

University of Limerick Oral History Project

Biographical Note

Professor Evan Petty

Evan was born in 1933 in Maesteg, a coalmining town in the South Wales valleys. On leaving Grammar School he worked in the large Port Talbot steel works for two years while studying part-time to obtain a National Scholarship to the University of Wales. There he obtained a B.Sc (Hons) followed by a Ph.D on research in Metallurgy. During this period he also gained experience with the Anglo- American Corporation of South Africa on the African Copper Belt and subsequently spent three years at Alcan Aluminium Laboratories . While there, he tasted part-time lecturing in Oxford which gave him an appetite for the academic life, so he joined what is now Hallam University in Sheffield to teach Metallurgy and Materials Science up to degree level. During 10 years in Sheffield he published three books and tutored several Ph.D students. This research and publication work was continued when he moved to U.L.

Evan was one of the first academic staff appointed to UL (NIHE) in 1972 – prior to the initial intake of students. He was instrumental in setting up the original courses in Engineering and Science and planning the laboratories in the new buildings In 1980 he gave the first Professorial Lecture to an invited Limerick audience and in 1981 became the first Dean of the College of Engineering and Science. At this point he realized that the majority of students at University level required better guidance and encouragement by teaching staff so he took on the responsibility of Director, Quality of Teaching and Learning. To broaden his views he joined SEFI (French acronym for the European Society for Education and Training of Engineers) and in 1991 he became President of this organisation. During his tenure he presented papers on educational topics across many countries in Europe and the USA.

Since retiring he has moved to Kilkenny where he has expanded his involvement with the Craft Council of Ireland and, following his long-time hobby of woodturning, he is now President of the Irish Woodturners Guild.