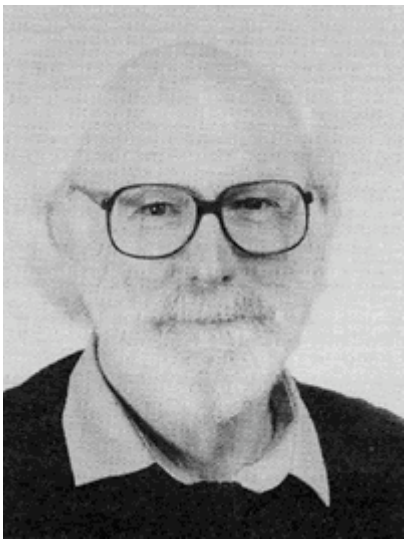
NZMS Newsletter 52 August 1991

CENTREFOLD

Douglas Clark Harvie



The end of 1991 will see Doug Harvie formally retire from his position as Reader in the Mathematics Department and Institute of Statistics and Operations Research at Victoria University of Wellington. It is unlikely, however, that he will have given his last lecture at the University; his expertise in the area of optimisation will continue to be sought after and I would expect to see him back here, at least intermittently, for that reason. A stronger draw to keep him in touch with the University will be his regular sessions with the staff badminton group; not something to be given up lightly.

Doug is the longest serving member of both the Maths Department and the ISOR, having been appointed as a lecturer here in February of 1957. He had, at this time, already been at Victoria as a student from 1948 to 1951 and as a Junior Lecturer from 1953 to 1955. He was at Auckland Teachers College in 1952 and a teacher at Waipawa High School in 1956. In his 34 years here he has taught many students who have now become colleagues either at Victoria or at other universities; there will be many members of the N.Z.M.S. who will remember with affection his classes in what could be any of a huge range of topics. One colleague remembers her reaction to his first year lectures on trigonometry; she was convinced that he must be the NZ expert on trigonometry who would be teaching it at honours level and doing research in it. Some years later, on joining the staff, she discovered that teaching trigonometry was the "prize" for being the last to get a finals exam in for printing.

In 1957 the scene in university mathematics was very different from the present; Doug thinks of it as a lucky time in which lecturers were expected and able to teach in any area of mathematics. He had joined a department with only four other staff members, and with a principal interest in analysis he introduced such modern topics as topology into the courses. His willingness to teach new courses and try new methods has been a feature of his career; it would be difficult to find a topic he has not taught at some stage. Initially his main interest was analysis, but after trying one of the first electronic calculators and realising the new

possibilities they opened up for Mathematics he had a growing enthusiasm for numerical analysis. This interest developed, with the help of periods of study leave at Dundee with R. Fletcher and then at the O.R. Department at Lancaster, into his present research and main teaching interest of optimisation. This interest has placed him firmly in the I.S.O.R. where he is the resident expert in this subject.

The most influential person on Doug's early career was Professor J.T. Campbell who was lecturing at Victoria when Doug was a student and was his Head of Department when he returned as a lecturer. It was Professor Campbell who pointed him in the 'right' direction after he had second thoughts about his first choice of subject, Chemistry, and again when he had tried Physics. As Head of Department Doug remembers with affection how he tolerantly allowed him, as a new lecturer, to take over two of his honours courses and was always an encouraging mentor.

Since the early influence of Professor J.T. Campbell the Mathematics Department at Victoria University has always had a student-oriented approach to its own courses and has maintained very close links with the schools of the region. The Wellington Mathematics Association was one of the first in the country and Doug was a member of it for many years; his involvement helped to begin the tradition of publishing solutions to public examinations, a tradition which has been of great financial benefit to the Association. It was also because of his deep interest in secondary teaching that Doug became involved with the introduction of 'New Maths' in the late 1950s. Many of us have seen what we regard as some unfortunate effects of the 'New Maths', but with his involvement from the beginning Doug also sees a very positive side to the revolutionary change; the established syllabus and methods of teaching were not achieving what they should and the new order, with its emphasis on 'understanding' and the whole range of skills which can be taught through mathematics, was a shake-up which the system needed.

In his career Doug has served the University Mathematics Community well. He, with Professor Campbell was an instigator of the annual Mathematics Colloquium, the first of which was held in Wellington in 1966. He was chairman of the Mathematics Department at Victoria for five years and has always encouraged younger members of staff, myself included. Doug has always been a friend as well as a colleague, and I for one am happy that his retirement will not mark his absence from the University scene in Wellington.

Lindsay Johnston