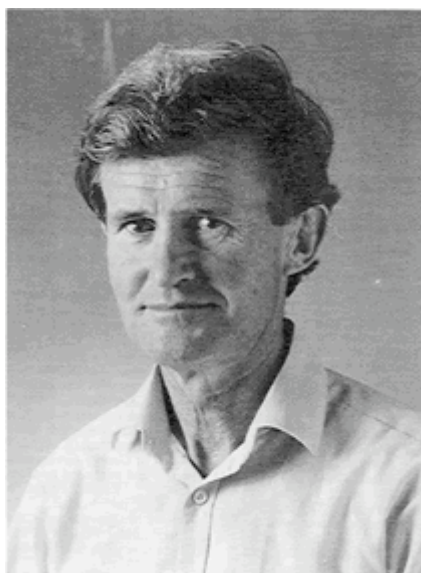


CENTREFOLD

Professor Brian Woods



Brian retired on 31 January 1994 after 24 years as Professor of Engineering Mathematics at the University of Canterbury. He was President of the New Zealand Mathematical Society in 1988-89. Brian applied in 1969 for the Chair in Mechanical Engineering, for which the University had another very able applicant, so in the sort of operation done at that time Brian was installed in a vacant Chair in Mathematics and given responsibility for Engineering Mathematics. These responsibilities have now been returned to the Chair in Applied Mathematics, which means that he may have been Canterbury's one and only Professor of Engineering Mathematics.

Brian grew up in Southland, being a boarder with his twin brother at Waitaki Boys High School, Oamaru, when boys were made men with cold showers in the morning and beds on open balconies in mid-winter. After an Intermediate year at Otago, he came to the School of Engineering at Canterbury to do a degree in Mechanical Engineering, specialising in aeronautics. He joined the RNZAF in the Defence Science Corps and was sent by them to the College of Aeronautics, Cranfield, followed by secondment to the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough. He spent four years as a lecturer in Applied Mathematics at Leeds before returning to Canterbury.

His research interest at that time was in supersonic flight, where he found some nice solutions for the supersonic flow around a delta-wing. The decreasing importance of supersonic flow theory eventually led him to retool at the opposite end of the fluid mechanics spectrum, studying lava flows from volcanoes. His skill in mathematical techniques was evident in some interesting solutions for the creeping flow of lava, but these became entwined with experiments which were not entirely successful and unfortunately may never appear in print.

Brian had an important role in our department for many years as the buffer between Gordon Petersen and the real world. He became well-practised at moderating Gordon's more extreme ideas and continues to visit Gordon in his unhappy bed-ridden decline. He was the Department's social manager, arranging functions and providing hospitality for visiting Poles from Papua New Guinea and others.

His skill at handling people led to a number of important appointments or elections at Canterbury, including Dean of Science, President of the AUT, President of the Staff Club, University Mediator, and election to the University Council. When we were each told to select a mentor, a large number of the Department chose Brian, which is a measure of the important role he played in the Department. We wish him well in his retirement, which already has included a trip to Canada to visit friends and relatives. At the present time he is taking maximum advantage of this year's extended ski season.

Peter Bryant